Christian Studies

A Publication of the Faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology

Volume 19 / 2003

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 19

Christian Studies

Volume 19 Spring 2003

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Number 19 2003 ©

Foreword

Through its worship the church renews its identity as it rehearses the founding events of Christian faith and life. Reading scripture, invoking God in prayer, preaching, sharing the bread and cup, and singing hymns have characterized Christian worship from earliest times. Clearly, worship is one of the most important things that Christians do.

Given the significance of worship, alterations in the practice of worship should not be made casually. Ellen Charry, editor of *Theology Today,* has reminded us that issues surrounding contemporary disturbances over worship are much deeper than clashes of tastes between older and younger generations. Fundamental questions loom in the background. For example, what is the appropriate relationship between Christian faith and a popular culture dominated by entertainment? Charry warns that while some modifications in worship are helpful, others subtly redefine the nature of Christianity itself.

What the church needs today is wisdom and discernment in making decisions regarding worship. The articles in this issue of *Christian Studies* are presented toward the goal of enabling and encouraging wise decisions about worship.

Special thanks are owed to guest contributors Philip Camp, Patricia McNicol, Wendell Willis, and David Worley. As always, I am grateful to my colleagues, not only for their contributions to this issue, but also and more fundamentally for the theological conversation which I am privileged to enjoy with them. A word of thanks is also due to Mark Shipp for formatting this issue while on sabbatical.

Michael R. Weed, Editor

Christian Studies (ISSN–4125) is a publication of the faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology (formerly The Institute for Christian Studies). *Christian Studies* is funded by gifts from readers and friends of the graduate school. Subscription is free upon request. Back issues are available for $3.00 each, plus postage. Correspondence should be addressed to Michael R. Weed, Editor, *Christian Studies*, Austin Graduate School of Theology, 1909 University Avenue, Austin, Texas 78705. *Christian Studies* is indexed in *Religion Index One.* FAX: (512) 476–3919. Web Site: www.austingrad.edu. E-Mail: christianstudiespress@austingrad.edu.

Foreword

Over the years, certain volumes of *Christian Studies* have generated greater interest. *Christian Studies 19*, which focused on the issue of music in the church, is one of those. As Michael Weed says in the reprint preface, "The issue clearly struck a chord in the lives of many Christians and in the life of congregations."

Long before I became President of Austin Grad, I appreciated its mission to serve the church. *Christian Studies* is one way that is accomplished. Faculty members and other scholars address issues pertinent to the life of the church through this journal. Academic institutions ideally serve as places for the responsible and reasonable discussion of important issues. Sometimes these issues are controversial. However, Christian integrity and academic freedom deserve no less than open and benevolent discussion of such issues.

Three eminent scholars of international repute read *Christian Studies* 19. These were Walter Brueggemann, Marva Dawn, and Stanley Hauerwas. Each one made favorable comments. Professor Brueggemann writes:

> I should say that I quite agree with the sympathy and tone of the articles in the issue. It seems to me that there is a great deal at stake in preserving the tradition. One of the most important critiques of 'praise hymns' is that they contain no narrative structure and no narrative substance, and when the narrative is lost we are nearly out of business. I do hope that you are able to make a difference in your church tradition about these matters.

We reprint this issue of *Christian Studies* in the spirit of Dr. Brueggemann's hope that we are able to make a difference in our church tradition about these matters. Churches are facing difficult issues and church leaders are making crucial decisions. Addressing those questions and making those decisions in light of informed biblical and theological thinking is imperative. Therefore, I am pleased that *Christian Studies* is contributing to the ongoing discussion of an important matter before the churches. It is with pleasure and gratitude that we submit this reprint.

Stan Reid, President
Austin Graduate School of Theology
August 17, 2004

Preface to Reprint

Christian Studies 19 was received with considerable interest by readers. The issue clearly struck a chord in the lives of many Christians and in the life of congregations. Essentially we addressed concerns about how contemporary Christians—and churches—are being overcome by the surrounding culture.

Only after *Christian Studies* 19 was published did we learn of developments among some churches which readers sensed illustrated concerns we had raised. We believe *Christian Studies* offer perspectives relevant to conversations now going on among many churches and in most denominations.

It is our desire that *Christian Studies* continue to play a constructive role in the on-going conversation—with its past and with its surroundings—that is so important for the life of the church.

Michael Weed, Editor
August 17, 2004

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Consecrated Pragmatism
Trends in Modern Worship

Michael R. Weed

> Only a foolish person would
> describe a meeting with God as "fun."
>
> Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

Over a decade ago the Dear Abby column ran a series of letters concerned with changes occurring in the writers' respective places of worship. Letters from Catholics, Protestants, and Jews across the nation reflected common concerns: that worship was being invaded by entertainment and theatrics.

Concerns from such diverse sources indicate that disruptions over worship are being experienced within many different religious groups across the land. This fact alone should alert us to the possibility that, regardless of the particular shape such disturbances take within any particular denomination or religious group, something much larger may be behind this development. Many observers of the American religious scene suggest that the underlying causes of the present unrest and disruption over worship may ultimately reside in powerful cultural forces that are the legacy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although it is inevitable that culture influences religion, often in a negative way, many such influences are now becoming widely accepted and well-established within the modern church. In fact, some Christian leaders have presented arguments encouraging accommodation to the surrounding culture. One particularly powerful source of such influences has been the

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church growth movement, founded by missiologist Donald McGavran in the 1950s.[1] A fundamental concern of McGavran was to make mission work more effective by minimizing social dislocation experienced by converts in the process of conversion. McGavran saw this as a major hindrance to the spread of Christianity. Addressing this problem, McGavran argued that the Great Commission not only contains a mandate to go to all nations; it also prescribes a strategy for doing so.[2] He contended that the Great Commission's "making disciples" and "teaching" designate two separate steps in Christian mission. Essentially, McGavran argued that "making disciples of all nations" entails attracting followers and building churches within different "clans, tribes, castes," and other culturally distinct groupings (e.g., social and economic). In this manner social dislocation is minimized and converts are able to "feel at home" with their own kind.[3] The Great Commission's reference to "teaching" is taken to mean "perfecting" and may occur later, after disciples are formed into distinct culturally adapted churches.

Given its particular interest in mission effectiveness within cultures, it is understandable that the church growth movement would turn to the social sciences in order to identify and monitor the attitudes, practices, and trends of cultures within which it seeks effectively to attract converts and

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[1]Other immediate causes of alterations in worship practices are certainly identifiable. For example, the Liturgical Movement originating with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) has fostered renewals not only among Roman Catholics but also mainline Protestant denominations. Likewise, the charismatic revivals of the late 1960s have affected most worship traditions in America: "Any congregation that sings praise choruses or is led in their worship by a praise team has been indirectly influenced by the charismatic movement," John Witvliet, "Evaluating Recent Changes in the Practices of Christian Worship," *Crux* 38 (2002): 19. See also Ellen T. Charry, "Consider Christian Worship," *Theology Today* 58 (2001): 281–285.

[2]Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955), 13f.

[3]Donald McGavran, "Church Growth," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 242.

build culturally adapted churches. C. Peter Wagner, who was named Donald A. McGavran Professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1984, designates the method as "consecrated pragmatism" and stresses that the church growth movement seeks to be scientific in promoting church growth.[4] He observes:

> For some reason or other, a scientific approach has not been used widely among Christians for understanding God's work in the world with more precision. But church growth intends to do just that. [5]

Wagner continues:

> Just as in medicine, it will take specialized and professional training to use these tools well. . . . Specialists are now being trained and equipped to give much more than superficial answers to the question, "Why isn't my church growing?" [6]

According to Wagner, scientific research supports the church growth movement's strategy of evangelizing within cultures to form culturally distinct churches. Wagner states that "the principle of homogeneity," i.e., that people like to be with their own kind of people, is the nearest thing to a "natural law" of church growth.[7]

Clearly the views of McGavran, Wagner, and their successors have broad and far-reaching implications for the life of the church and the shape of Christian mission. For a variety of reasons, no doubt including the vision of a scientific approach to evangelism and church growth, they have also

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[4]C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale: Regal, 1976), 31, 35–145. Wagner is the author of over ten books and a leading spokesperson for the church growth movement. Cf. Tom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 54f.

[5]Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 40–41.

[6]Establishing the practical nature of the church growth movement, Wagner states: ". . . none of the members of the faculty of the Fuller School of World Mission—where church growth theory has been generated to date—has his doctorate in theology or philosophy as such. Rather, faculty members combine such academic fields as civil engineering, education, social ethics, linguistics, agriculture and anthropology where scientific methodology is a prominent part of the training" (Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 41–42).

[7]Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 110.

had widespread influence. Perhaps the most immediate and visible influence of the church growth movement's ideas is their impact upon views of the purpose and practice of Christian worship. Before examining the church growth movement's influence on contemporary worship, however, a brief assessment of four of the movement's major assumptions is instructive.

Church Growth Assumptions Assessed

First, an underlying assumption of the church growth movement is that numerical growth is a primary purpose of Christian mission. The New Testament is read in a manner suggesting that numerical expansion of the church was a major concern of the writers of the New Testament and that the early church evidences a self-conscious strategy for church growth. These assumptions are unfounded. The early church shows little interest in numbers nor any strategy other than that of preaching the Gospel.[8]

Second, there are no hermeneutical grounds—exegetical or theological—for distinguishing between "making disciples" and "teaching" in Matthew 28:19, 20. Matthew's word for "disciple" means "one who engages in learning through instruction from another; a pupil, apprentice," i.e., one who receives instruction or is taught.[9] "Teaching them . . . " is how disciples are made. The church's mandate from Jesus is to teach disciples, not to attract followers. This point is critical because the unwarranted

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[8]See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). ". . . on the one hand, there is joy in the rapid growth of the church in its earliest days, but . . . there is no evidence that the numerical growth of the church is a matter of primary concern. There is no shred of evidence in Paul's letters to suggest that he judged the churches by the measure of their success in rapid numerical growth . . ." (126).

[9]See Walter Bauer, *et al.*, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, "*mathētēs*" (ed. F. W. Danker; 3rd, rev. ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 609. See also Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, "*mathētēs*" (9th ed. with supplement; Oxford: Clarendon, 1940 and 1968), 1072: "learner, pupil, apprentice."

distinction between "making disciples" and "teaching all things" is used to justify various means of attracting attention within different cultures with the intent of only later providing substantive Christian teaching, or "perfecting."

Third, regarding church growth's law of homogeneity, it is important to remember that although Jesus confined his ministry to the "household of Israel," the fellowship of his disciples included at least one Zealot (Mark 3:18) and one tax collector (Mark 2:14)—groups who bitterly opposed one another—as well as a number of women disciples (cf. Luke 8:1–3).[10] This pattern continued in the early church and was an essential aspect of its identity. Early Christian preaching

> demanded a radical reorientation of outlook and life, exclusive allegiance to God the creator, acceptance of Christ's resurrection, and expectation that Christ would deliver believers from eschatological judgment.[11]

The first Christians were essentially "converts."[12] However variously expressed and imperfectly realized, Christian converts were those who had turned from and broken with the dominant culture. Their citizenship was in heaven (Phil 3:20). Within the present age and its culture(s) they lived as respectful aliens and exiles (1 Pet 2:11). Those baptized into Christ had put on a new nature and become part of a new social reality, repairing and transcending the fragmentation of humanity into such distinctions as clans, tribes, and castes: "Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man" (Col 3:11). Clearly, both Jesus and the early church intentionally violated the "principle of homogeneity."

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[10]Hans Weder, "Discipleship," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 208.

[11]Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 2000), 30.

[12]Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 211 f.

Finally, church growth views of culture tend to be uncritical. There are no biblical or theological grounds for assuming that the Gospel should be adapted to different cultures—much less to assert that "God accepts culture." As all individuals are sinful, so all cultures are sinful—and just as individuals may be differently sinful, so cultures may differ in their distortions of God's intentions for humanity.

Cultures are the social-historical embodiment—beliefs, attitudes, practices—of centuries of human estrangement from the Creator. Far from being morally or spiritually neutral, cultures dominate our ways of viewing reality from birth and have far more control over our lives than do the influences of individual sinners. As William Willimon reminds us, the church is itself a culture—a new culture that inevitably and purposefully lives in tension with the surrounding culture(s). While Christian preaching may need to be adapted in order to be understood, this is not the same as making the message acceptable, much less making the message attractive. Willimon further cautions:

> The Bible doesn't want to *speak to* the modern world; the Bible wants to *convert* the modern world. . . . Too often, when we try to speak to our culture, we merely adopt the culture of the moment rather than present the gospel to the culture. . . . This is why the concept of "user-friendly churches" often leads to churches getting used. . . . The point is not to speak to the culture. The point is to change it.[13]

The church is always a *counter*-culture; conversion necessarily entails social dislocation and relocation in a new community with its own distinct history and culture (Rom 12:2).

The Church Growth Movement and Contemporary Worship

In spite of the critical shortcomings of its basic assumptions, the church growth movement's views have had far-reaching effects. They are a

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[13]William Willimon, "This Culture Is Overrated," *Christianity Today* 41 (May 1997): 27.

significant influence in the congregational life of virtually all American churches, regardless of denomination.[14] Essentially, they foster the idea that the gospel must be presented in terms of the surrounding culture in order to make it attractive to non-Christians (and to make conversion less socially disruptive). In the United States, the principal force shaping a homogeneous popular culture is the entertainment industry, which, through its marriage with technology, has become an all-pervasive presence.

From day-care centers to nursing homes, young and old spend hours daily staring at television sets. Automobile radios and Walkman headsets further ensure that no one need ever be bored, much less alone with his or her own thoughts. Thus the assumption that the gospel must be adapted to culture has meant that in American churches (and most Western societies) Christianity is adapted to audiences whose values and expectations are those fostered by an omnipresent entertainment industry.

For obvious reasons, the adaptation of Christianity to modern culture has had visible impact upon the conduct of corporate worship. Corporate worship is the aspect of church life that most easily lends itself to being modified in terms of an entertainment and performance format. Such adaptation has meant that worship becomes primarily a means of "outreach," carefully designed to attract outsiders whose tastes and attitudes are essentially those shaped by the surrounding entertainment-saturated culture. Rick Warren is quite candid in this regard:

> For the first time in history, there exists a universal music style that can be heard in every country of the world. It's called contemporary pop/rock. The same songs are being played on radios in Nairobi and Tokyo and Moscow. Most TV commercials use the contemporary/rock style. Even country and western has adapted it. This is the primary musical style we've chosen to use at Saddleback.[15]

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[14]Cf. Mark A. Olson, *Moving Beyond Church Growth: An Alternative Vision for Congregations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 12f.

[15]Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

Social-scientific insights are used in shaping and guiding this process. Wagner, for example, observes:

> As every sociologist knows, certain laws of collective behavior operate differently in small groups than in large groups. As every psychologist knows, mob psychology has certain effects on people's emotions and their reactions to stimuli which would not be the case at all if the person were alone or in a small group.[16]

Wagner concludes that Christian worship should be viewed as celebration and as a means for attracting nonbelievers. He states:

> Too many worship services are . . . not the kind that they [members] are very enthusiastic in inviting their unconverted friends to. Why not admit it! It's no fun! . . .
>
> Good celebrations need lots of people to make them fun and attractive.[17]

Similarly, Rick Warren asserts in *The Purpose Driven Church* :

> At Saddleback, we believe worship is to be a celebration so we use a style that is upbeat, bright, and joyful. We rarely sing a song in a minor key. Unbelievers usually prefer celebrative music over contemplative music because they don't yet have a relationship with Christ.[18]

Following this carefully engineered approach, Christian worship becomes an occasion where, guided by scientific insights regarding collective behavior and mob psychology, the unconverted and unbelievers are introduced to fun and entertaining worship experiences.[19]

A significant result of this strategy is that Christian worship is not

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1995), 285.

