

Changing Trends in African Pentecostal Worship as it Affects genZ (Post-Millennials)

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Abstract

Worship has been used throughout human history to express gratitude to Yahweh. This study investigated the Pentecostal worship as it affect gen Z in Africa. The research adopted a descriptive design method. gen Z is also refers to as iGeneration and generation Y(e). It is the generation of people born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s. iGeneration set apart the normal way of worship and see it as old way of worship. They have no regard for holiness. They believe doing things in their own ways which has led some of them into immoral way of life style of worship even in the church. Biblical method of worship becomes an irrelevant. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob' (Ps.24:3-6). There is a great lacuna between the Pentecostal pattern of worship (biblical way of worship) and the gen Z way of worship which this study investigated. The research concluded with some recommendations such as: the text of Christian songs must be biblical both in what it says and in the spirit in which it is said, the spectrum of music which brings glory to God and meaningfully grows His people in Christ-likeness is much broader than any individual's personal comfort zone, worship should be done with good conscience and holy heart.

Key Words: African Pentecostalism, Changing Trends, genZ, Worship, Yahweh.

Introduction

Christian worship involves putting into words, symbols and actions of reverence for God. It includes the corporate celebration of what God has done and how he has made himself known, as his mighty acts are brought to mind. It gives opportunity both for response to him in praise, thanks, confession and offering, and for deepening our understanding of God, is hand in his will for mankind.

As Jews, the first Christians already shared in this kind of worship in the synagogue week by week, and in the temple, they were accustomed to meeting together to hear the scriptures being read and expounded, to pray together and to sing hymns. They would have been familiar with the worship of the temple, which centered on the sacrifices offered to God and which provided what Evelyn Underhill calls the Primitive symbols and references such as Lamb, blood and sin-offering

which New Testament writers used in describing the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus (John Stacey 1971).

The God whom they had worshipped together every Sabbath was the same God who had made himself known to them in Jesus' so after the resurrection they naturally worshipped as they had done before, but their worship had a new emphasis and content (Richard 1971).

This paper searches for biblical worship principles. It does not cover every mention of worship in the bible but some. Jesus is the center of worship. Take Jesus away from worship, and all that remains is continental drive.

Christian Worship

The word Worship comes from an Old English term "*woerthscipe*". The term originally referred to the action of human beings in expressing homage to God because, He is worthy of it. Worship covers such activities as adoration, thanksgiving, prayers and all kinds, the offering of sacrifice and the making of vows. Nowadays however, worship is used for any kind of interaction between God and His people, expressed in (but not confirmed to) cultic or formal activity by a religious group or individuals. It, therefore, includes not only the human approach to God but also the communications of God with his people, and the whole communal activity that takes place when people gather together religiously. Such actuality is the formal expression of spiritual attitudes which should characterize God's people at all time, Roman 12:1 (Kendall 1989).

It is of note that worship is nowhere actually defined in the Scripture, but when the key biblical terms for worship are examined in a variety of contexts, it is clear that the central concepts are homage, service and reverence.

In the Old Testament, worship ideally, is focused at the sanctuary appointed by God. It follows the rituals laid down by God and is facilitated by the priesthood He has ordained. But this cultic activity is not honouring to the Lord unless it leads to obedience and praise in every sphere of life.

In the New Testament, the same terminology is used in a transformed way to portray the work of Christ and the response that please God, Jesus as Son of God and high priest of the new covenant fulfills and replaces the whole system of approach to God that was at the least of the old covenant. His incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension makes possible an engagement with God in spirit and truth', which culminates in the unceasing worship of the new creation.

One of the visible marks of the church is 'holy', hence the need to worship God as Holy as he is. He also desires people to worship Him in spirit and in truth' John 4:24 cf. Ps. 29:2.

In defining worship, the following Greek verbs should be understood, namely:

- (i) *Proskuneo*- to bow or prostrate oneself in submissive lowliness and deep reverence;
- (ii) *Sebomai*; to look upon with awe; and
- (iii) *Latreuo*- to render service for. Thus, worship is man's response to God's revelation of Himself. To worship God is therefore to ascribe to Him the supreme homage of which He alone is worthy.

