

## The Price for Ritual Immersion

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In Nairobi's urban, middle-class churches, rituals turn into commodities when worship music is on demand and provide a potential career for urban youth. In this paper I would like to dwell on the economic aspects of worship music and relate that to the ritual function of worship within contemporary Pentecostalism.

Worship music plays a major role in contemporary Pentecostal ritual, it frames the ritual and accompanies its peak moments. Worship music has a deep unifying meaning connecting the congregation to each other and to God. In the local understanding it is a means of encountering God and serves to facilitate the believer's total immersion into His presence. However, in Pentecostal spirituality the presence of God is desired and sought for not only in church gatherings or Sunday services, but in every aspect of life. For many, the worship music provided through different media (CD's, DVD's, internet, radio, e.t.c) become a tool to invite God into the every day life of the individual. The ritual act is taken out of its ritual setting and allowed to penetrate life as a whole.

Understood thus, Pentecostal worship is a ritual act with religious meaning. This, however is not the whole story, as worship music also has an economic side to it. The cost for producing attractive musical performances and productions is high and not all churches can afford the required equipment. For the urban middle-class churches, high-quality worship music becomes a major attraction and a major expense. Several churches produce their own CD's and DVD's and through television and radio their main singers and worship teams become famous personalities, drawing people to church. In some churches young talented musicians and singers flock, as a space is provided where they can develop their talent and potentially also build a career within the music or worship music industry. In churches that are less affluent worship music take a more moderate shape, but instruments and other equipment is still considered an important investment. It is not uncommon in poor areas to find electronic instruments in a church built of mud. For the individual, the price for a worship-CD or DVD is rather moderate. If it is still too expensive, there is always the possibility of listening to the same music on Christian radio or just head for a church service, where ritual immersion into God's presence is free of charge.