[16]Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 98.

[17]Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 98–99.

[18]See Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 286–287.

[19]See "No Experience Necessary," *Leadership* 22 (Summer 2001): 28–32. This article is an interview by *Leadership* editors with Jim Gilmore, a co-author of *The Experience Economy* (Harvard Business School Press). Gilmore states, "Christians can use the principles in the book to succeed in the marketplace, but the organized church itself should never try to stage a God experience. Increasingly you find people talking about the worship *experience* rather than the worship *service*. That reflects what's happening in the outside world. I'm dismayed to see churches abandon the means of grace that God ordains simply to conform to the patterns of the world" (31). See also note 28.

ordered by concerns to honor God or the needs of believers to understand and grow in the Christian faith. Rather, guided by data gleaned from questionnaires and surveys, "scientifically informed" worship "targets" unbelievers' interests and tastes, namely the modern quest for entertaining and fun experiences.

The full implications of this major shift in the focus and meaning of Christian worship are far-reaching.[20] Perhaps in an attempt to defend against the implication that the Christian faith is not being passed on, Wagner offers the peculiar and perhaps revealing caution that

> it is not too healthy for a church to spend too much time worrying about the next generation any more than it is healthy for a woman to spend too much time thinking about whom she will marry if her husband dies and leaves her a widow. The only generation any church is responsible for winning is this generation.[21]

Regarding the next generation, we do well to remember that the answer to the question, "Will our children have faith?" lies in another question: "Will our faith have children?"[22] A "worship style" adapted to an entertainment and performance format and that "lacks theological substance, invites passivity, and fosters an easy-listening consumerism that provides neither music nor words that will help worship participants remember deep truths"

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[20]For example, it poses special difficulties for churches practicing weekly communion. While communion may be "meaningful," it is difficult to make it exciting, upbeat, and fun, much less entertaining. Thus many such churches (a) move communion to another time, (b) move the "celebration" (e.g., so-called "seeker services" on Saturday), or (c) try to minimize communion's distraction from the otherwise "upbeat tempo" of the celebration (e.g., by avoiding or downplaying traditional language of sin and sacrifice and communion hymns, etc.).

[21]Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 60. It would seem obvious that the likelihood that one generation will be succeeded by another is far greater than the possibility that a married woman may become a widow. Not to be fundamentally concerned with passing on the faith to future generations, now present to us in our children and grandchildren, would seem irresponsible to most thoughtful Christians.

[22]Cf. Walter Brueggeman, "Will Our Faith Have Children?" *Word & World* 8 (1983): 271–283.

is not a worship style suited for passing on the faith to future generations.[23] It carries little risk of worrying about the next generation; it is interested in neither the past nor the future; it is a worship style for the "Now" or "Me" generation.

How Did We Get Here?

As noted, various influences of the church growth movement increasingly dominate congregational life throughout America. The goal of forming successful churches where everyone finds his or her individual needs met is becoming an unchallenged assumption among church leaders; the expectation of finding such churches is a given among "church shoppers."[24] A constant monitoring of trends, tastes, and fashions through questionnaires, surveys, and polls now rivals the study and teaching of scripture as the sign of a church's devotion to ministry and zeal for evangelism. Ministry itself is in the process of becoming equated with utilizing the latest technologies and methods in successfully managing the numerous programs of the modern church.[25]

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[23]Marva Dawn, "True worship, real evangelism," *Christian Century* 116 (April 1999): 455–458. Dawn continues: "Another result is that the real problems—namely, failure to educate people concerning the meaning and practice of worship, failure to understand the real idolatries that keep people from participating in the church, and failure to equip the priesthood of all believers for outreach to the world—remain unaddressed" (455).

[24]Decades ago, Peter Berger observed: "Emotional pragmatism now takes the place of honest confrontation with the Christian message. The way is opened for the attitude of the religious consumer, who shops around the denominational supermarket for just the right combination of spiritual kicks and thrills to meet his particular psychological needs. The question of truth loses all significance." See Peter Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 126.

[25]Cf. Olson, *Moving Beyond Church Growth*: "At gatherings of pastors and leaders, there is little conversation about vision or even theology. The latest computer program, sound system, or programmatic technique receives concentrated attention. . . . A whole industry has grown up to provide helps (a softer term for techniques) for preaching, premarital counseling, youth ministry, stewardship, personal devotional life, and any other dimension of church life. The advent of the

It is now evident that what some viewed merely as a shift in strategies, i.e., "using the most advanced methods," has become considerably more than that. However unintentional, the inescapable result of the church's uncritical endorsement of modern methodologies is a major shift of attention—and confidence. The focus of modern churches becomes a preoccupation with identifying and monitoring human needs. The modern church's confidence now rests in human techniques and strategies designed to satisfy the restlessness and impatience endemic to modernity. In other words, what was viewed innocently as merely a tactical move is turning out to be a seismic shift of unforeseen magnitude.

Put simply, modern methodologies arise from and reinforce modern presuppositions and assumptions; they presume both the possibility and the desirability of the rational mastery of virtually all areas of human life, individual and corporate. The unexamined and ready acceptance of these practices inevitably brings their secular and mechanistic assumptions into the heart of congregational life. In this fashion, fundamentally a-theistic assumptions have become dominant influences in most modern American churches.[26]

Looking back over the last forty years, one may wonder at the rapid and unchallenged spread of church growth techniques and strategies among American churches. This phenomenal growth and popularity is especially puzzling given the biblically and theologically questionable assumptions of

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Internet and the proliferation of information only exacerbates the insatiable need for more techniques, more technologies" (16).

[26]To some, a glance at the 389-entry index of Wagner's *Your Church Can Grow* confirms the reality of the threat of "practical atheism." Wagner's index contains entries for "consecrated pragmatism," "end justifies means," "goal setting," "homogeneous units," "mobilization," "possibility thinking," "pragmatism," "scientific approach," "social science," "staff," and even "Welk, Lawrence." There are no entries for "cross," "communion," "gospel," "Lord's Supper," "preaching," or "prayer"!

the church growth movement. While no doubt many elements are involved, at least four appear to be contributing factors, the last being perhaps the most significant and the most foreboding.

First, the insubstantial and arguably un-biblical premises of church growth strategies no doubt appear to many as simply non-biblical and therefore doctrinally neutral. This perception may also partially explain the spread of such methods across denominational lines. Second, once acceptance and practice of church growth methods reach, in effect, a critical mass, relentless pressure is placed on virtually all churches and church leaders to "do what everyone else is doing," "change in order not to be left behind," "get our share of the market," and so on. Third, a sizable and growing industry has emerged, aggressively marketing numerous products associated with church growth techniques and strategies. No doubt each of these has played a contributing role in altering the landscape of American churches over the last forty years.

Finally, however, the most significant factor in the rise and spread of church growth methods throughout American churches undoubtedly lies elsewhere. Namely, by mid-twentieth century, American Christians managed their daily lives on the basis of the same secular assumptions and methods as everyone else. In an ironic twist on the principle of homogeneity, American Christians were becoming at home in the modern world—a world increasingly remote from the world of the New Testament.[27]

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[27]Cf. Craig Gay, "Evangelicals and the Language of Technopoly," *Crux* 31 (1995): 38. "The fact that we have found ourselves increasingly drawn toward social-scientific methods and techniques in our churches . . . is quite disturbing. After all, the future cannot be very bright for a humanly engineered church. Even more troubling, however, is what our attraction to secular methods and techniques suggests about our past and present; for it may suggest that we have become embarrassed by our own traditions vis-à-vis modern scientistic culture. Indeed, it may suggest that we have secretly lost faith in the power of the gospel, and are hoping that 'science' will provide us with more success and security than prayer and

Given who American Christians were becoming, it simply made good sense to manage the business of the church in the same fashion and with the same methods that were proving so successful in all other areas of modern life. Looking back, these sweeping developments in American churches were socially and historically inevitable. In a sense, church growth theory simply legitimated fundamental changes already occurring in the basic attitudes of American Christians, changes brought by the rising tide of secularizing forces which now carry modern society in their wake. Viewed in this context, the widespread influence of the church growth movement appears to be as much a symptom of more fundamental problems as it is a cause.[28] It appears that church growth's "consecrated pragmatism" has been enthusiastically embraced not because it is consecrated but because it is pragmatic.

Recovering Our Bearings

C. S. Lewis is reported to have said that when we get the wrong sum at the beginning of a sequence of calculations we cannot improve matters "by simply going on." For modern Christians, there can be no strategy or tactic to improve matters. Attempts to devise such only perpetuate the deception of trusting in our own power and ingenuity to solve all problems—in effect, to manage transcendence. The modern church, in spite of its plans and programs, is at a point where it cannot "simply go on."

We recover our bearings by returning to the beginning, to a word

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the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we are, as the apostle Paul put it, holding to the form of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim 3:5)."

[28]Unnoticed was the fact that modern methods and technologies carry secularizing forces which construct a closed world with no place for transcendance. Ironically, efforts to redress the modern world's loss of transcendance now seek to manufacture experiences of transcendance by drawing on these same secularizing methods and technologies (e.g., "worship technologies" to produce "multi-sensory worship experiences"). Cf. Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Image Books, 1976), 615. See also note 19 above.

that comes from outside the flow of human history, a word that exposes our pretensions of wisdom, a word that cannot be managed, only served and obeyed.

> Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe (1 Cor 1:20, 21).

"Congregational Song Is in Trouble"
What Makes a Good Hymn?

R. Mark Shipp

> Mennonite, Moravian, Church of the Brethren, and Church of Christ congregations cherish their heritage of congregational part-song, though nowadays they worry about losing it. Worry they well might, for congregational song is in trouble.[1]

Perhaps at no time in the history of the Church has there been more ferment and confusion relative to the music which the church creates and sings. I have recently visited churches where there was no song in worship dating prior to the 1970s or 80s. This is a de facto abandonment of the rich heritage of Protestant hymnody, not to speak of earlier forms of congregational music, going back at least to the fifth century. Until relatively recently, most hymnals in Churches of Christ—indeed most Protestant hymnals— contained hymns and songs from many periods of church history. I have recently seen hymnals which do not contain any compositions other than the "contemporary Christian" music genre, composed within the past few years.[2]

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[1]Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville: WJKP, 2000), 51.

[2]See Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 279-292. Warren states that a congregation's choice of music may be "*the* most influential

Changes in church music are part of a wider phenomenon of pressure for change in worship throughout many religious communions. We often hear that the church must adapt to the culture's changing tastes and aesthetic styles, or risk losing our children to the world and becoming irrelevant to society.[3] The most obvious arena for cultural adaptation is public worship and especially the church's music.

What is lacking in most discussions about worship music are biblical and artistic criteria for evaluating lyrics, musical styles, and poetic quality. In this article I propose to offer criteria for evaluating hymns and hymnody for corporate worship among Churches of Christ.

Theological Criteria for Assessing Church Music

I have rarely heard in discussions about hymnals and "special music" reflections about the content or theological criteria to be used in determining which hymns or songs are appropriate for corporate worship. Typically, what one hears is "these songs are so meaningful," or, "it speaks to my heart," whether the style is that of eighteenth-century Europe, 1920s America, or contemporary pop culture. The first concern ought to be, "does the song, regardless of style, reflect biblical faith and theology and does it communicate that faith clearly?" While nowhere in the Bible is there a prescription for proper hymnody, several principles can be drawn from biblical texts relating to the issue of congregational music.

I know of no better passage which deals with the theology of congregational song than 1 Chronicles 16.[4] David has succeeded in bringing

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factor in determining . . . whether or not your church grows" (280). The implication is that if a church does not primarily use contemporary pop styles in worship, that church will not grow. After surveying his church, it was decided that it would be "unapologetically a contemporary music church" and that, within a year of this decision, his church "exploded with growth" (281).

[3]Even Wren, *Praying Twice*, suggests that it is important for "liberals to give a critical welcome" to contemporary Christian music (127).

[4]Some of the discussion on 1 Chronicles 16 below may be found in a

the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem and ordered certain priests and Levites to minister in song before the sanctuary:

> Moreover he appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel (1 Chron 16:4).

The ministry of music in David's new sanctuary was to involve three things: *causing remembrance* (NRSV: "invoke"), *thanking*, and *praising*. While the three categories mentioned here relating to the content of the music of the sanctuary may not be exhaustive, they are sufficiently broad to allow us to begin a theological survey. 1 Chronicles 6:8–36 is attributed to Asaph, the chief musician, which emphasizes these three functions of the Levitical music ministry at the sanctuary. This "new hymn" is composed of the bricks and mortar of three older psalms: vv. 8–22 correspond to Psalm 105:1–15, vv. 23–33 correspond to Psalm 96:1b–13, and vv. 34–36 correspond to Psalm 106:1, 47–48. The new psalm features several imperatives (give thanks, praise, sing, remember, ascribe, tremble, etc.), but I wish to focus on three of these, around which the psalm is structured: *remember*, *praise*, and *give thanks*. These three imperatives are commanded of the Levites in v. 4, are found in the introductory section of the psalm, and provide the themes and structure of the psalm which follows.

The song commands the people of Israel to *remember*. After an introductory section (vv. 8–13, in which most of the imperatives of the new psalm are mentioned), vv. 9–22 comprise the *remember* section. These verses exhort Israel to remember God's faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham and his protection and providential care of them. The second section, vv. 23–33, is the *praise* section. This section, corresponding to most of psalm 96, does not begin with the imperative "praise," but rather "sing." The

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much more expanded format in Mark Shipp, "'Remember His Covenant Forever': A Study of the Chronicler's Use of the Psalms," *RQ* 35 (1993): 29-39.

reason for singing is given in v. 25: "For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised." In any event, this section of the psalm is characterized by praise for God's awesome majesty as king, judge, and creator. The final section is the shortest. It is the *give thanks* section, corrsponding to Psalm 106:1, 47–48. It begins with the command to give thanks (v. 34) and ends with the petition for God to deliver Israel from the nations, in order that they may give thanks to him (v. 35).

Several observations may be made relative to this psalm and the injunctions to the Levitical priests in charge of the service of song. I will look at each section of the Chronicler's song in turn, with the aim of identifying principles which still apply to the theology of Christian song today.

First, much of what we do in Christian worship involves *remembering* and *reminding* a congregation who God is and what he has done for us in Christ. Congregational song is one of the major vehicles we have for remembering God's mighty acts in the past, which have redeemed us and constituted us as his people. We, too, remember God's covenant with the patriarchs as a part of our own story of redemption. We, too, recall God's mighty acts in Egypt and at the Red Sea, at Sinai and in the wilderness. The story of the judges, kings, Israel's idolatry, exile, and redemption from Babylon are also part of our story. We remember the prophets and their prophecies of a greater redemption to come and a greater son to sit on David's throne. As Christians, we remember the events of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection, and the stories of the early church which reflected concerning those events.

It is not without reason that the commands to the Levites begin with "remind" or "cause remembrance." What happens when a community of faith forgets its own story? Israel was prone to forget as, it seems, we are too. No community of faith can long exist without its own story, involving a beginning, a middle, and a purpose toward which it strives. If it forgets, that

community may exchange its authentic story for a counterfeit one. This counterfeit story may be one of American culture or supremacy. It may be one where personal blessing supersedes God's action and lordship. It may be one of anemic remembrance, where pop culture, with its memory of 20 to 30 years, replaces the authentic Judeo-Christian memory of God's mighty acts of deliverance.

