

THE ACTIVITY OF LOVE

Excerpts from a sermon on “What Worship Is” by Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

Why do we worship?

The fundamental reason why we worship is that deep within us we have an urging, a dictate, which says that there is a God and that we have an ongoing relationship with Him (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1308). As the Psalmist said: “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?... O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8). Seeing the Lord and His relation to us, stirs within us an awe-inspiring recognition that virtually demands some response from us. Worship is that response.

What, then, is worship? The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church answers the question very simply. It says that a person “is in worship when [the Lord] is loved” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3690:5). The affections we feel for the Lord, for His good and truth, for His providence, are in themselves worship! They radiate from us—filled with reverence, awe, thankfulness, and joy. They praise the Lord.

So, a vital aspect of worship is our state of mind. As we sense the Lord’s infinity—and what we would be without Him—a true humility permeates our minds (*Arcana Coelestia* 7550, 8271). We then approach Him, willing to receive everything from Him. “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God” (Psalm 43:3-4). Where there is love in our spirits, that love comes forth in worship. Worship is the activity of love (*Arcana Coelestia* 1561e).

This definition of worship is extremely broad and has wide ranging implications. If whatever comes forth from love is worship, then we are at worship whenever we are trying to follow the Lord’s commands (*Arcana Coelestia* 10645:2). Each time we decide not to steal, each time we are truthful, we are at worship. For when we love the Lord, we show it by obeying His Word. Also, simply by doing our jobs as well as we can—being useful—we are helping our neighbors, and thereby we are at worship (*Arcana Coelestia* 7038). Walking on the path established by the Lord is a life of worship.

The longing expressed frequently throughout the Psalms to enter into the Lord’s courts is really the desire to have good rule in one’s life. Such good in our lives is not just positive feelings, or emotionally uplifted states, but practiced commitments to doing what is right—in our jobs, at home, and with whomever we meet. This worship is perpetual. As the Heavenly Doctrine notes, “a person is worshipping all the time if love and charity abide in him” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1618).