

**Lo, God Is Here***Gerhardt Tersteegen (1697–1769); tr. John Wesley (1703–1791)*

Lo, God is here; let us adore,  
 and own how dreadful is this place;  
 let all within us feel His pow'r,  
 and humbly bow before His face.  
 Who knows His pow'r, His grace who proves,  
 serve Him with awe, with rev'ence love.

Lo, God is here, whom day and night  
 united choirs of angels praise;  
 to Him, enthroned above all height,  
 the host of heav'n their anthems raise.  
 Disdain not, Lord, our meaner song,  
 who praise Thee with a stamm'ring tongue.

Almighty Father, may our praise  
 Thy courts with grateful fragrance fill;  
 still may we stand before Thy face,  
 still hear and do Thy sov'reign will.  
 To God whom earth and heav'n adore,  
 be praise and glory evermore.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***Adoration***Kevin T. Bauder**[This essay was originally published on June 19, 2015.]*

The adoration of God is one of the most neglected practices in American evangelicalism. Many evangelicals could not even describe what adoration is. This neglect is unfortunate. Adoration is the most fundamental aspect of biblical religion. It is the goal of both creation and redemption. The practice of adoration should be the center of both the individual Christian life and the corporate life of the church.

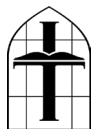
What is adoration? Certain synonyms shed light on its meaning. For example, *admiration* involves enjoying a thing on the ground of its excellence. The difference between admiration and adoration is that adoration includes overtones of devotion to the thing that is being admired.

Another synonym is *worship*, the act of recognizing the value of a thing. To worship God is to recognize and submit to His supreme value. This is almost the exact meaning of adoration.

Yet another synonym is *praise*. Arguably, praise is the final stage of adoration, the expression of approval and admiration toward a thing whose value has been recognized. If admiration is the enjoyment of the thing because of its excellence, then praise (as C. S. Lewis noted) completes the enjoyment. Our admiration remains inchoate until it is expressed.

These observations help to explain why thanksgiving and adoration are different activities. Augustine distinguished things that are to be used from things that are to be enjoyed. The giving of thanks is an expression of gratitude, which is always grounded in some benefit received by thankful people. The giving of thanks is connected to utility: we are thankful for things that are useful to us. Praise, however, is an expression of admiration, which is grounded in the excellence of the thing being admired. It is connected, not to utility, but to enjoyment of the thing in itself.

We can admire things for which we are not particularly thankful. Spectators at a sporting event might admire the prowess of an opposing player, even though they are not thankful that he is drubbing their team. Their admiration is grounded in the excellence of the athlete, while their thankfulness



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(or lack thereof) is grounded in the usefulness of that athlete to one's own interests.

Of course, we ought to be thankful to God. He is the one who gives us every good and perfect gift. Lack of thankfulness is terrible impiety. It is at the heart of the depravity that the apostle Paul outlines in the first chapter of Romans (see especially verse 21). The directing of thanks to God is obligatory and good. But it is not adoration.

God deserves to be adored, not for what He gives, but for who He is. He would deserve to be adored if He never did anything for us. If, an instant from now, He allowed all humanity to slip into the condemnation that we merit, He would still deserve our adoration. The adoration of God is grounded in His excellence, and His is the only true excellence.

How ought we to offer adoration? How can we recover this practice? Adoration begins with the recognition of one or more of God's perfections or mighty deeds. Some of these perfections we may glimpse through natural revelation, but natural revelation is never unambiguous. God's perfection is most clearly seen in and through the written Scriptures, where He declares His character fully and clearly.

So while exegesis and exposition are not admiration, they should be tools in its service. Whenever we read the Bible, whenever we study it, and whenever we hear it preached, we ought to be asking ourselves, "Who is this God? What is He like? What has He done?" We should never permit ourselves to encounter God's self-disclosure in Scripture without seeking to see Him in His glory.

Having encountered this aspect of God's person or work, the worshipper proceeds to consider it. Adoration is the most intellectually challenging task in the world, as the worshipper tries to analyze, define, and (as much as a human can) understand who God is and what God has done. The better we grasp these things, the more we will perceive of God's glory, the greater will be our admiration, the more profound will be our devotion, and the richer will be our praise. True worshippers of God are never finished with the task of understanding how He has disclosed Himself. Indeed, we never will finish that task—God is infinite, His glory is without limit, and the ages of eternity will be filled with successive journeys of discovery in what must be His eternal self-revelation.

As we encounter God's person and His mighty deeds, we also seek to respond rightly. Not every response is the right response. Some are completely wrong—no aspect of God's person or work ought to evoke our irritation, for example. Familiarity is always out of order (though intimacy—which is not the same thing—is a precious possession of all true worshippers of God). We must never approach God with condescension or a know-it-all attitude.

While wrong responses are possible, the essence of adoration is the response. No impiety is greater than to encounter God's excellence, His exalted magnificence, and yet to remain unmoved. When we hurry through our Bible reading so we can get to our coffee, we become guilty of profanity. We must—we *must*—respond to the God whom we meet, and our response must be ordinate.

The final stage of adoration is to express this response as praise to God. We must vocalize our admiration, and our expression of admiration ought to include our response. The word *emotion* is probably not the best one to use, but it is the one that most people will readily understand: our praise must always include an emotional element. We cannot truly meet God, and we cannot truly consider Him, without being moved by what we see. Our adoration expresses this movement of the soul, this affection that God's glory evokes.

Sometimes we are concerned that a particular expression of worship may be too emotional. I would argue that no expression of worship has ever yet been emotional enough. Still, the emotion must be the right emotion, and wrong emotions crop up very easily in depraved worshippers. Furthermore, our adoration is not about the emotion. It is about the God whom we adore. The emotion is in the expression, but the expression is not about the emotion.

The best way of learning adoration is not by talking or writing about it. The best way of learning adoration is to practice it. So ask yourself: How has God revealed Himself to you recently? How has He brought His Word to bear upon your life and situation? What does that show you about Him? Now that you glimpse this little bit of His excellence, take a moment (or an hour) to respond to Him with praise.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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