So we come together regularly as churches to *remember*. What is remembered in 1 Chronicles 16? The people of Israel are commanded to remember God's faithfulness to his covenant, God's nature as creator and king, and God's grace in delivering his people from sin and bondage. We engage regularly in acts of remembrance each first day of the week. The Lord's Supper is the paramount example, but textually-based sermons and the faith we express in song also call us to remembrance.

Second, David's new song commands us to *praise*. The primary means of expressing praise is the faith we sing, as we are reminded by the current plethora of "praise songs." Praise, however, should not be simple repetition of the Lord's name or some contentless commands to "praise" or "bless." Reasons for praise are specified in 1 Chronicles 16 and these reasons correspond to those given in hymns of praise found in the Psalms. We render praise to God because of 1) his nature as creator, king, and judge, 2) his faithfulness to his covenants and promises, and 3) his concrete acts of redemption in the past and his continuing work of the redemption of his creation. These may be simplified in three categories: who God is, what God has done in creation, and what God has done in redemption.

Who God is: God is praised as king and judge in the middle section of the poem. God alone is the righteous judge, dispensing justice to the nations (v. 33). He alone is sovereign over his creation (vv. 27–31). These two roles are perfectly joined in a benevolent and just sovereign. The middle section of the poem is tempered by the inital section (vv. 8–22), where God

demonstrates his love, providence, and loyalty to Israel, and by vv. 34–36, where his loyalty to his covenant moves him to save and deliver Israel from the nations.

What God has done in creation: Two aspects of God as creator are mentioned in the middle section of the poem. First, he is creator of the heavens and the earth, which distinguishes God from idols (vv. 25–26). Second, he has so ordered and established creation that it is dependable and immovable (v. 30) and it rejoices in his sovereignty (vv. 31–33).

What God has done in redemption: Much of the Bible recounts the story of God's redemption of his creation and his people Israel/the Church. We praise him for his faithfulness in redeeming, for without it we would all be dead in our sins. God has saved us, not because of our goodness, but because of his grace and his faithfulness to his covenants and promises. We, too, can repeat with Israel, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his covenant loyalty endures forever."

Third, 1 Chronicles 16 commands us to *give thanks*. The primary reason for thanksgiving in the Chronicler's song is related to the last point above: because of God's wonderful acts of faithfulness in keeping covenant and saving us "from the nations." Psalm 106, which 1 Chronicles 16 reflects in vv. 34–36, is not so much a song of thanksgiving as it is a corporate confession of sin. After rehearsing Israel's history of rebellion, the psalmist exhorts the community to give thanks for God's covenant loyalty (v. 34), in spite of their sin, and cries out for God to save once again and deliver them from the results of their sin. While thanksgiving should extend to every area of life, David's new song emphasizes giving thanks for God's covenant faithfulness and presupposes confession of sin. The hymns which we sing together should also thank God for what he has done in redeeming us and in giving us the privilege of confession and forgiveness of sin.

What makes a good hymn in terms of biblical theology? The

injunctions to the Levites at David's sanctuary are perhaps not an exhaustive list. Nevertheless, they are an appropriate way to approach a biblical theology of hymnody. The faith that the church sings should invoke remembrance of our story. Hymns should praise God for who he is and what he has done. Hymns should lament and confess our sinfulness and thank God for redeeming and restoring us. It is striking that in the Chronicler's psalm, blessings and benefits to individual Israelites are nowhere emphasized. The emphasis is rather upon who God is and what he has done and on the community's response to a gracious God ("Save *us* and deliver *us*!").

Aesthetic Criteria for Assessing Church Music

Even with good theology and a good grasp of the story of God's nature and redemption, it is possible for a hymn to be "not a good hymn." This is because a hymn is not only composed of biblical concepts, but musical movement and poetry as well. If a hymn is to be addressed primarily to God, without primary reference to ourselves and our own experience, the words and music should be suitable for addressing God. One implication of this is that a hymn's words and music ought not to be of such low musical and poetic achievement that we end up worshipping God with the worst examples of pop "artistry."[5]

Because hymns are and have always been congregational song,[6] and

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[5]Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, states unequivocally that the music the church sings is merely a matter of taste and culture: "I reject the idea that music styles can be judged as either 'good' or 'bad' music. Who decides this? The kind of music you like is determined by your background and culture" (281). Warren does not demonstrate sensitivity to the church as an alternative culture, nor to the impact that 2000 years of church music has had upon the church and general culture. One suspects that to Warren influence flows mainly in one direction: from the world to the church.

[6]Erik Routley suggests that hymns are "communal song." See Routley, *Christian Hymns Observed: When in Our Music God Is Glorified* (Princeton: Prestige, 1982), 1. Some hymnologists have disagreed with this and have insisted that the hymn as a "congregational phenomenon" is a Protestant invention. Note, however, Ambrose, Basil, and Clement's body of hymns and especially Ambrose's injunction

we also sing to one another, hymns should be singable and accessible to the majority of a congregation or community. "Hymns are the folk song of the Christian folk."[7] A major implication of this is that hymns should be simple musically, so that the majority of a congregation can readily learn and repeat the melody. The meter, rhyme, and wording should be regular, simple, and literary, without unusual, strange, arcane, or bizarre words or images. Another implication is that the hymns the church sings should be representative of the *whole* body, not just of one particular age or interest group.[8]

We have here a seeming contradiction. A hymn is a poetic composition, with reference to God, and an eloquent vehicle for expressing thanksgiving, praise, confession, and petition. It is also a folk song, in that it arises from and is sung by the Christian "folk." How, then, can hymn poetry be both eloquent and "folksy"? How can hymn music be simple and regular, but at the same time exalt the soul in worship to God? Indeed, to compose a hymn for corporate worship is no mean feat. Every generation of the church, however, has expressed its faith in song and we can do no less. The question

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for the church to sing in the fourth century (Routley, *Christian Hymns Observed*, 9–10).

[7]Routley, *Christian Hymns Observed*, 3.

[8]See Paul Westermeyer, "The Voice of the People: Here, Now, and Beyond," *The Hymn* 54 (2003). Westermeyer suggests that the "global nature of the [church's] song protects the church from idolatry. We are constantly tempted to regard our apprehension in the song of our time and place as the truth. . . . Global song protects us from taking such a tempting path " (15). One of the problems with over-contextualizing the church's hymnody is that it contributes to fracturing the church into a number of special age, race, and culture groups, each with its own musical "requirements." Cf. Michael S. Hamilton, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs," *Christianity Today* 43 (1999): 30, who says "Music has become a divisive and fractionalizing force, balkanizing Western culture into an ever-expanding array of sub-cultures—each with its own stylistic national anthem." The hymnody of the church should unite us with the church of yesterday and today, not further contribute to its division. See Also Dan Lucarini's discussion of the fallout which happens when contemporary music is forced upon a congregation—the older members are marginalized, silenced, and often hurt. Dan Lucarini, *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement* (Auburn: Evangelical Press, 2002).

is how to do it so that new hymns are in continuity with church culture and hymnody of the past, that God is glorified, and that the congregation is instructed, encouraged, and admonished. The following principles are not intended to be exhaustive, but are guidelines for evaluating the church's hymns in light of the present confusion surrounding church music.[9]

Principles for Evaluating Hymns: Poetics

The hymn is, first of all, a *poem.*[10] As poetry and literary art, it is subject to the canons of literary analysis and critique. While poetry resists attempts to over-analyze and quantify how or whether it moves us in profound ways, there are nevertheless broad principles whereby we can assess a poem's coherence, meter, rhyme, singability, and overall artistry.

First, a hymn should have regular meter and a consistent rhyme scheme. My students regularly insist that hymns need not have rhyme or a consistent metrical pattern. I answer them, "Yes, that may be true, but if you want anyone to sing it, it will." While some forms of Christian music throughout the ages lack a metrical pattern or verses tied to stanzas—witness Medieval plainsong, Gregorian chants, and some types of Oriental music—congregational hymns have largely developed over the centuries with rhythmic patterns and rhyme. Few Christian hymnals contain many examples of the chant, difficult for most churches to sing. At least as early as Ambrose and Gregory (4th and 6th centuries), a repeated metrical pattern was in place for church music.[11] One of the first questions one should ask is, *are the meter and rhyme consistent?*[12]

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[9]Many of these reflections have come out of my own experience with evaluating hymns and hymnals as part of a worship committee at my congregation.

[10]Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980), 13.

[11]Routley, *Christian Hymns Observed*, 10.

[12]What is meant by "metrical pattern"? A metrical pattern is a series of verses (poetic lines), usually divided into stanzas, *with a set number of stressed and unstressed syllables per line, repeated for each stanza.* According to Brian Wren,

There have been many metrical patterns throughout the history of Christian hymnody, but the most common have been long meter (four-line stanzas of 8, 8, 8, and 8 syllables), common meter (four-line stanzas of 8, 6, 8, and 6 syllables), and short meter (6, 6, 8, and 6 syllables). The pattern of repetition is virtually irrelevant; the crucial issue is that a pattern of syllables be consistently repeated throughout a hymn. One of the common practices of contemporary pop music is the relative freedom from the constraints of a metrical system, so long as the words and the music more or less match each other. What may be inventive or clever sounding on the radio, however, may be very difficult for a congregation to sing. Recently, a missionary to Brazil told me that what is currently popular among many Brazilian churches are songs with no particular metrical or strophic pattern. The end result is that half the members of his congregation do not, or cannot, sing.

The next question to be asked is, *is the rhyme pattern regular and is the rhyme of particular words forced or trite?* Lyric (song) poetry as it has been developed in the West normally has a rhyme pattern as well.[13] The rhyme pattern is normally set in the first stanza and should be regularly repeated throughout. Good rhyme is not forced, but is natural and does not call attention to itself.

Are the words in common, but literary English? Related to this, *is the grammar correct?* As mentioned above, the goal is to compose a "folk

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poetry is "time art," art in motion. The meter constrains the art of the poem into a pattern of repetitions, making the poem memorable and singable. One of the quickest ways to determine that a hymn is poorly written is to count the number of syllables per poetic line and compare the numbers of the lines in each stanza with each sucessive stanza. A beginner will typically force too many syllables into a poetic line in order to make a particular point, or else will force the music to carry the words along by having too few syllables.

[13]Typically, in four-line stanzas, the last words of the 1) second and fourth lines, 2) first with third and second with fourth, or 3) first with second and third with fourth will rhyme. Other rhyme schemes are also possible.

hymn" for the church, but with simple words and music. Archaisms, slang, colloquialisms, overly technical terminology, or excessively ornamented terminology should be avoided.

Are the lyrics consistent with scripture and hundreds of years of "church culture"? My concern really has to do with the transmission of biblical and apostolic traditions. One of the dangers which the church faces today is poverty of theology and biblical illiteracy, leading to impoverished worship and faith. This poverty of worship is partially a result of the wholesale abandonment of many hundreds of years of the church's music, which, with all its flaws, nurtured the church, passed on its faith and devotion, and galvanized it for ministry.[14]

As the "new song" in 1 Chronicles 16 was constructed out of the bricks and mortar of the "old songs" familiar from Israel's corporate worship over the years, so too our hymnody must reflect continuity with scripture and should draw on the rich hymnic tradition of our past. To abandon this heritage reflects a peculiar sort of naiveté or arrogance, which does not see a problem with replacing "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" with "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth." Some modern hymn poetry will survive us and deserves to, but what kind of legacy do we leave our children if we replace the classic with the mediocre? Should not the hymnody of the twenty-first century be at least be as rich as that of the eighteenth?

Principles for Evaluating Hymns: Music

The music of hymns is often seen as culturally neutral or negotiable.

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[14]My point is that the church has its own distinctive culture, developed over two thousand years, to which we owe considerable allegiance. See Mark A. Noll, "We Are What We Sing: Our Classic Hymns Reveal Evangelicalism at its Best," *Christianity Today* 43 (1999). Noll says "Evangelicalism at its best is an offensive religion." One might apply this principle more broadly to the whole Christian movement: it deals with the scandal of the cross and is therefore unapologetically counter-cultural (39).

While it is true that the musical vehicle for conveying hymn lyrics is not so immediately theological as the lyrics themselves, S. Paul Schilling has reminded us of an important caveat relative to the selection or composition of hymn tunes:

> Though hymn . . . [tunes] do not in themselves convey definite theological ideas, when they are joined with texts they may strengthen or undermine the meanings expressed.[15]

The music of a hymn, therefore, should not overwhelm the poetry; it should be at the service of the words in order to maximize their meaning and impact. Brian Wren has recently suggested that the common feature of contemporary Christian music is an emphasis on the beat.[16] Similarly, contemporary Christian music tends to emphasize the tune rather than the words. If the vehicle overshadows what it conveys, on the other hand, will it arrive at its intended destination? In an atmosphere in which tunes can easily overwhelm meaning, we do well to remember Schilling's caution.

As with poetic principles above, the following questions relating to hymn tunes are not intended to be exhaustive. They are, rather, general principles to be considered in selecting hymns for corporate worship.

Is the marriage of text and tune a happy one? Hymn tunes should be appropiate for expressing the meaning and ethos of the text.[17] A text which is contemplative, dealing, say, with the cross, ought not to be sung to a march tempo. A commonly cited example of an unhappy marriage of text and tune is "Love Lifted Me," which says "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore," in joyful and triumphant music.

Is the tune singable by the congregation? This is perhaps a criterion

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[15]S. Paul Schilling, *The Faith We Sing* (Waco: Word, 1983), 35.
[16]Wren, *Praying Twice*, 129, 131.
[17]Schilling, *The Faith We Sing*: "In hymns it is obvious that the mood of the music should fit that of the words. When it does, the tune sustains or intensifies the mood of the text and serves to reinforce its message" (36).

most subject to debate: what one congregation may excel at, another could never pull off. Perhaps some general considerations will not be far off the mark. First, most "special music," performed by professionals, is not appropriate for congregational singing. Attempts by churches regularly to include choral pieces or pop numbers contribute to the loss of congregational singing in favor of trained singers who can perform such music.[18] Second, music which is heavily chromatic (full of sharps, flats, naturals, and complicated chords, such as major and minor sevenths) can be tremendously difficult for congregations to sing. While chromatic movement and chords can be interesting when done well, the end result for a congregation is not to sing the difficult harmonies or even the melody. Third, the melody should have a regular pattern of repetition of musical motives with variations, tied to the poetic stanzas. If each stanza of a hymn has a different melody, or if there is no consistent pattern of repetition, that hymn will have a short congregational singing life.

Is the music consistent with humdreds of years of "church culture"? This criterion, in my opinion, is the one most likely to be neglected. There is considerable concern in the contemporary church that music reflect a changing culture, as music is often thought of as inescapably tied to changing fads, preferences, and styles. As much as the church is influenced by culture, however, the church is also called to be an alternative to the secular culture and often must stand in opposition to it. Furthermore, the church does not exist in a historical or theological vacuum. We are the product of hundreds of years of church culture. It is irresponsible for us to discard two thousand

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[18]Westermeyer has a series of helpful questions relative to analyzing musical styles appropriate to our congregations: "You have to ask what normal people in virtually every time and place can sing together. What is intrinsic to the song a community of faith has to sing? What can stand alone in their voices? What grows from their voices out, not from instruments in? What will best carry the texts they have to sing?" ("The Voice of the People," 19).

years of Christian reflection and musical development in favor of the passing whims of musical fancy. Each generation must contribute its best hymns, for the church is best served when it can sift and retain that which is suitable for congregational singing and helps us to best remember, thank, and praise our creator and redeemer.[19] The alternative is not pretty. What do we leave as a legacy for our children when we willingly replace Newton, Mozart, and Crosby with Big Tent Revival and Audio Adrenaline?