In various ways, the Bible makes it plain that worship is acceptable to God only, if it is based on a true knowledge of God and of His will. Worship outside this framework is idolatrous. Thus, in the traditions associated with Mount Sinai, the terms of the relations between the Lord and his people were set out in great detail and the pattern for acceptable worship was laid down clearly. These regulations were God's special provision for those whom He had redeemed and brought to Himself (Exod. 19:3-4). The Israelites were shown to express their special status as 'a kingdom of priest and holy nation' (Exod. 19:5-6) in every area of their lives.

Israel's relationship with God was not to be at the level of the mysterious and the irrational. They were to enjoy a personal and moral fellowship with the one who gave his ten 'words' to them (Exod. 20:1-17). These state the fundamental principal of living in a relationship with the God who had graciously brought them out of the land of slavery, and consecrated them to himself like other nations in the ancient world (Kendall 2003). Israel expressed its relationship with God through sacrifice and ritual, using sacred enclosures, and to depending upon the mediation of priests. The meeting of an ordinary Israelite with the Lord is conditioned only if the sacrificial ordinance of God were carried out according to his decrees by his consecrated priests. He would then manifest himself in grace, and allowing his glory and his word to bless them. the priests did not derive their authority and function from the community but from God, who sent them apart to be his servant, attending to the 'maintenance' of his 'house' Exod. 29:42-46 for entrance point of meeting.

Music in Worship

According to Westmore, Charles shrugged said, "All I know is that the largest book of the bible is dedicated to worship music. The children of Israel loved music. Moses tells us of two occasions when the Hebrews sang to the lord in a spontaneous outburst of praise and thanksgiving. The first was after God led them through the Red sea. "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea" (Exod. 15:1). The women responded with joy. "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: "sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea" (Exod. 15:20-21).

The Torah records one other time that the Hebrews sang out in spontaneous praise. During their wilderness journey, they had bitterly rebelled against God when drinkable water was scarce (Exod. 15: 23-24). In Numbers 21, they burst into song when the Lord promised them water. From there they continued on to Beer, the well where the Lord said to Moses, "Gather the people together and I will give them water." Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! Sing about it, about the well that the princes dug, that the nobles of the people sank-the nobles with scepters and staffs." (Num. 21:16-18).

Other than these two instances the first five books of the Old Testament do not describe the Israelites singing, it is most likely that the kind of the song the Hebrew sang might be the music that followed from their culture. They surely sang celebration songs at times of great joy. Songs of mourning probably accompanied times of great sorrow. Music was a very important part of their lives (Westmore 2003).

African Pentecostal Movement

Pentecostalism is a general term used to describe the groups and sects which have traditionally placed emphasis on the speaking and receiving of certain gifts of the spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophesying and healing as a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism has been considered a movement to Christian renewal. It is also classified as a Holiness Movement, and the Born Again Movement. The doctrines and practices of modern Pentecostalism placed a high priority on international evangelization. The movement spread to Africa soon after the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles (Allan 2000).

Pentecostals have invariably rejected paedobaptism and adhered to the practice of adult water baptism by immersion as a public profession of faith after conversion. They claim that the experiences of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost are reenacted in the day-to-day activities of their church. They maintain that, as in the Early Church, their meetings are characterized by outbursts of ecstatic enthusiasm featuring healing, speaking in tongues, interpretation of prophecies, and all kinds of miracles. Pentecostalism includes a wide variety of denominations. Notable among these are the Wesleyan Pentecostals, Holiness Pentecostal Apostolic (who affirm the continuing validity of Apostolic offices, such as apostles, prophets, deacons, etc.) and a few others. The characteristics of African Pentecostal movement are: prosperity message, faith healing, religious advertising, introduction of camp and creating public awareness for their programs.

Biblical Trends in Worship

According to Westmore, “God did not want Israel’s ‘(abad),’ their service, unless it came from their hearts.” Moses commanded the people to serve God with all of their hearts. ‘And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God asks of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul’¹⁰ (Deut. 10:12) God required that the Israelites serve Him with all of their hearts and with all of their souls. Music is part of service.

The best way to understand this command is to examine the book of Deuteronomy where more than thirty times Moses urged his people to deal with their hearts. They were to love God with all their hearts “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut.6:5).

