

A Response to Dr. Williams' Paper

Perhaps the author was deliberate in his attempt to view the subject of worship so broadly that the main "object" of worship (God in Jesus Christ) was diminished. For Williams, worship is summarized in a number of ways: "an estatic modality of ritual . . . an endeavor to free one's thoughts . . . solitary reflection and complex social dealings . . . the experience of adoration and sacred awe." In these and other references the author highlights humans as the center of worship and the ultimate creation is that of anti-structure. Such a creation takes into account where and who the worshipper is, and the nature of order generated by means of the worship experience.

Building upon the thesis propounded by the anthropologist Victor Turner, Williams sets about to disclose a glimpse of the inner nature of the worship experience as anti-structure. He carefully explores this hypothesis and concludes that Black worship with its peak experiences and religious symbols provide necessary opportunities for structures in opposition to the established societal structures to emerge. Consumed by the non-rational moments inherent in Black Worship in particular and all worship in general, persons on the margin of society can be lifted above imposed social status to which they are subjected.

Through the sensitive eyes and thoughts of Howard Thurman the author moves beyond self cognition to the binding of many selves, which is also a process of anti-structure. Rituals and symbolic action can unify the community and incite them into action to alter the structured society.

While providing a provocative study, much is left to the imagination of the reader and hearer as to the part faith in the Almighty God plays in the process. The anthropological approach need not limit the process to the whims of human action. The author, however, makes this a major assumption, so that references to God seem almost peripheral to the worship event. Even in the concluding section where comments on Black worship and theological reflections are indicated, one is thrust again into the centrality of humanity rather than into the center of the one who calls humans to worship.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Williams for providing the impetus for

further examination of anti-structure and its implications for new structures that continually evolve in Black worship. There are many points which could serve as referents for holistic worship and particularly new understandings of ritual and symbolic action created by "marginal" people. Of special interest would be the newly developed theologies of Baptism and the Lord's Supper which are apparent in traditional Black churches, where a different hermeneutical principle is operative in the use of scripture. Further examination could provide and inform Blacks of the locus of discipline, and the foundation of anti-structures in scriptures, especially those passages that call us to do this in remembrance of God Incarnate—Jesus Christ.