Conclusion

What makes a good hymn? A good hymn is one which causes us to remember God's acts of faithfulness in the past, to praise him for who he is and what he has done, and to thank him for his provision, redemption, and forgiveness. It is singable by the majority of a congregation, without being trivial or trite. It is simple and elegant in its poetry and musicality. It is regular in its meter and rhyme, with simple and memorable musical movement. Finally, a good hymn is one which passes on the faith of the prophets, apostles, and the saints who have gone before us. It is a "new song," but a new song which owes more to centuries of church culture than it does to recent decades of pop culture.

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[19]Westermeyer, "The Voice of the People," 18.

The Changing Sound of (Worship) Music

Wendell Willis

Surely it is a surprise to no one that "worship" is one of the most widespread and impassioned discussions among Christians today. For the last two years I have been working on a book about Sunday worship, and while there have been changes in many areas related to Christian worship, none is so much discussed—and so controversial—as church music. Perhaps the major reason is that music is so conspicuous; you can't ignore it. This may be one reason that the *a cappella* music in Churches of Christ is so often regarded as a defining belief, although many other groups also use *a cappella* music. Also, singing is the major part of public worship where all those present participate (not everyone can/will lead prayers, make announcements, preach).

In this essay I will reflect on the changes in music which is sung, the way it is sung, and other shifts in church singing. My comments largely draw upon personal observation and reflection on recent trends. While there are occasional references in this article, it is more essay than research study.

Describing the Changes

There are a number of factors which have led to shifts in worship music in Churches of Christ.[1] One force for change is the shift from the

[1]It has been suggested that the recent change is just the current manifestation

"social world" of the old hymns to that of modern times. Geographically and culturally, we moved from the farm—and then the memory of the farm—to the city. So "beyond this land of sowing, planting and reaping" has less meaning and power for us than for our ancestors. We are more interested in "investment strategies" than "cotton futures."

Another force is that sociologically Churches of Christ have crossed the tracks into the "middle class" and have become somewhat embarrassed by our old hymnody. Just as you don't see men wearing plaid work shirts with ties to church today, many members today regard older songs as lacking sophistication.

Yet another force is an interest in a greater spirituality, especially in an individual sense. Historically, Churches of Christ have not placed strong emphasis upon one's personal spiritual walk (in contrast with, e.g., our Baptist friends). This has been a serious omission, and for many members has even become a "felt need." Just as some members have come to emphasize a personal prayer life and devotional readings, so also more personal music and worship has become appealing.

Finally, I suggest that a major force has been a concern for our youth. I am certain that all Christian parents have worried whether their children would remain believers. That worry has increased to almost neurotic proportions among many contemporary Americans, who rightly recognize the great strength of the secular culture and the widespread power of dangerous attractions for the young. That worry is exacerbated for many by a sense of guilt for neglecting our children. We have often been willing to ask our

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of inevitable cultural swings (the pendulum effect). Of course, if it is inevitable, there is no reason to reflect on it or discuss it since it will just happen. Another common explanation is that attitudes toward church music are shaped by personal emotional involvement (nostalgia for older members). No doubt sentimentalism is a strong influence, but it is not decisive. I enjoy many old songs which I still deem inappropriate for worship.

children, "What would interest you enough to come to church?" Then we try to provide that "interest."

Sources for Change

In the early 1980s a tremendous effort was put forth for the revision of the most popular hymnal in Churches of Christ, *Great Songs of the Church*.[2] This hymnal was revised when many churches were shifting away from the "gospel" music of the previous generation from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America and reclaiming the greater European hymn heritage. The new hymnal never achieved the popularity of its predecessor and is a classic example of unfortunate timing. But just as that revised song book was appearing, the worship landscape was shifting in another direction.

The trends in church music in the last twenty years have been to the "praise songs," most of which are musically simple and often contain words which are taken from Scripture or paraphrased. Most of them have found their way from youth groups familiar with Christian recording artists into Sunday worship. This new source of music itself represents a change, I think, in how religious music is produced. When I think of my high school/college days, religious music was not a significant interest to young people. I listened mostly to folk, a few "crooners," and some rock, none of which was overtly religious. But in the last twenty-five years, the Christian music industry has taken off, and church young people are as likely to go to a "Christian concert" as to a "rock concert."

When this new form first appeared, given the content of much popular music (and the lives of the musicians!) in the 1970s, many parents, I am confident, breathed a sigh of relief and were delighted that their children were interested in Christian music. (I do wonder how much was an interest

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[2]The history of "Great Songs" is itself inspirational. See Forrest McCann, "A History of Great Songs of the Church," *Restoration Quarterly* 38 (1996): 219–228.

in music and how much was an interest in being with other young people with whom you felt more comfortable.)

Within Churches of Christ a singing group called "Acappella" first hit it big in the 1980s. They were featured at many gatherings, and especially youth rallies. I suspect that there were two reasons for their popularity and acceptance by adult leaders in Churches of Christ. First, the group was made up of Christian young people coming from Churches of Christ. Second, they were—*a cappella*! So this group became very popular around many Churches of Christ.

While I am not saying that they were a "fifth column" movement, I do think that "Acappella" had two effects on church music (initially with youth groups). First, by their style of using their voices to imitate instrumental sounds, they softened the boundary between vocal and instrumental music—in the ears of many. Second, young people who first got interested in Christian youth music with "Acappella" went on to other groups who gave Christian concerts. This musical interest produced interdenominational youth rallies under the name of a "concert."

Once our young people—and their youth ministers—got very invested in going to Christian concerts, they were exposed to the people who wrote and performed much of that music. Many of these people come from the Pentecostal tradition. One reason for this is that music has a very dominant role in the Pentecostal churches. The impact of Pentecostal music, both in the content of the songs and in the use of instruments, has gone into a large number of non-Pentecostal churches (Baptist, Catholic, Anglican). Again, I don't regard this as a fifth-column move by Pentecostals. They simply had success in popular Christian music and were imitated in what they were doing even while they were looked down on by the "mainline churches."[3]

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[3]Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994),

There were also some residual effects on church music coming from the Pentecostal singers. One will notice that many songs only had one verse originally. Why? Because having a "new song" is a charismatic gift, and is frequent (even expected) in Pentecostal worship.[4] The song is considered almost like a prayer.

This "gift" theological outlook also explains why the new music is so very individualistic. The song was believed to be given by the Spirit to an individual to be sung by him or her in the worship. It was not understood as being for congregational singing; that is a later appropriation of the song.

Of course, Pentecostal churches also have a strong tradition of instrumental music as well as creating original songs. The ability to play an instrument is also considered a gift; not just an organ or a piano, but a variety of instruments. When we lived in Springfield, the Assembly of God had close to a full orchestra. So whereas in our churches persons capable of playing instruments do not consider that a religious gift, in the Pentecostal churches they do. So it is absolutely predictable and consistent that Pentecostal worship music and concerts employ instruments.

A critical question is whether we can appropriate the music because we like it, without also taking on the underlying Pentecostal theology. (I recognize that some in Churches of Christ are even interested in the theology as well, but I think a real minority.) Obviously we can appropriate it at some level without absorbing the theology, but I suspect very few in our churches who like to sing "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in this Place" know it is the national anthem for the Pentecostals.

127–132, describes the impact of charismatic worship on mainline churches, its relationship to the later praise movement, and the theologies undergirding both.

[4]Jack Boyd, *Leading the Lord's Worship* (Nashville: Praise Press, 2002), 113f. Boyd offers some critique of praise teams and gives suggestions for their best use. He is not criticizing their historical roots.

Rationales for Change

I have suggested that a major source of change has been the rise and growth of a commercial Christian music movement that includes songs from the Pentecostal tradition.[5] But I have never heard any give that as a rationale for changing music in Churches of Christ. One reason for the changes in "worship style" which is often expressed is evangelism. Many have thought that a better worship service, both song selection and singing, would be more attractive to "seekers" [6] who might not be drawn to sermons, but whose enjoyment of popular music would better "connect" with newer religious music.[7]

Whether and to what degree this has worked as intended is at least debatable; but apart from pragmatic evaluation of results, let me offer some critique of the stated rationale.

A. First, it mistakes evangelism for enticement. If someone comes to worship because he is drawn by the music, that does not equate with being drawn to the gospel message—unless just getting him to come is understood to be evangelism. Attendance is not conversion.

B. Second, to draw people by the music program and then try to direct them to being baptized looks like a "bait and switch" (as some churches have seeker services for outsiders; worship services for insiders). This is always

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[5]Bryan Belknap, "What Makes Music Christian?" *Group* (October 2000): 79–84 reflects very thoughtfully on the commercial Christian music industry. In what seems a fair treatment, I find very interesting his comment, "I believe the word 'Christian' is often simply a marketing term used to describe products and services—it is not necessarily indicative of a life style modeled after Jesus Christ."

[6]The "seeker service" represents a new form of service. There are differences among those who employ them. For some a seeker service is not worship, but for others it is the way worship should be formatted. For an analysis of this new form of service, see Lester Ruth, "Lex Agendi, Lex Oreandi: Toward an Understanding of Seeker Services as a New Kind of Liturgy," *Worship* 70 (1996): 386–403.

[7]Marva Dawn, "Worship Is Not a Matter of Taste" in *A Royal Waste of Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 186–193, critiques the idea of worship as a "point of entry" for outsiders. She also makes some important criticisms about the argument for having two distinct worship services for different groups.

a potential problem with "needs"-based evangelism, but I admit that it depends upon how we describe what people are invited to attend.

C. Third, to lure people with music is much like an addiction—you have to keep raising the ante. Audiences quickly bore of all entertainment, so it has to be changing. This is easier if the audience remain spectators (and auditors), which will happen if the music continually changes so that members cannot learn the songs comfortably.

D. Finally, the Restoration Movement went through this same experience over a century ago. I recently discovered that the stated rationale of those who favored having the organ in Restoration churches was part of a larger appeal to improve the quality of worship—both to attract outsiders and to keep our children in church![8]

Praise Teams and Choruses

A friend who is a very accomplished vocal musician and leads singing widely once observed that praise teams (or worship teams) in Churches of Christ are not the genuine article. It is probably true that the "praise teams" found in Churches of Christ today are only pale shadows of what the real item looks like in a church where the worship is built around the praise service and the song service is not just an "added" segment. But it is probably less useful to critique what others are doing than to focus on what we do.

Tom Olbricht once commented that in his youth in south central Missouri quartets and other groups were often featured at church gatherings. I have observed the same for years, although most often at the old "monthly singings" (which perhaps were more entertainment than worship, at least to the participants). But the more recent trend has been to use a small number of individuals, usually with microphones, as the foundation for the entire song service. Since generally the worshipers are to join in the singing as well, these are usually called "praise" or "worship" teams, not choruses. I suspect the model has followed the music into worship. We incorporated

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[8]See Wendell Willis, "The Sociological Factors in the Music-in-Worship Controversy," *Restoration Quarterly* 38 (1996): 193–203.

first the songs, then the method of leading because the songs were often written without parts.

My own reservation about praise teams and choruses is three-fold. First, there is the temptation for singing to become a performance. This temptation is both for those who do the singing and for others who listen. (I grant that it is not different for those who preach or who lead prayers—both are areas where temptation to seek applause are present and strong.)

Second, the temptation is for the other worshipers to become only auditors, rather than participants.[9] If my poor singing detracts from the sound of the group, and if we are making efforts to improve our sound quality, there is a temptation to let others do the singing. I have always been aware that I cannot sing well, and that leads me to sing softly even when there are many other poor singers around me.

Third, very often the new "praise songs" are too simplistic in theology (and/or too self-focused in theology) to be able to rightly teach Christian faith or form Christian character. They are not un-Christian but sub-Christian.[10]

Conclusions

I have sought to sketch the growth of the current "praise chorus" form of music in Churches of Christ, and in doing so I have suggested that the route taken was from "youth songs" in youth devotionals to a rise of professional musical groups who performed such music (and became the source for much of it). Then I argued that the next step was when the youth

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[9]Both of these last two points are insightfully developed by Marva Dawn in "Do they really want such banality" in *A Royal Waste of Time*, 231–233.

[10]See "Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water," in Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 172–179. She also raises questions about whether there are criteria to evaluate worship music and offers some suggestions.

groups (especially youth ministers) began to participate in cross-confessional concerts, in which many of the influential musicians came from Pentecostal churches.

What I find especially intriguing, if my historical sketch has validity, is that recently churches have looked to their youngest members for guidance in what to sing. We should pause and consider Charles Wesley's insistence that what most people know about the Christian faith comes from what they sing. The content of our hymns is much more important than we may suspect. Would we want the young people to determine what would be the proper topics or content of sermons? Or as an analogy, do we think the young people should determine the curriculum at their schools? We send them to sports camps where they do not decide how to be trained, what skills are needed, how much practice is necessary—we assume that older, experienced teachers know better than the young how to do some things.[11] So at the risk of offense, I suggest that we not—in effect—put the youth in charge of worship planning or hymn selection. To state the obvious, they are immature and not knowledgeable.

A similar point could be made about allowing non-Christians to shape music (or worship) for Christians. They do not understand the truths of the faith, have no means by which to evaluate the theology of hymnody, and have no commitment to the need for music to sustain and nurture faithful

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[11]Obviously the analogy could be carried on in many fields: music, art, and others. The point is that in most areas adults recognize that young people do not have sufficient experience and learning to decide what is best for them. Perhaps we really think that Christianity is simple enough that there is not much they need to learn, master, and practice to develop as Christians.

Christian lives. Would we permit those who neither understand nor value a language to decide what we need to do to learn that language?[12]

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[12]Again Marva Dawn has some profound (and provocative) comments on "Criteria by which to Plan" worship and especially music. This essay is also in *A Royal Waste of Time*, 296–312. Dawn is Lutheran and so is both familiar with and supportive of instrumental worship music in a way I am not—but this difference does not diminish the value of the questions she suggests need to be asked in planning worship.

Our Musical Preferences Do Matter:
Appropriate Music in the Assembly

Allan & Patricia Burke McNicol

Imagine a dimly lit stage; musicians are tuning their instruments and guitars. They check the volume controls on the amps. The drummer makes sure that everything in the trap set is in good working order. The pianist arranges the music so all the segues will go smoothly. The lead singer and back-up vocalists check their microphones.

A crowd gathers and the band begins a twenty-minute set that can be described as rhythmically energized, upbeat, and intended to evoke enthusiasm. The leader sings, provides verbal interludes and transitions, and prompts the audience to higher levels of energy and emotion.[1]

You may recognize the description is not of a club or a rock concert; it is a *worship* service. In most major cities there are countless assemblies (Pentecostal, Baptist, Episcopalian, and non-denominational) where this description accurately expresses reality. Substitute a praise team for instrumentalists and one can include some Churches of Christ in this description. What is clear is that many worship assemblies have adapted

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[1]Compare a similar description by Milburn Price, "The Impact of Popular Culture on Congregational Song," *The Hymn* 44 (1993): 11.

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themselves to a model of worship analogous to attendance at a performance. Leaders are on "stage" and the congregation is the "audience." In the interest of consumer-friendly evangelism, Christian assemblies are becoming interchangeable with assemblies in the wider culture.

This essay will not directly address the issue of how friendly the church should be with the dominant culture when communicating its message.[2] Rather, our focus will be on the function of music in a Christian assembly. We wish to offer the following thesis. Christian faith has developed its own expressions of music that function effectively as vehicles of transcendence supporting the church as an alternative culture to that of the surrounding fallen creation. These recognizable expressions may be traced historically with a degree of precision. At present this important heritage is in danger on two fronts. First, from neglect; second, many churches, fearful of losing younger generations, are embracing forms of Christian hymnody adapted to music styles of popular entertainment culture. Consequently, the heritage is dismissed and, if the trend continues, future generations will be diminished.

