

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

CHAPTER 14b

Worship and Adoration

Adoration means different things to different people. Protestant Bible translators avoid associating worship with adoration. The English words *adore*, *adores*, *adored*, *adoring*, or *adoration* never appear in the NAS, KJV, or NKJ Bibles. The word *adore* appears once in the NIV as maidens express human affection for their beloved in the Song of Solomon.¹ Some ESV Bibles add the following heading before Song of Solomon 2:8: “*The Bride Adores Her Beloved*”.

According to “The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language”, when the noun *adoration* refers to an act of worship, it emphasizes “profound reverence” rather than affection.² Based on this definition, adoration and worship appear to be synonymous. Some Bibles affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church reflect this view. In the “New American Bible”, the word *adore* appears 216 times and *adoration* four times, translated from *shachah* and *proskuneo*. Protestant translations render the same Hebrew and Greek words as *worship* or *bow down*.³ The “Douay-Rheims” version replaces the word *worship* throughout its text with renditions of *adore*. For example, it renders John 4:20-24 as:

¹ Song of Solomon 1:4 NIV

² The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2010

³ <http://www.usccb.org> (11-12-07)

*Our fathers **adored** on this mountain: and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where men must **adore**. Jesus saith to her: Woman, believe me that the hour cometh, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, **adore** the Father. You **adore** that which you know not: we **adore** that which we know. For salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true **adorers** shall **adore** the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to **adore** him. God is a spirit: and they that **adore** him must **adore** him in spirit and in truth.*

The “New Jerusalem Bible” translates verses like Psalm 29:2 and Psalm 96:9 as, “...**adore** Yahweh in the splendour of his holiness...”, and Psalm 86:9 and Revelation 15:4 as, “...all nations will come and **adore** you...”.

The “Catholic Encyclopedia” offers the following information to enrich our understanding of worship:

“The rational creature, looking up to God, whom reason and revelation show to be infinitely perfect, cannot in right and justice maintain an attitude of indifference. That perfection which is infinite in itself and the source and fulfillment of all the good that we possess or shall possess, we must worship, acknowledging its immensity, and submitting to its supremacy.”⁴

Editors for this Encyclopedia deviate from Protestant theologians by combining worship and adoration together from a Greek word that normally means service. They state:

worship called forth by God, and given exclusively to Him as God, is designated by the Greek name *latreia* (latinized, *latria*), for which the best translation that our language affords is the word Adoration.”⁵

⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia accessed on <http://www.newadvent.org> (2-7-08)

⁵ Catholic Encyclopedia accessed on <http://www.newadvent.org> (2-7-08)

The “Catholic Encyclopedia” asserts that adoration “formally consists in self-abasement before the Infinite, and in devout recognition of His transcendent excellence.”⁶ Its editors elaborate with the following statements:

“The primary and fundamental element in **adoration** is **an interior act of mind and will**; the mind perceiving that God's perfection is infinite, the will bidding us to extol and worship this perfection. Without some measure of this interior adoration "in spirit and in truth" it is evident that any outward show of divine worship would be mere pantomime and falsehood. But equally evident is that the adoration felt within will **seek outward expression**. Human nature demands physical utterance of some sort for its spiritual and emotional moods; and it is to this **instinct for self-expression** that our whole apparatus of speech and gesture is due. To suppress this instinct in religion would be as unreasonable as to repress it in any other province of our experience. Moreover, it would do religious grievous harm to check its tendency to outward manifestation, since the external expression reacts upon the interior sentiment, quickening, strengthening, and sustaining it.”⁷

Another Semantic Shift

According to “Online Etymology Dictionary”, the verb *adore* comes from the Late Latin, *ad*, which means “to” and *orare*, which means, “speak formally or pray”. In earlier Classical Latin, *adōrāre* meant, “to speak formally, to beseech, or to ask in prayer”.⁸

The verb *adore* now carries a two-part distinction in its definition.⁹ The first part, emphasized by Roman Catholic translators, means to worship. The second part appears to be the result of a 19th Century se-

⁶ Catholic Encyclopedia accessed on <http://www.newadvent.org> (2-7-08)

⁷ Catholic Encyclopedia accessed on <http://www.newadvent.org> (2-7-08)

⁸ Adore. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved January 15, 2011, from <http://www.etymonline.com>

⁹ Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc

mantic shift where for some reason, adore began to reflect a sense of fond affection. The noun *adoration* adds a third definition: “A method of electing a pope by the expression of homage from two thirds of the conclave.”¹⁰

“Online Etymology Dictionary” traces the semantic progression of adore since the 10th Century.¹¹ Its root extends to an Old French word, *aorer*, which means, “to adore, worship, praise”. During the late 1500’s, *aouren*, meant, “to pay divine honors to”, then near 1600, “to honor very highly”. However, by the 1880’s this source claims a “weakened sense” emerged when its definition added, “To be very fond of”.

This shift in meaning impairs the usefulness of the word adoration. By the 20th Century, someone might adore God with worship while another might lavish their affection on a cute little puppy—because it is so adorable. God’s glory and a puppy’s cuteness do not qualify for adoration in the same way.

Merriam-Webster conveys a two- part distinction in its definition of adore.¹²

1. To worship or honor as a deity or as divine
2. To regard with loving admiration and devotion; to be very fond of

“Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary” also conveys a two-part distinction.¹³

1. To worship with profound reverence; to pay divine honors to; to honor as deity or as divine
2. To love in the highest degree; to regard with the utmost esteem and affection; to idolize

“The American Heritage Dictionary” draws the distinction this way.¹⁴

¹⁰ Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc

¹¹ Adore. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved January 15, 2011, from <http://www.etymonline.com>

¹² <http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary> (6-23-08)

¹³ Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc.

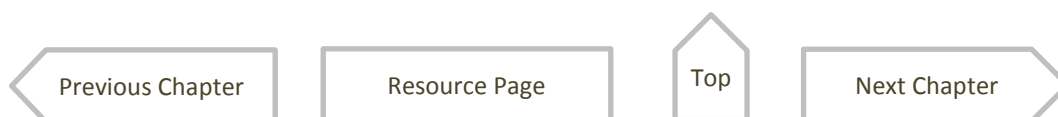
1. To worship as God or a god
2. To regard with deep, often rapturous love; to like very much

Unlike biblical love, adoration now implies a unilateral response of affection based on cause. We worship God because He is worthy. His divine attributes and supernatural accomplishments warrant a response of esteem with the utmost regard. Because God occupies a class of His own, He merits a one-way flow of provisional honor to match His superior assets, singular accomplishments, and sovereign virtues.

As in worship and service, a wall does not stand between adoration, love, and worship—only a distinction remains for clarity’s sake. Profound reverence blends with passionate affection in a hybrid response of adoration. According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE), adoration incorporates both subjective sentiments and outward expressions into acts of worship. ISBE asserts that, “Though this word never occurs in [Protestant] English Versions, it represents aspects of worship which are very prominent in the Bible.”¹⁵

Except for definitions in English dictionaries, only two Hebrew words associate adoration with praise: *barak*, which normally means to bless, and *TeHillah*, which normally means to praise.

Unlike adoration, we love God unconditionally as He first loved us unconditionally. Jesus laid His life down for us while we were yet sinners because He loved us. Our love for Him and His love for us do not depend on performance, status, or visible appearance. God commands us to love one another regardless of behavior or achievement. Our relationships thrive on a deliberate exchange of love without preconditions.



¹⁴ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2010

¹⁵ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, [http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/A/adoration/\(5-1-07\)](http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/A/adoration/(5-1-07))