They were to seek Him with all their hearts. “But if from here you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut.4:29). God’s words were to be on their hearts (Deut.6; 6) and they were to fix His words in their hearts (Deut.11:18). He called them to serve Him with all of their hearts (Deut.10:12) and with joy and a glad heart (Deut. 28:47). They were to circumcise their hearts (Deut.10:16), that their hearts might not “be led astray” (Deut.17:17), clearly, the heart lies at the core of what it means to know and love God in order to render an acceptable worship unto Him.

According to Robert Westmore, “Worship in the Old and New Testaments center on our relationship with God.” The word worship in the Bible often translated as in Hebrew (*Shabah*) which means to bow down at the waist before someone. In Greek, the word translated “worship’s (*Proskuneo*) means to lie on, one’s face before someone. In both cases, those who worship are making a relational statement about the person they are worshiping.

In the ancient Middle Eastern culture, worship express social standing by bowing or prostrating oneself before other people. Bowing meant placing yourself on a rank lower than the person before you. It was a symbolic offering of your services, as a servant might offers them to his masters. Ancient Middle Eastern culture put great emphasis on maintaining the proper balance within the strata of society.

When in both the Old and New Testaments people worshipped the Lord by bowing they were making a deep statement to God. “Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord” (Gen. 24: 26) (The people) believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped” (Westmore 2003), Exodus 4:3. Worship meant glorifying God or ascribing Him His worth. This is an American approach to worship. Worship is what people do to God. People magnify Him. People lift Him up.

The social ritual of bowing, *shabah*, has a much different idea behind it. The Hebrew who bowed was realigning his relationship with one who is far greater. God’s greatness was not the issue in *shabah*. The relationship was all-important. To glorify God or to ascribe Him worth simply tells how people feel about Him. To worship Him in a biblical way, the worshipers make sure that their lives are under His care and His lordship. *Shabah* meant that worshippers knew how they should act toward their Lord. It was neither a mystical experience nor an emotional encounter. *Shabah* was an attempt to bring harmonious relationship between the king of the universe and those whom He had created in His image.

Christian in Africa assumes that worship relates to singing and “experiencing God”. Often Africans raise their hands to worship God, almost as if they are reaching out to Him and touching Him. For some worship becomes an attempt to experience God, to know His presence. But in the historical books of the Old Testament (like, Josh. 22:27; Jud. 6:10; 1Sam.1:13; 1Kings 1:47; 2Kings 10:28; 2Chronicles 29:28; and Ezra 7:19), the word *shabah* always indicates one of three things: (i) warnings against worshiping false gods; (2) presenting sacrifices and offerings to God in the tabernacle or temple; (3) bowing low before God, which usually happened at the temple.

gen Z Worship

It is a post-millennials generation. It is being refers to as iGeneration. It is the generation of people born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s. It is also known as Generation Y(e) and Net Generation.

gen Z want to do things their own way, they want to worship in their own way. They are more individualistic and they don’t believe that religion is only one way. Influencers are showing them that they can do religion the way they want to do it. The way that feels good to them. They are not enforcing strict rules to worship. It is relatable. gen z prefers things that are short and sweet. They don’t have to sit through a four-hour church service to connect to God or other Christians. gen z shares their faith more openly online. The whole thing about online is that people are freer. They have more freedom of speech. They talk about their spirituality and religion. They share their beliefs in different ways online. Since people can be so anonymous online and that allows them to be more vulnerable and ask for help when they need it.

The New Trends in Worship

According to Garreth, “The church of the mid-twentieth century is a church in movement’. It is probably true to say that its pilgrimage from established traditional to a new understanding of

its nature and mission is at heart as transforming as the pilgrimage to which it was called at the time of the Reformation. Of all the aspects of this change in the church's life the movement towards unity, which we call "the ecumenical movement," is undoubtedly of most far-reaching significance. Worship is the life-blood of the church, the present-day; efforts towards reform of worship (often called liturgical movement") are among the most important activities of the ecumenical movement.

T.S Garreth pointed out that Christian teaching at its highest has always proclaimed with united voice that man exists for the glory of God. In a world which tends to judge all human activity by its economic usefulness and which values the church largely for its contribution to social welfare, this needs to be asserted emphatically.