To join our heritage with the entertainment culture is like mixing oil and water. One form of music may be expressive of transcendence, while the other is more commonly associated with personal gratification.[3] In contrast,

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[2]This issue has been dealt with by numerous books and essays. See, for example, two works by Michael R. Weed, "The Twilight of the Gods: Pluralism, Morality, and the Church," *ICS Faculty Bulletin* 3 (October 1982): 5–16; "The Secularization of the Church: From Transcendence to Technique," *ICS Faculty Bulletin* 6 (Fall 1985): 69–85.

[3]Although this is not the burden of our article, many in Churches of Christ (*a cappella*) seem unaware in their acceptance of this Trojan horse. Modern popular music (especially rock), because of its appeal to emotions and sensibilities, cannot be separated from instrumentation—especially percussion. This was anathema to the ancient church. Some vocal groups in Churches of Christ have shown amazing ingenuity in presenting versions of this music in religious dress by substituting the human voice for instrumental backing. But it is a lost cause. If the church utilizes these forms of music for its hymnody, instruments will eventually appear to accompany it. The music itself demands no less.

we suggest that from the earliest days to the present Christian leaders have identified certain features of music as being crucial for its use in worship. By drawing attention to this heritage we wish to suggest a place to start in the difficult task of choosing music appropriate for use in Christian worship.

Procedurally we will sketch the main features of the music used widely in the ancient church, the period of Latin influence (400–1400), the European Reformation, and the modern era (with an emphasis on the emergence of the Restoration Movement).[4]

Music in the Ancient Church

One thing that can be said about music in the ancient church is that it was not dictated by the culture. Everett Ferguson states succinctly, "(early) Christian music was vocal and monodic."[5] Without question it was the direct antithesis to the winsome melodies coming from the flute or tambourines accompanying the worship of Isis or Cybele up the street.

Indeed, the Latin word *musica* seldom appears in discussions of worship in early Christian literature.[6] This may well provide the clue that will lead to insight. In the ancient world music was considered to have an almost magical power either to soothe the gods or drive away demonic powers. In this capacity it was linked with the offering of sacrifices.[7]

Whether at the temple in Jerusalem or in the numerous sanctuaries of the Greco-Roman world, music in a religious context could not be

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[4]To deal in any reasonable detail with this issue would demand volumes. Nevertheless, we must start somewhere; and if we sensitize some to the reality that the Christian community has been able to make judgments that certain forms and structures of music are more suitable for the assembly than others, then we will consider our effort worthwhile.

[5]Everett Ferguson, "Music" in *Encylopedia of Early Christianity* (ed. Everett Ferguson; 2nd ed.; New York: Garland, 1997), 788.

[6]Ferguson, "Music," 788.

[7]J. Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (trans. Boniface Ramsey; Washington: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 1–50.

disentangled from the offering of sacrifices—usually to give pleasure to the gods. In a community where the sacrificial system had been obliterated by Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice, music was destined to play a far different role in worship. It is important to note that the music offered by trained singers accompanied by instrumentalists (as in the Jerusalem temple) was rejected by early Christians as a vain attempt to influence or control the divine.[8]

In contrast, early Christian singing may be described as a heart-felt recitation of confession and praise in an expressive lyrical mode.[9] In dominant

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[8]Here it may be appropriate to say a brief word about the absence of instrumental music in ancient Christian worship. Traditionally for Churches of Christ, operating out of the Reformed/Restoration tradition, the issue as to whether or not one used instruments of music in worship has been treated as a question of the interpretation of scripture (i.e., a hermeneutical issue). This discussion centered on whether a particular practice in worship can be based in scripture. A common principle set forth was that a course of action was excluded in worship if it were not authorized by a text or validated by a practice warranted by the NT. But in the ancient church reflection about the music in worship did not directly revolve around matters of scriptural interpretation. Rather the focus of the role of music lay elsewhere. As with the Jewish synagogue, the Christian assembly made a clear break from the temple service with its mixture of animal sacrifices offered in tandem with instrumental music. In both synagogue and the Christian assembly music offered by human lips was the norm. (Indeed, the connection of instruments of music and sacrifice was so vital to temple worship that when John in Revelation 5 described anachronistically worship in the heavenly sanctuary in terms of the theology of Isaiah 6, the music came from the cithara.) Although most Jews going to the synagogue in the first century would not be opposed to what took place in the temple, in keeping with the wider cultural spiritualization of worship, they conceived that their vocal music was the offering of spiritual sacrifices. Christianity quickly broke with temple worship whether Jewish or pagan altogether. In their assemblies Christians offered to God vocally "the sacrifice of praise, that is the tribute of lips" (Heb 13:15 NEB). This was the conceptual milieu that accounts for the absence of instrumental music in the worship of the ancient church. Moreover, as with synagogue worship, there is little evidence that the psalms (sung in the temple) were actually sung in Christian worship. People of the ancient church would be astonished with some today who wish to revitalize worship by imitating how the psalms were sung in the temple. They would be appalled to walk into some modern worship centers featuring drums and cymbals, knowing that the music they knew, produced by flutes, drums, and tambourines, appealed directly to the emotions, not the conscious heart.

[9]This dovetails closely with the many references in the literature from the

Semitic cultures such as greater Syria, Christian singing would have a musical cadence which would be pleasing auditorily to the participants but would probably strike the modern person as very unadorned, somewhat akin to the cantillation of a synagogue lector.[10] In the Greco-Roman world where Christianity spread, singing was also important. But here again the musical quality was simple and instructive. It was simple in expressions of praise to God and Christ. It was instructive in that its verbal expression encouraged others in the faith. Its unadorned style differed greatly from the traditional Greek hymn of the pagans with its strict meter and emphasis on stressed and unstressed syllables.[11]

The simple and unadorned quality of early Christian music is worthy of note. The technical word for a formal Greek hymn, *paian,* does not even occur in the New Testament. The New Testament prefers to refer to a Christian song as a *psalmos* (psalm). Originally functioning as the superscription for the book of Psalms in the Greek Bible (LXX), by the time of the New Testament, a *psalmos* became a synonym along with hymns and spiritual songs for a freely composed religious composition.[12] Not until the

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early church to Christian singing being responsorial. Procedurally, a leader may recite perhaps a *sursum corda* or read a composition and the congregation would respond in a lyrical cadence. Ferguson, "Music," 788, gives a number of handy references. This is also confirmed by the appearance of an abundance of short praise formulae, doxologies and eulogies in the New Testament that appear to be drawn directly from the songs of the assembly (cf. Luke 2:14; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; Rom 1:25; 9:5; Eph 1:3; 2 Cor 2:14; 8:15; 9:15). In addition, the New Testament contains various other responsorial utterances such as *amen, halleluiah,* and *maranatha.* All of this is evidence for the widespread presence of verbal expressions of thankfulness for God's gift of Christ in early Christian assemblies.

[10]Many of the songs of Qumran or the *Odes of Solomon* (probably second-century works of a Christian-Jewish provenance) are grounds for support that the length of early Christian hymns could extend to multiple stanzas. The Christ hymns of Phil 2:6–11 and Col 1:15–20 are examples of movement in this direction.

[11]Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1983), 78–80.

[12]Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul,* 78–80. Cf. Col 3:16; Eph 5:18–20; 1 Cor 14:26. These references do not refer to the psalms of the Psalter although

third century did Christian hymnic composition begin to reflect some interconnection with the forms of Greek metrical poetry which were structured into stanzas, each employing the same meters and numbers.[13] Only at this time did hymns, roughly as we know them today, emerge. Examples would be the famous *Phos Hilaron* ("Gladsome Light") or Clement of Alexandria's *Shepherd of Eager (Tender) Youth.*

It is critical to note that in both its form and content early Christian music was an expression of an alternative culture in whose assemblies offerings of praise connected its members to the Lord of the universe. The new communities necessitated a new way of worship to break with the old forms of musical expression in the culture—especially the connection between music and sacrifices. By selectively utilizing certain conventions of ancient music, early Christian music in and of itself did not develop any new musical structure. The focus of Christian song was not on structure but on the praise of Christ and the edification of fellow believers. More developed musical structures embodying a focus on transcendence would follow.

The Period of Latin Influence (400–1400)

By the early fourth century, the church began to be influenced by the musical forms of the Greco-Roman culture. Nevertheless, the cantillation and chant-like procedures, embedded in Christianity from its Semitic origins, were still widely utilized and began to find expression in a form of music known as plainsong. Plainsong would be the dominant form of music in the church for the next one thousand years.

Plainsong hymns consist of a single unaccompanied (*a cappella*)

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some early Christian songs may have been influenced by the structure of the Book of Psalms. We emphasize that the Psalter's connection with the times of sacrifice probably militated against this usage. Rather, the Psalter was read and expounded as scripture anticipating the events of Christ and the new era.

[13]Edward Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music: The Music of Pre-Constantinian Christianity* (Nottingham: Grove, 1992), 80–84.

melodic line with no discernible meter. It allows freedom of rhythm to fit the words of a text. It is thought that early plainsong melodies were influenced by the music of the synagogue and the Christian Hebrew music with which it would have had close connections.[14] Although its sound is foreign to the ears of the average Christian today, it has re-emerged through numerous recordings made in European monasteries and convents. The uncomplicated quality of plainsong stands in stark contrast to rock music with its pounding rhythms and to movie music with its lush complicated orchestration. The genius of plainsong was to support and express the impact of the word in liturgy and to create for the worshipper a reality that transcended the hardship, pain, and loss so common in daily medieval life. Its most famous form is Gregorian chant.[15] Routley considers that chant expresses perfectly the ethos of medieval worship which was designed to separate the spirit from many of the de-humanizing aspects of daily medieval life.[16] The music outside the church was often rooted in questionable bodily movement.[17]

Gregorian chant is one of the treasures of Western civilization *and is considered the source of music in the West.* Examples can even be found in hymnals in use among Churches of Christ.[18] One of the most famous examples of medieval chant is the Easter sequence *Victimae Paschali Laudes.*

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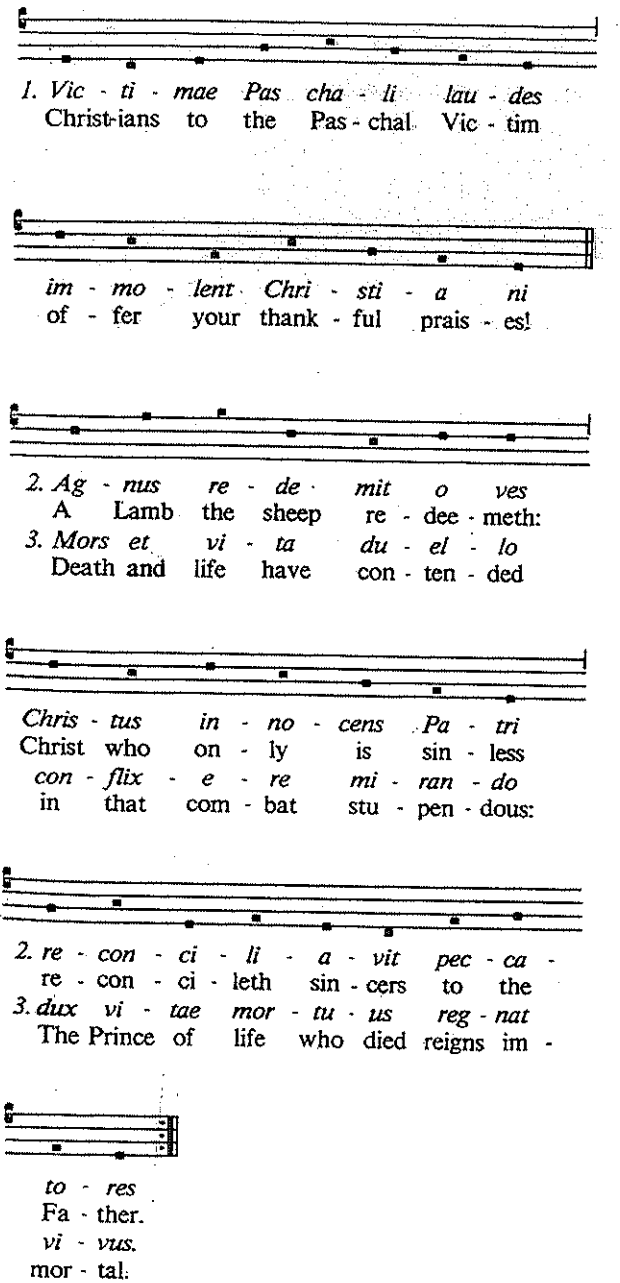
[14]Egon Wellesz, "Early Christian Music," *The New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 2.

[15]Gregorian chant takes its name from Pope Gregory I (died 604). Gregory authorized the collection and standardization of chant melodies in order to combat perceived abuses and a secularization which, even then, was creeping into the liturgy. Gregory also established a school which both preserved and spread these melodies throughout Europe.

[16]Erik Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymns* (Chicago: GIA, 1981), 12.

[17]Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymns*, 12.

[18]Forrest M. McCann, ed., *Great Songs of the Church* (rev. ed.; Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1986), 160, 246, and 247.



Gregorian chant endured because it was an unsurpassed vehicle for evoking in both singer and listener a response that only can be described as

devotional. Medieval thinkers believed in the moral implications of music: so the song sung *a cappella* came directly from the heart of the worshippers, and the single melodic line expressed the unity of God's people. The unmetered aspect of chant created a quality that was able to bring one into the presence of transcendence with relative ease.

As the centuries passed, battles emerged over increasing embellishments in chant that could only be handled by professional musicians. Nevertheless, at its core, plainsong embodied the simplicity and purity of Christian devotion. For over half the history of Christianity it successfully differentiated Christian song from secular and pagan music.

The Reformation and Bach

Two primary streams of hymnody flowed out of the Reformation, one influenced by Luther and the other by Calvin. Both were to have implications for singing in churches of the Restoration Movement. Luther wished to refine worship by removing obstacles to the ordinary person's search for salvation. His liturgical reforms aimed to give the congregation its own special part in the service. Luther composed a repertoire of *chorales* for the people to sing. His gifts as both a theologian and a musician enabled him to convey profound scriptural teaching with simplicity and artistic grace.[19] Because he loved medieval chant, Luther adapted many of the simple forms of plainsong melodies, putting them into meter and translating them into German. Luther's hymns were works of creativity or were drawn from the best traditions of vocal music (rather than from the taverns) that he knew.[20] His *chorales* were written with only a text and a melody and were intended to be sung by the congregation in unison without accompaniment.[21]

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[19]Charl Schalk, "Martin Luther's Hymn's Today," *The Hymn* 34 (1983): 131–133.

[20]Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymns*, 21–24.

[21]Erik Routley, *The Church and Music* (London: G. Duckworth, 1967),

The other major stream of hymnody within the Reformation found its source in Calvin. Because of his respect for the Spirit's inspiration of scripture, Calvin considered the Psalms as the norm for expressions of public praise and had them translated into the vernacular. This practice became characteristic of the Reformed Tradition and lasted well into the nineteenth century. Later, free paraphrases of the Psalms, such as those of Isaac Watts, would popularize this process.

Calvin's philosophy on music has three points of emphasis: (1) it should be simple;[22] (2) it should be modest and dignified because it is offered to the Sovereign God; (3) it is best achieved as the product of the unaccompanied voice.[23]

Like Luther, Calvin was interested in writing hymns that were singable. But the full flowering and culmination of the music of the Reformation and the origin of our roots of four-part singing in the church of later times came with J. S. Bach.

Bach's sacred and secular works were expressive of a world view in which all beauty is sacred because it has God as its Creator and Redeemer. Thus he sought to unite praise to God and aesthetic beauty. Bach probably did not compose hymn tunes himself, but he took tunes available in Europe and harmonized them into four parts. He gave them an expressive content through rich harmonic structure that has left an imprint on hymn-writing to the present time. Through such compositions as *O Sacred Head, Now*

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[22]When considering the issue of simplicity one is reminded of the very atheological subject of women's fashion. A specific classic dress design may be described as the ultimate in simplicity. But this does not mean dowdy or "Plain-Jane." Correspondingly, we must not assume that simple music is uncultivated or ordinary. It is well known that the greatest hymns are masterpieces of simplicity even though much that passes today for simplicity is in the words of Fred Pratt Green "commonplace and trite."

[23]Routley, *The Church and Music*, 125.

Wounded, or *Jesus, Priceless Treasure* we share not only his genius in combining theology and beauty but also his affirmation that Jesus is the beginning and end of faith.[24]

Bach, influenced by Luther, thought that the congregational singing of the *chorale* should be the climax of his cantatas and passions. By establishing a rhythm of even measures, and by expressing the emotional meaning of a text through the use of four-part harmony, he has bequeathed to our era some of the most important characteristics of the modern hymn.[25]

Four-part harmony did not begin with Bach. It was used earlier in devotional and domestic settings. But Bach's way of harmonizing a simple tune to enhance and facilitate spiritual responses based on the text became the accepted way of writing hymns. To Restoration Christians, who did not use instruments, Bach's use of four-part harmony and general aesthetic influence on hymnology was an invaluable legacy.

The Contemporary Era

Among the leaders of the Restoration Movement in the early nineteenth century, Alexander Campbell was without peer. His many accomplishments included the editing of a hymnal.[26] Campbell took pride in selecting the best hymns available in the Reformation. He especially preferred tunes composed by his famed contemporary Lowell Mason.[27] Referring to the hymnal Campbell wrote:

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[24]Jaroslav Pelikan, *Bach Among the Theologians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 26.

[25]Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymns*, 68.

[26]Alexander Campbell, ed., *The Christian Hymn Book—A Compilation of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* (1st ed. 1828; edition available to the author, Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1865).

[27]Mason composed and harmonized some of the best-known tunes for classical hymns still in use to this day. Some examples are *Perez* (*Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Above*), *Gerar* (*God Is the Fountain Whence*), and *Hamburg* (*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*).

> No volume, indeed (the *Christian Hymn Book*) ought to be studied with more care, and composed with more special regard to the sacred style, than this book of Christian worship.[28]

Campbell set the standard for "simple but dignified worship" in churches of the Restoration Movement. This tradition became a guiding force in many other hymnals such as L. O. Sanderson's collection, *Christian Hymns,* and was definitely a force behind E. L. Jorgenson's *Great Songs of the Church,* with its treasury of traditional hymns and gospel songs, and *Great Songs of the Church* (Revised).[29]

On the other hand, the expansion of Churches of Christ on the American frontier at the height of the period of nineteenth- and twentieth-century revivalism meant that wider cultural forces inevitably influenced our hymnody. Here we find distant roots of contemporary demands that church music be "user-friendly" with the culture. In the nineteenth century, paramount among innovations in Christian music on the frontier were camp meetings and gospel songs. These songs emerged from revivals that featured powerful preachers and soloists working together to arouse the emotions of audiences to respond to the invitation. These songs had a strongly individualistic character reflecting an intense personal faith. In the main, especially in the form of solos, these songs had more emotional impact when performed with instrumental accompaniment. They became accepted tools of evangelism—especially among instrumental churches of the

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[28]Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger New Series* 6 (Bethany: Alexander Campbell, 1842; repr., Joplin: College Press), 231.

[29]The latter is especially worthy of note because of the mainly unheralded work of both F. M. McCann and music editor Jack Boyd. McCann and Boyd sought to include hymns from almost every Christian century encompassing both East and West, and through judicious translations, they made available to English-speaking Churches of Christ for the first time a number of significant hymns and tunes from other languages. In this collection, thoughtfully arranged in four part harmony for congregational singing, many of the finest hymns of the ecumenical community are now available for use by churches of the Restoration tradition.

Restoration Movement.

Besides the gospel song, the use of shaped note music was popular in churches of the South. Much of this music was performed by the Stamps-Baxter Quartets and published and distributed by them. The music specialized in alto leads, bass runs, and harmonizations that imitated instrumental textures, all designed to give the singing energy and zest. This and similar forms of music became ubiquitous in Churches of Christ in the twentieth century. Today, the acceptance of this music has mutated into a fascination with and appreciation for the music which is widespread in popular entertainment culture.

With the advent of Christian radio and the emergence of huge marketing interests, more and more people expect songs sung in church to be in the same style as those popular in the surrounding culture. Since most of popular contemporary music is intrinsically connected with amplification and instrumentation, current practices inevitably mean that we must ask the question, sooner rather than later, will more and more Churches of Christ sanction instrumental accompaniment?[30]

The battle between the use of traditional hymnody and "user-friendly" songs in the mode of popular contemporary music continues. At present there appears to be a disposition to blend these, producing various mutations of both kinds of music in Sunday services; but it is impossible to determine where all this will go. With advanced technology, new hymns are being introduced with great rapidity into our assemblies. However, by and large, because of poor arrangements, most congregations have been unable to sing

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[30]Our focus in this essay has centered on the need to distinguish music used for church from the music of popular culture. The influence of popular culture on church music is compounded by the widespread impact of charismatic worship. This essay does not discuss the role and function of the praise song in the assembly, which Allan J. McNicol treated earlier in "Contemporary Trends in Hymnody: Bane or Blessing in the Church?" *Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 39–46.

these hymns well.[31]

Conclusion

As we move well into the second decade of the "worship wars," most congregations have accommodated a blend of traditional hymnody and popular entertainment music in their assemblies. Decisions on the choice of music for the assembly are commonly made on the basis of preferences in much the same way as a radio station, losing market share, shifts from one style of music to another. Attention is seldom given to critical questions such as "What does God require with respect to what we offer him in praise?" Or, "If God is One of absolute worth, shouldn't we offer him not only our best manner of life but also our best quality of music?" And, "Is the best only a matter of personal preference, 'as long as we are sincere'?" In this essay, we have argued that "the best" resides in our legacy of quality hymnody produced by outstanding poets and musicians among the people of God throughout the centuries.

As this essay has indicated, in the past, the church has been able to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate music for the assembly. We believe that with good effort we are capable of doing the same today. We will be impoverished if we replace our rich heritage with a constant diet of music shaped by the modern entertainment culture.

In conclusion, a word about our tradition of *a cappella* singing: it is not late-breaking news that the tradition is at risk. For it to be maintained with integrity, at least three basic areas must receive immediate attention.

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[31]A point ought to be made about "contemporary" hymns. Contemporary music is usually connected by most people with praise songs or styles of music that are widespread in popular secular culture. Many marvelous hymns composed in recent years by authors such as Fred Pratt Green, Carl P. Daw, Jr., and Timothy Dudley-Smith are as theologically deep as those composed in other eras. Unfortunately, such compositions seldom make it into our assemblies, even though they are contemporary and are easily found in standard denominational hymnals.

First, we must utilize an appropriate combination of unison singing (strength of plainsong) and fresh arrangements for four-part harmony, without which the clamor will come for instruments to supply the lacking texture in congregational praise. Second, the movement started in the last century to publish the best hymnody of the wider ecumenical community must be continued. Finally, church leaders must encourage gifted poets and musicians to compose hymns that exhibit the highest standards of literary and musical craftsmanship and encourage song leaders to lead them. We are not prepared to abandon our glorious *a cappella* tradition, but it is late in the day.

Singing and Worship from the Perspective of the Russian Orthodox Church

Philip Camp

Throughout my life, I have worshipped with churches that have upheld the tradition of *a cappella* singing. I was given many reasons for this restriction against instrumental music, but during my early college years studying music I began to question the validity of these arguments. My discovery of the *a cappella* tradition in the Russian Orthodox Church led me to pursue a doctoral dissertation topic in the area of Russian sacred music. In selecting this subject area for my research, I also hoped to gain a deeper understanding of my own worship practices by learning from another *a cappella* tradition. After the study was completed, I not only learned from the Russian Orthodox perspective specifically about *a cappella* singing but also was left to ponder my own attitude regarding worship. I was reminded of the essence of true worship—the desire of the worshippers to please the One worshipped.

My study of the Russian Orthodox tradition started with the formal beginnings of this church in the Middle Ages. Christianity became the official religion of the Slavic peoples in the year 988, after Prince Vladimir openly accepted Christianity as practiced in the Byzantine Church of Constantinople and declared it the state religion. In his monumental book, *Choral Performance*

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 19 2003 ©

in Pre-Revolutionary Russia, Vladimir Morosan discusses two common misconceptions of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian scholars: that Russian liturgical singing originated entirely from the importation of the liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church, and that Russian liturgical music included choral performance from its inception. Scholars generally agree that the liturgy for the Russian Orthodox Church began developing shortly after Prince Vladimir converted to Christianity, and pre-revolutionary Russian historians generally acknowledged that Russian liturgical singing originated entirely from the importation of the established liturgy from the Greek Orthodox Church. However, more recent scholarship suggests that other foreign influences also may have played a part.[1] The reason such influences were so easily overlooked, Morosan implies, is that the level of influence from these other Christian traditions paled in comparison with the enormous influence of the Byzantine tradition. He explains,

> While the original chant melodies and notation may have undergone certain changes in being transferred to a different language and different ethnic musical sensibilities, the liturgical order (including the order of singing) remained Byzantine Greek, at least as long as Greek hierarchs from Constantinople headed the Russian Church.[2]

Thus, many aspects from the Greek Orthodox order were passed on to the Russian liturgy. Liturgical actions, such as incensations, vesting, carrying the gifts of bread and wine for communion, and the breaking of the bread, were inherited from the Greek Orthodox Church.[3] And, most relevant to this essay, the *a cappella* tradition of church singing still practiced in the

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[1]Vladimir Morosan, *Choral Performance in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (Madison, Connecticut: Musica Russica, 1994), 3.

[2]Morosan, *Choral Performance*, 7.

[3]For a thorough discussion of the development of Eastern Orthodox worship practices, see Hugh Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996). Though Wybrew makes a case for the origin of the Byzantine Liturgy dating to the first century, the development in the fourth century shows a stronger connection to the later Byzantine and Russian Orthodox liturgies.

Roman Catholic Church as late as the tenth century[4] passed into the Russian Orthodox Church and has continued for over one thousand years.

However, another aspect of Russian Orthodox worship by the latter part of the nineteenth century was the delegation of all singing to the priests, deacons, and the choir. The role for the members of the congregation, therefore, was that of passive listeners.[5] Though this silence from the congregation violated New Testament exhortations for all members to sing, this restriction encouraged the cultivation of an art form that by the early twentieth century was highly developed. In an overview of the history of Russian liturgical singing, Morosan adds, "For a period of approximately two decades, from 1897 to 1917, Russian [*a cappella*] sacred works were among the more innovative choral music being written anywhere in the world."[6]

Johann von Gardner's *Russian Church Singing,* from which Morosan's more recent work originates, divides the history of Russian liturgical singing into epochs and periods, from its beginnings through the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.[7] The first epoch, from 988 until the mid-seventeenth century, consisted of monophonic singing, as the chants were

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[4]Though some organs are documented to have appeared in Western European churches as early as the eighth century, their actual usage has been the subject of debate. However, by the tenth century, records confirm the usage of organs and bells as a part of regular worship in Europe. Barbara Owen, "Organ IV," in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (ed. Don Michael Randel; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 583.

[5]Vladimir Morosan, "The Sacred Choral Works of Peter Tchaikovsky," in *Monuments of Russian Sacred Music: Peter Tchaikovsky, The Complete Sacred Choral* Works, Ser. 2, Vol. 1/2/3 (ed. Vladimir Morosan; Madison: Musica Russica, 1996), lxxxix.

[6]Vladimir Morosan, "One Thousand Years of Russian Church Music: An Introduction," in *Monuments of Russian Sacred Music: One Thousand Years of Russian Church Music*, Ser. 1, Vol. 1 (ed. Vladimir Morosan; Washington D.C.: Musica Russica, 1991), lv.

[7]Johann von Gardner, *Russian Church Singing, Volume I, Orthodox Worship and Hymnography* (trans. Vladimir Morosan; New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 143–146.

sung exclusively in unison or parallel octaves by soloists. The second epoch, from the mid-seventeenth century onward, is characterized by the development of polyphonic choral singing. Scholars generally agree on the dates and the principal stylistic qualities of the two epochs; however, the delineation of specific periods, dates, and style traits within the epochs has not been universally accepted.[8] Still, the final period in the history of Russian liturgical singing is widely acknowledged as the culmination of nine centuries of development. This period, identified by Morosan as the "New Russian Choral School," began with Peter Tchaikovsky's setting of the Divine Liturgy in 1878, and continued until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Morosan reports that during this brief period of time, twenty-eight major composers contributed between nine hundred and one thousand shorter choruses, and over forty large-scale works.[9]

In certain doctrinal aspects, the Russian Orthodox Church has somewhat resembled the Roman Catholic Church, but their exclusive use of *a cappella* singing even to the present day is an intriguing difference. In the first chapter, "The Essence of Liturgical Singing," Johann von Gardner treats the subject of instrumental music. He states that the Russian Orthodox ban on instrumental music usually is attributed to "ascetical tendencies," and that the writings of the church fathers are often cited.[10] Validating Gardner's point even as recently as 1995, Archpriest Boris Nikolaev wrote that the church's exclusion of instrumental music "has its ideological basis in the Orthodoxy itself." He then described vocal music as "natural," and instrumental music as "artificial and imitative." After referring to both Old Testament and New Testament passages, he emphasized the admonition from scripture to "sing praises 'with understanding'" from Psalm 47:7. Quoting

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[8]Gardner, *Russian Church Singing*, 139.
[9]Morosan, *Choral Performance*, 91.
[10]Johann von Gardner, *Russian Church Singing*, 21–22.

from Metallov, Nikolaev concluded that the reason that instruments were excluded was because the voice alone is "able to express the most diverse, deep, and delicate movements of the human soul."[11] Indeed, this line of thinking was not far from that of the early Christian thinker, St. John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), as demonstrated from his writings near the end of the fourth century:

> Here there is no need for the cithara, or for stretched strings, or for the plectrum, or for art, or for any instrument; but, if you like, you may yourself become a cithara, mortifying the members of the flesh and making a full harmony of mind and body. For when the flesh no longer lusts against the Spirit, but has submitted to its orders and has been led at length into the best and most admirable path, then you will create a spiritual melody.[12]

During the climax of the history of Russian choral music in the final period of the new Russian choral school, the ban against instrumental music in the Russian Orthodox Church became an issue for the first time. This restriction was even challenged by one of the leading composers of *a cappella* church music, Alexandre Gretchaninoff (1864–1956). In 1917, immediately after the first events of the revolution, Gretchaninoff composed his third liturgy, the *Domestic Liturgy*, opus 79, for tenor and bass solo, chorus, string orchestra, organ and harp, the first and only Russian liturgy setting to be scored with instrumental accompaniment. Perhaps this alone would have been adequate in voicing his objection to the ban; however, a relatively

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[11]*Znamennyi Raspev i krukovaia notatsia kak osnova russkogo pravoslavnogo penia* [Znamenny Chant and Hook Notation as the Heart of Russian Orthodox Church Singing] (Moscow: Nauchnaia Kniga, 1995), 29–30. Introduction ed. Philip Camp, trans. Sergei Shishkin, "Pochemu v pravoslavnom bogosluzhenii ne dopuskaetsa instrumental'naia muzyka" [Why instrumental music is not allowed in Orthodox worship], 2002.