Worship embraces the whole of life. It is our response to God who is everywhere present and active in his universe. As the Bible makes it clear, God who is everywhere has also willed to reveal himself at particular times and in particular situation to people of his choice. New trend help in and add to the overall vision of what churches are doing. It brings similarities between what is happening in a concert and the happening in some churches. Alister said that the idea of having the lights down lower promotes performance over participation.

According to Alister, many people feel uncomfortable when other people can see them or hear them when they are worshipping. The perspective needs changed but it would seem having lights lower and music a little louder, would allow people to feel more comfortable and free to worship. When people can hear other people singing louder, that makes them feel more comfortable to sing out louder. As people get more comfortable stepping out and worshipping, those unhealthy perspectives can change.

Sometimes people may just disagree on styles of worship but that is the great thing about having so many different styles of churches even in small communities (Guinness 1990). Worshipers should not do things the same way because different methods will reach different people. All things are being redeemed, and all creative ideas can be used for the glory of God and for furthering His Kingdom.

Conclusion

The possession trends of worship should be handed over to the Lord. The singers are supposed to be God's own possessions. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own" (1Corn. 6:19). People are holy when they give up their self-possession and surrender their rights to God. Sanctification, which means "the work of making something holy", begins when believers give up their personal rights for control. They transfer ownership rights completely over to Jesus Christ and ask Him to direct their hopes and desires.

There is no place for bickering and fighting among those who worship (Westmore 2003). Worship is supposed to be holy and belong to God alone. All worshipers are supposed to be holy and God's possessions.

In the law, time itself could be holy, such as holy convocations, “speak to the Israelites and say to them; “These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies” (Lev. 23:2). On holy convocations or assemblies, God did not permit the Israelites to work. Instead, they were to come together, to celebrate. “On the fifteenth day of the seventh months, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work, celebrate a festival to the LORD for seven days’ ((Num. 29:12). There is no one phrase, verse, paragraph, chapters or book of the Old Testament that hints God was present among the Israelites on holy days in a special way. The days were holy because they belonged to God as His own possession (Westmore 2003). Because God owned those days, the Israelites had no right to use them for their purposes. When the choir come together to worship in music, their time is not theirs to do as they pleased. Their personal pleasures and desires are not relevant. God owns the choir practice. God owns worship service.

God owns the church where worship is being done as His own possession on earth. God took His possession, and placed it among the Israelites, even though they were sinful. “You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them” (Lev. 15:31). The tabernacle made Israel holy because God dwelled within it. Holy worship meant something very specific to the Hebrew. Worshipers had to cleanse themselves of sin through sincere sacrifices. They had to bring to God offerings that belonged usually to the Lord and everything God set apart as His own possession, whether time (the Sabbath), place (the temple) or object (something devoted to God, had to belong to Him alone (Westmore 2003).

“Therefore, urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship”, (Rom. 12:1). “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing”, (1Tim. 2:8). A holy sacrifice is one that belongs to God alone. Holy hands are hands that have not been defiled by anger and disputing. Holy worship is worship that belongs solely to the Lord.

Recommendations

The researcher would suggest that there is much about which to be encouraged in the direction of church music today. It seems that the pendulum is swinging back toward substantive lyrics. The text of Christian song must be Biblical, both in what it says and in the spirit in which it is said. There are many writers today who are taking seriously the theological content of their lyrics and are turning the focus God-ward in contrast to the anthropocentric trivial of much that has been written in recent years.

The spectrum of music which brings glory to God and which meaningfully grows His people in Christ-likeness is much broader than any individual’s personal comfort zone. At the same time, there are musical expressions which are intrinsically opposed to both the content and form of acceptable worship. Anything which is divisive, which panders to the flesh, which is less than our best or which denies the principle of self-giving is inappropriate in the worship of God.

What qualifies worship and the means in which to create a rightly focused environment for worship, is a heart issue and knowing and teaching the why behind what is being done. It is not necessary to have fancy lights, latest and greatest sound equipment to be able to worship but

all these can only add to the creative atmosphere and help those who cannot go to places of worship without them. One should prefer an environment that allows people to worship where all senses are being stimulated.

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