[12]St. John Chrysostom, "From the Exposition of Psalm XLI," in *Source Readings in Music History: Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (ed. Oliver Strunk; New York: Norton, 1965), 70. This statement is similar to others recorded by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215), St. Basil the Great (ca. 330–379), and St. Jerome (ca. 341–420).

recent publication from the Russian Orthodox Church indicates not only that Gretchaninoff made a more formal proposal, but also that the proposal would have met strong opposition even at the end of the twentieth century, shown by the type of language used to describe Gretchaninoff and his cohorts:

> In 1917, people that dared to call themselves orthodox raised the question about the use of an organ in orthodox worship at the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. A joint session that addressed specific questions concerning church singing was held on December 8 of that year. A[leksandr] Gretchaninoff proposed the introduction of the organ for use in worship. The suggestion received the support of the director of the Synodal School, A[leksandr] Kastal'sky, as well as by D[mitri] Allemanov, a priest in the Orthodox Church whose so called choral works are still performed even today by church choirs. The proposal was rejected by a vote of eight to three.[13]

As this proposal was documented to have occurred in December of 1917, it was certainly overshadowed by the all-encompassing event of the Bolshevik Revolution only a few weeks earlier. In his dissertation on Gretchaninoff's 1936 Catholic mass setting, *Missa Oecumenica,* Bradley Holmes suggests that if the revolution in Russia had not occurred, the Russian Orthodox Church might have eventually accepted instrumental music.[14]

As a part of that debate one year after Gretchaninoff's proposal, A. P. Golubstov pointed to the early Christian "decrees" that made instrumental music "forbidden to each Christian." He then expounded upon Tertullian's metaphor—the "organ of the human word," describing it as "the perfect instrument by its physical design." He concluded that the human voice "is more natural, more vivid..., expresses more intimately the inner state of a soul and serves as a conductor of her movements." Golubstov once again

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[13]Kutuzov, B. "Problemy russkogo znamennogo penia v sviazi s istoriei vozrozhdenia katolikami gregorianskogo khorala" [Problems of Singing Znamenny Chant in relation to the history of revival of Gregorian Chant by Catholics], *Shkola Znamennogo Penia* [School of Sign Singing], No. 1 (ed. Philip Camp; trans. Sergei Shishkin; Moscow: Spass Cathedral of Andronic Monastery, 1996 and 2002).

[14]Bradley Holmes, "Missa Oecumenica and the Roman Catholic Masses of Alexandre T. Grechaninov" (D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 1990), 42.

pointed to the history of the church in his final statement: "Due to those advantages, vocal performance or singing was universally recognized in the ancient church."[15]

However, Gardner's explanation seems to offer more substance than merely pointing to the arguments of early Christian fathers. He explains that the purely vocal music of the church is an inherent part of the "essence" of worship, and that those who perceive liturgical music as just another category of music, with all the "same musical-aesthetic relationships found in secular music," have misunderstood the true essence of liturgical singing.[16] He then expounds upon the essence of liturgical singing, which by its nature, he argues, would exclude instrumental music:

> Orthodox worship consists almost exclusively of verbal expression in its many forms: prayer, glorification, instruction, exegesis, homily, etc. Only the word is capable of precisely expressing concrete, logically formulated ideas. Instrumental music, on the other hand, by its nature is incapable of such unambiguous expression; it can only express and evoke the emotional element, which is received subjectively by each individual listener, thus giving rise to a variety of interpretations. But it is impossible to give such an emotional reaction a precise, logical definition. Concepts such as sadness, majesty, joyfulness, happiness, etc. are merely general and vague characterizations of emotional qualities and do not represent any unequivocal ideas that can be precisely expressed in words. The same musical form, whether a simple tune played on a fife, a complex piece of instrumental polyphony, or even a melody hummed without words by the human voice, can be supplied with texts of different content and character that will enable the same music to convey completely diverse ideas. Only the word can give musical sounds a definite, unambiguous meaning. And in worship only the word can clearly express the ideas contained in prayer, instruction, contemplation, etc.[17]

While Gardner's point seems to clearly and reasonably explain the church's

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[15]Golubtsov, A. P. *Iz chtenii po tserkovnoi arkheologii i liturgika. Chast 2: Liturgica,* [From the readings on the Church Archaeology and Liturgics. Vol. 2: Liturgics], (Sergiev Posad: 1918), 254–257. Unpublished translation from the chapter "Instrumental'noe ispolnenie tserkovnykh pesnopenii" [Instrumental Performance of the Church Motets] (ed. Philip Camp; trans. Sergei Shishkin; 2002).

[16]Gardner, *Russian Church Singing,* 22.

[17]Gardner, *Russian Church Singing,* 22–23.

ban against purely instrumental music without "the word," it does not adequately explain the ban against instrumental accompaniment to the vocal music. In fact, his very arguments articulated in his next statement could also effectively support the use of instruments to accompany vocal music:

> Thus, wordless instrumental music by itself is not suited for conveying the concrete verbal content of worship. It can only entertain and please the ear, evoke various emotions, and, to a certain extent, reflect the emotional content of ideas expressed by words. On the other, the word taken in conjunction with musical sounds can combine logical clarity and precision of meaning with the emotional response to verbal ideas.
>
> Herein, it seems, lies the reason why the musical element is admitted into the Orthodox liturgy only in conjunction with the word. Either the musical sounds give emotional coloration to the logically concrete contents of the liturgical texts, or the musical expression arises as an emotional reaction to the ideas expressed by the words.[18]

In a recently published interview from the *Choral Journal,* Vladimir Morosan's explanation of the essence of liturgical singing seems to take Gardner's philosophy a step further. Though the question he addresses here is not specifically about the use of instruments, his general statements about performing Russian liturgical music give a rational explanation to the restriction against the use of instruments:

> Chu: Are there other aspects of study necessary for performing [Russian Orthodox choral music] well?
>
> Morosan: When it comes to performing Russian sacred music, the greatest challenge for Western musicians seems to be the understanding that singing this music is, first and foremost, prayer. It is music of worship, not music at worship (something that ornaments or decorates, like icing on the cake). The same is essentially true of Gregorian chant—it is sung worship. Somehow, this approach needs to be central, even in a concert performance.
>
> When Vladimir Minin of the Moscow Chamber Choir did a workshop here in 1988 with American professional singers, the one thing he tried to convey, using every means possible, was that you cannot sing Russian music simply with a well-trained throat and a curious intellect. "There's God up there," he said, pointing heavenward, "and then, there's us down here, and we have to approach the music from that perspective."

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[18]Gardner, *Russian Church Singing*, 23.

> The Western choral musician needs to understand (or perhaps, rediscover) this fundamental truth.[19]

The idea that all Russian liturgical music is considered to be prayer seems to carry much significance in the exclusion of instruments. The use of instrumental music to accompany vocal music would seem to qualify as "icing on a cake," making it "music at worship" rather than "music of worship," a notion that was recently verified by Morosan through personal correspondence.[20] Consequently, in Russian Orthodoxy, instrumental accompaniment might be used if the desire to please man was considered. However, in their intention to present an offering *only* to please God—the essence of Russian Orthodox liturgical singing as described above—instruments are excluded. Morosan adequately sums up the position thus: "Singing sacred music is not about entertainment or diversion; it's about fundamental questions of humanity and divinity, and us being raised from earth to heaven."[21] Many aspects of a Russian Orthodox service are influenced by this type of reverence, demonstrated both in the pew-less cathedrals where congregations stand throughout the duration of long services that can last several hours, and in the sustained and contemplative style of the music itself.

Thus, in defending the practice of *a cappella* singing, Russian liturgical scholars approach the topic from a unique perspective. While advocates of *a cappella* church music in the West tend to approach the topic from a biblical perspective, arguing from the standpoint of "intended silence" from the New Testament, the external emphasis of the old covenant versus the internal focus of the new covenant, first-century pagan practices versus Christian practices, and even from the standpoint of the absence of instruments

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[19]George S. T. Chu, "An Interview with Vladimir Morosan," *Choral Journal* 40 (1999): 40.

[20]Morosan, personal interview, May 19, 2002.

[21]Chu, "An Interview with Vladimir Morosan," 40.

in the first several hundred years of church history, the advocates of *a cappella* music from the Russian Orthodox tradition raise a more philosophically based theological question, essentially, "What is the point of worship? Is it a desire to please men, or to please God?" In Russian Orthodox practice, the songs used in worship are meant *only* to please God, and adding instruments to the worship practice would originate only out of the desire to please men—another notion that is related to the thoughts expressed by early Christian writers on the subject, most notably St. Augustine in the fourth century.[22]

As briefly mentioned above, this overall desire to please God through worship also infiltrated the stylistic tendencies of *a cappella* music itself. In the peak of musical creativity in the Russian Orthodox Church just prior to 1917, the expression of the text and the suitability of the music to fit the meaning of the text became an increasingly important goal for the composers of church music. This also became a topic of debate, as many traditionalists became fearful that too many style traits from the secular forms of opera and ballet would infiltrate sacred music. However, as the nature of the texts was highly reverent, and the composers generally skilled and sensitive, the few compositional devices that were imported from secular musical forms actually brought greater expression to the liturgical and non-liturgical devotional texts that were commonly sung, resulting in a richer, more meaningful worship experience for the church. To use a modern stylistic comparison from the songs out of an *a cappella* church tradition in this country, the Russian equivalent of a Stamps-Baxter quartet from fifty years ago, with its often buoyant treatment of such topics as the crucifixion, would be unthinkable. Yet the style of some of the classic hymns, such as "It Is Well with my

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[22]St. Augustine, "From the Confessions," in *Source Readings in Music History: Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (ed. Oliver Strunk; trans. William Watts [1631]; New York: Norton, 1965), 73–75.

Soul," by Horatio Spafford and Philip Bliss, or even some of the current "devotional songs" sung by church youth groups, with their effective use of well-crafted melodies, rhythms, and harmonies that are sensitively suited to accentuate the meaning of the text,[23] would be very much in line with the thinking of the advocates of *a cappella* music from the Russian Orthodox Church.

As one who supports the *a cappella* tradition in our churches today, I have gained much insight from this study of the music of the Russian Orthodox Church. First, it has been encouraging to learn that another church tradition has maintained such a strong practice of unaccompanied *a cappella* singing that the members generally have never questioned its validity, with only the exception described above. Secondly, studying the rich quantity of excellent choral music cultivated from the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church has inspired me to seek out, to develop, and to support gifted composers of *a cappella* church music with the goal of cultivating songs and hymns that are more worshipful. In doing this, perhaps our current songs should be re-evaluated for their appropriateness in worship. In this re-evaluation, questions should be asked about each song or hymn, such as, "Does the music appropriately express the meaning of the text, or does it detract from the meaning of the text?"

Finally and most importantly, this study has reminded me of the

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[23]Many of the newer "devotional" songs are learned aurally at Christian youth camps, youth rallies, or other youth gatherings, making it difficult to trace the actual composer. While some of these songs are very simplistic in terms of style, such as setting the male voices on the main theme or melody, with a strict echo sung by the women a few beats or measures later, other songs contain well-crafted melodies. While the harmonies are generally improvised by the congregation and are constantly changing, the expression of the text becomes very poignant, such as in "Create in me a clean heart, O God," a straight setting of Psalm 42:10–12, and "The Greatest Commands," which may be found in the hymn book *Songs of Faith and Praise* (ed. and arr. Alton H. Howard; West Monroe: Howard, 1994), no. 448.

overall reason that I should attend a worship service—to participate as a worshipper to God. Music should not be the central focus of our assemblies, but rather, worship. Certainly the use of great music enhances our participation, emotionally attracting or reminding us of who God is and how we want to please him, but when the music becomes the central focus of our assemblies, we have missed the point of worship altogether. When we approach our worship assemblies with an individual and collective passion focused on presenting an offering pleasing to God, we will experience the true joy of worship as God intended.

Churches of Christ Meet the Evangelicals
A Review Essay

Evangelicalism and The Stone-Campbell Movement. Edited by William R. Baker. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002. Pp. 256.

Reviewed by Allan J. McNicol

The term "evangelical" is nomenclature that has crept up on the average member of Churches of Christ. Yet there is scarcely a person among us who has not heard a sermon of Billy Graham, listened on the radio to James Dobson or R. C. Sproul, read a book by Tim LaHaye, or known someone who has gone to Willow Creek or Promise Keepers. All of these have one thing in common: they constitute a part of the spreading evangelical empire. Evangelicalism is an inter-connected network of para-church and trans-denominational entities and ventures (publishers, broadcasters, and educational institutions, etc.), with many different perspectives.

For its adherents, the unifying element or common denominator is that one has put his or her personal trust in Jesus, receiving both assurance of salvation from sin and going to heaven after death. Evangelicalism accommodates many different denominational expressions. What is important is the conviction of full assurance of salvation, coming not by any work of human merit, but through faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

For the evangelical, this perspective is the test of being a true Christian. Without this defining conviction, one's Christianity is suspect and probably apostate.

Evangelicalism as a Historical Entity

As primarily a movement rather than a denominational entity, evangelicalism to this day remains difficult to define historically. It seems to have had its origins in the Wesley revivals of the eighteenth century with their emphasis on a personal conversion to Christ. It is difficult to find anyone calling himself evangelical before that. Evangelicalism has been closely tied to revivalism, missions, and world evangelism ever since. Hence its name. To the evangelical it is imperative that one should inform others of the importance of conversion to Christ. Fine points of theology or denominational affiliation are subservient to this mandate.

In recent years a *battle royal* has broken out between two groups of evangelicals as to who best represents the heritage. One faction privileges the theological vision of Calvin (1509–1564). This faction focuses on the understanding that salvation is a work of God from beginning to end. The salvation of individuals has its origin in the elective purpose of God and was realized in the atonement on the cross (only for the elect). The Holy Spirit draws the elect irresistibly to Christ, although even these partisans would say that ultimately they are responsible to heed the call of the gospel and live a dutiful Christian life. Practically speaking, however, they claim that God's grace is irresistible to the elect and that such an act of the free will as making a personal decision for Christ, thus cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit, comes dangerously close to denying salvation through faith as a gift of God. All recognize that this group is a minority within the movement, but it is a significant minority because its adherents have supplied the bulk of evangelicalism's intellectual power through theologies and commentaries.

On the other hand, the opposing faction, going back to the Wesleys,

believes each person is free to accept or reject the salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross. Such people are often called Arminians.[1] Indeed it is incumbent upon the Christian to present the gospel to every person so that each one will make a personal decision in order to receive the grace of salvation. Needless to say this larger group within evangelicalism, which incorporates the great revivalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is much more proactive and visible in the areas of preaching and church growth. Evangelicals of this stripe readily state that the Holy Spirit acts in the process of conversion from beginning to end but not to the exclusion of human initiative and responsibility. Sometimes the debate between the two factions over the role of the Holy Spirit and human cooperation in salvation can devolve into semantics. Perhaps the comment of an earlier evangelical comes close to the truth: "An Evangelical preacher is a Calvinist on his knees but an Arminian in the pulpit."[2]

Evangelicalism has a number of features that are attractive to many in Churches of Christ. Pulpit ministers admire evangelistic programs such as Alpha Groups and Bible Study Fellowship. Since denominational affiliation is unimportant in such groups, it is easy for someone marrying outside our tradition to become involved in this network. And, all in all, since the cultural context encourages concern with fulfillment of personal needs over points of doctrine, the emphasis on individuals in evangelicalism fits the bill. It is no surprise that many in Churches of Christ now view themselves

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[1]Although predating the evangelical movement, the name comes from the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) who, although operating within the orbit of Calvinist theology, argued that election to salvation was conditional on human response. His views were condemned by later followers of Calvin at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619).

[2]Charles Simeon (1759–1836). The reference is from Gerald Bray, "Evangelicals, Salvation, and Church History" in *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future* (ed. Thomas P. Rausch; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 81.

as evangelicals. But this is not as simple an equation as one may think.

The Evangelicals and the Stone-Campbell Movement

Whether Arminian or Calvinist, all evangelicals agree on one point: salvation cannot be dependent on a sacrament of the church (i.e., baptism). Evangelicals unite in claiming that demanding baptism as a condition of salvation violates Ephesians 2:6, " By grace are you saved through faith *and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*" As is well known, the evangelical paradigm for salvation is Jesus' response to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43). Here the witness of Churches of Christ comes into tension with the evangelicals, if not open conflict. Can a fellowship that teaches that baptism is essential for salvation call itself evangelical?

This is at the heart of the task that the writers of *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement* (ESCM) take up. The occasion for most of the essays in the book was sessions at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, where from 1996–2000 a special purpose group was convened. Focusing on the paradigm of conversion, scholars from both Christian Churches (Independent) and Churches of Christ (but none from the Disciples of Christ) discussed such things as the role of faith, the Holy Spirit, and baptism in the conversion process. The general goal was to find points of common ground between the Stone-Campbell Movement and evangelicals, as well as locating areas of disagreement.

One pleasing outcome was the close cooperation and general coherence in theological positions between scholars in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Basic differences remain between the two groups over how silence in Scripture should be understood in matters of worship and church doctrine, but these were not central to the discussion. Regarding the conversion process, despite their different pilgrimages throughout the twentieth century, both groups formed a solid phalanx in defense of the original insights of the nineteenth-century Restorationist positions.

On the issue of the relationship between the Stone-Campbell Movement and the evangelicals, however, the results are less salutary. Ironically, during the years that this dialogue continued among scholars, members of the Stone-Campbell Movement increasingly formed common bonds with the evangelicals. They feel comfortable being around them and are not afraid to say they are evangelical and a functionional and contributing part of this considerable community. For example, Max Lucado, evangelist of a Church of Christ in San Antonio, is one of the most popular evangelical authors and lecturers.

As Richard Hughes and others have pointed out, sociological factors are in place to ensure that many of our people are more and more comfortable with the evangelicals. Our children make friends with them at Navigators and other youth-related events in the public schools. And, as adults we join in resisting both the ever-advancing march of secularism in our major intellectual centers and the moral pollutions of the popular culture. Add to this a common respect for biblical authority and it is easy to see why we have much in common. But are these shared concerns sufficient grounds for us to seek recognition as a part of the evangelical community? Surely not. After all, we share many similar concerns with conservative Roman Catholics! Here we come to the crux of the matter.

Can we be active participants in evangelical culture without abandoning the clear biblical basis of our distinctive beliefs and practices that have defined us as a fellowship? This reviewer is not sanguine that this can be done. What we are witnessing in Churches of Christ is a community bent on rushing into evangelicalism, while a few scholars sit around parsing the theological differences in irenic armchair discussions.

And even in these essays there is an indication that irenic discussion can sometimes lead to important equivocations. Take for example a comment by the editor:

> Nevertheless, despite the careful analysis of baptism in all seven articles, not one author states that baptism is essential for salvation, a common slogan only a generation ago. Not one author minimizes the role of faith in Jesus or the grace of God for salvation. If anything, these principles are emphasized in recognition that Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement leaders in the past made baldly unbiblical remarks along these lines (p. 237).

To be sure, the editor balances these comments in the next paragraph with commendations of the articles by Hicks and Cottrell which are very much in the mainstream of our thinking on baptism. But the impression remains that if only we would keep engaging in an irenic discussion with the evangelicals we could arrive at common ground and find closure in the truth. More likely is a full scale embrace of evangelicalism by our constituency which will force preachers and, finally, our scholars to accept the theology. Indications are that this is well underway.

There is precious little in evangelical theology today that would lead one to conclude it will be otherwise. Certainly, the responses in ESCM from the evangelical side by Blomberg, House, and Grenz are enough to convince one that evangelical scholars are not going to change their positions. And how could they? The *raison d'etre* of evangelical theology is the conviction that salvation is based on the penal substitutionary death of Jesus received through the gift of faith alone apart from any ordinance or sacrament. To teach otherwise would be to sacrifice the soul of evangelicalism. Never mind as Cottrell notes (p. 84) that before Zwingli's pronouncements in 1523–1525 practically no one in the history of Christendom excluded baptism for the forgiveness of sins from a direct connection with salvation.

It doesn't have to be this way. Ironically, while many of our church leaders are capitulating to the evangelicals, this is taking place at a time when international biblical scholarship and ecumenical Christianity is affirming more strongly than ever the central importance of believer's baptism in the ancient church in the conversion process. This reviewer has spent three decades teaching in a school that has a considerable evangelical student

population. Regularly, evangelical students are surprised to discover the central importance of baptism and the church for all aspects of Christian life in the New Testament. With an enormous number deprived of this witness, is this the time to be equivocal and in retreat with respect to our historic stance?

Conclusion

Despite the present infatuation with things evangelical, perhaps a word of caution is in order. Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement represent two different theological traditions. It is not possible to reconcile them fully any more than it is possible to reconcile say, the Reformed Tradition and Eastern Orthodoxy. The theological center that salvation is based on individual faith (trust) alone in Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross is such an essential identifying mark of the evangelical movement that no serious deviation from it can be countenanced. Neither the idea of salvation by faith alone nor the view of the atonement as penal substitution for our sins are identifying marks of Churches of Christ. Our polar star is the restoration of the common faith of the ancient church, not least the confession of baptism for the forgiveness of sins, as the basis for the unity of all believers. This fundamental presupposition leads us to a very different understanding of the Christian faith.

Nevertheless, those scholars among us who choose to identify with the Evangelical Theological Society are to be commended for initiating the discussion that has now found its way into this book. We trust that they are aware that more and more of our people are considering themselves as consciously evangelical; in this context such a discussion is overdue. Now will our scholars continue to do the hard work necessary to engage the evangelical establishment from the perspective of a full biblical witness?

The essays in this book represent a tentative first step in dialogue between two major constituencies on the American religious scene. As in

any first step there is always a lot of excitement about breaking old barriers and moving to new vistas of understanding. The evangelicals are good people, and one cannot but be appreciative of the sense of warmth, genuine spirituality, and evangelical fervor generated in these circles. But some cautionary signs are in order as we move ahead with the dialogue. For starters, there ought to be a realization that serious dialogue with evangelicals will entail not only discussions about the nature of conversion, but conversation about other doctrines such as original sin and the nature of the atonement. And here we run up against another cautionary sign. Evangelical thinkers such as Mark Noll and David Wells regularly express their dismay at the shallowness of much of evangelical theological thinking, which is often a mile wide and an inch deep. It would be good to have constructive dialogue with solid evangelical thinkers. One wonders, however, since many of our present amalgamations and alliances are being driven by mere prudential concerns for acceptance in a broader community that has widespread visibility, whether the voices of the scholars will be heard.

Gerhard Lohfink. *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God.* Translated by Linda Maloney. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Reviewed by David Worley

In his exasperation over the divisions between believers 200 year ago, Thomas Campbell would have found a kindred spirit in Gerhard Lohfink, who also yearns for the unity of the Spirit. Though not as a *Declaration and Address*, Lohfink has written a kind of sequel to his popular *Jesus and Community* (German original, 1982). Building on decades-long conversations with his brother, the Old Testament scholar Norbert Lohfink, and with Rudolph Pesch, a New Testament scholar and fellow member of the Katholische Integrierte Community that Lohfink joined in 1986, Lohfink passionately presents through scripture the unexpected unfolding of God's designs through a particular people he has chosen. Though not presenting a pattern of church life to try to duplicate, Lohfink's work, nevertheless, is an kind of exhortation for the church today to understand itself through the full richness of scripture as the people of God. God's work continues.

Others such as Ben Meyer and Tom Wright have been reminding us of God's plan for the restoration of Israel in scripture, that we should understand ourselves as the *ekklesia* of God with a history running long before Pentecost. Through a readable, engaging translation, Lohfink, however, has offered a rich feast, insightful, and moving. Our collective breath is taken away by what God has done to reconcile the world to himself through his servant Israel. How patient on our clocks God has been. And it has been God's work. From infertility to second sons, from families to monarchies, through six flags over Palestine, to 12 non-professionals, God effects a pilgrimage of the nations, to the praise of his glory.

With such ease, Lohfink reminds us of God's way with his people in Deuteronomy and through Isaiah which illuminate our Lord's life and

purpose and our purpose as the church today. The Exodus and Sinai are not just events of Israel past; they explain the gospel story and are our story as God's people. Jesus' baptism, his testing, his feedings, his exorcisms, his signs, his meal, his parables, his teaching, all these are explained as the presence of the Kingdom which had been anticipated.

Aside from a few unnecessary distractions (appeals to evolution, certain historical reconstructions of Israel's origin, infant baptism apologia), Lohfink's book is thoroughly commendable. It functions as a warning akin to Paul's in Romans 11 about the wild shoot becoming arrogant. More positively, it provokes awe that we have been called through the gospel to a unity of the Spirit (as Father with Son) through which the world may know that the Father sent the Son into the world, to the praise of his glory.

Obiter Dicta

Baptism

For Paul, as for all early Christian teachers, baptism was highly significant as the initiation into the Body of Christ. . . . The position was simple: the Church was a society with its own forms of organized life, and it had always recognized faith by administering baptism, and thereby conferring membership of the Body. Hence Paul could appeal directly to baptism as a fact with a generally recognized significance, and draw from it conclusions regarding what entrance into the people of God involved.

C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*

"When our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he meant the entire life of the believer to be repentance.": "Every day, every hour, what do I do to be a Christian?" asked Luther. And he answered, "I creep back to baptism, I go to the beginning and start again." . . . For what is in the baptism that I creep back to is nothing short of the Kingdom of God, the eschaton, my perfection. But I do not arrive at that perfection by a journey of self-realization. I arrive at that perfection by never budging from baptism, by never budging from my starting point.

Robert W. Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*

With baptism the Christian walks "in newness of life," and this new life begins in the context of the fellowship of believers (cf. Rom 6:4). Baptism makes the baptized men and women Christ's property and incorporates them into his body, that is, the church of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12–13). . . . Baptism therefore initiates for Christians a status of becoming, and this status lasts until the parousia (cf. 1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Cor 15:51).

Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification*

Church

Though the Bible seldom uses the word that we translate "church," the Scriptures do make clear that we weren't made part of the Body of Christ for what we can get out of it.

Marva J. Dawn, *Is It A Lost Cause?*

Evangelicals, Truth, and Postmodern Religions

Today, evangelicals should be concerned not only because the secular world has opted for the centrality of experience and power over and above truth, but because some evangelicals are being tempted to do the same! If we think we can offer an experience that will compete effectively with other postmodern religious experiences, we tread ground alien to the New Testament. Paul never argued that Christ could top the mystery religions and other ecstatic cults in terms of religious experience. He offered the truth—Jesus Christ and him crucified. This was the power of God to which he wanted them exposed (1 Cor 2:1–5).

Dennis McCallum in *The Death of Truth*

Glow of Fellowship

Nothing is easier than to stimulate the glow of fellowship in a few days of life together, but nothing is more fatal to the sound, sober brotherly fellowship of everyday life. . . . We have no claim on such experiences, and we do not live with other Christians for the sake of acquiring them. It is not the experience of Christian brotherhood, but the solid and certain faith in brotherhood that holds us together. . . . We are bound together by faith, not experience.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Habit

Most of us eat, sleep, work, make love out of habit. We habitualize certain actions because we think they are important. Most Christians go to church out of habit. Contrary to popular belief, their habit in no way minimizes the importance of this experience, in fact, it confirms its importance. . . . our deepest feelings, our most important values and commitments, must be constantly reiterated in our lives. Therefore we do them out of habit.

William Willimon, *With Glad and Generous Hearts*

Happiness

The mistake many people make is identifying happiness with certain moments of their lives and doubting its capacity to stand the test of time. They would like time to have a stop at certain perfect moments of life, seeing in the

clock a menace to their fragile joys. Happiness is for them the paradise lost forever in the past. Now nothing is more mistaken than this. For the various happinesses with which life is visited and which are graces from God have no purpose but to awaken a taste for happiness that time alone can deepen . . . And after having brought us to love God in his gifts, it brings us to love him for himself.

Jean Danielou, *The Scandal of Truth*

Interest in Religion

[I]f a nation tries to cultivate religion for the sake of regaining prosperity, the resulting brand of religion will be addressed to a very odd God indeed. There is said to be a revival just now of what is called "interest" in religion. Even governments are inclined to allot broadcasting time to religious propaganda, and to order national Days of Prayer. However admirable these activities may be one has a haunting feeling that God's acquaintance is being cultivated because he might come in useful.

Dorothy L. Sayers, *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World*

New Age Religion

[W]hether New Age religion is a barrier to genuine spiritual enlightenment is a question appropriate for theologians rather than social scientists. After all, social science is incapable of determining the authentic spiritual needs of human beings. The critics are right, however, in one regard. New Age religion . . . does not do the things that traditional religion does. It does not bind people to a larger group or society nor require them to subject themselves to a higher authority. Indeed, it does just the opposite. . . . New Agers mostly reject the social world and any kind of authority beyond the self.

James Tucker, "New Age Religion and the Cult of the Self," *Society*, 39

Pastoral Counseling

We do not really have to get into the depths of the personality every time, even on important issues. When somebody shows up and says, "Pastor, should I leave my spouse?" the pastor ought to be able to answer automatically, "No."

[T]he notion of the counselor as fundamentally listener and of the counselee as fundamentally speaker is exactly backwards. What ails the counselee is that he cannot hear, and what the pastor can do is so to speak that the counselee can in fact bear to hear.

[T]he logic of the position I have espoused dictates that the final goal of pastoral counseling is to enable people to pray. I do not mean that every session must end, "Let us pray"—although I think pastors could well say, "Let us pray" a good deal oftener than they now do. But the goal that swings before me must indeed be that the person shall be able to hear the words that the community always speaks to him or her as the word of God . . . and answer freely because it is the natural thing to do.

Robert W. Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*

Resurrection Appearances

I see the appearance events as resulting from some kind of temporary intersection between the worlds of the old and new creations, meeting places between the risen life of Christ, which is the seminal event giving birth to the new creation, and the continuing life of the disciples in the world of the old creation. . . . The empty tomb also tells us something of the connection between these two worlds. It implies that the Lord's risen body is his dead body, transmuted and glorified, confirming the insight that the new creation springs from the redemption of the old creation. The empty tomb is of great theological significance, for it testifies that in Christ there is a destiny for matter as well as for humanity.

John Polkinghorne, "Opening Windows onto Reality,"
Theology Today

Resurrection of Christ

The Resurrection of Christ means . . . that Christians do not inherit their task from Christ, they share it with him. We are not successors of Jesus, but his companions. That is the measure both of our privilege and our responsibility. The essential nature of the Church is that so long as the world endures there should be in the world an organism which is truly responsible to the motions and impulses of Christ's mind and heart and will, an organism completely expendable in the carrying out of his purposes.

T. W. Manson, *The Servant Messiah*

Secularizing the Church

The Protestant churches were once the established religion of this nation . . . [T]heir establishment . . . set the moral agenda of society. Since the Civil War, the Constantinian settlement has been breaking up even in this nation. . . . And . . . churches have taken a desperately wrong tack: they have tried to hold their social position by secularizing themselves. If the society would not let the churches set its moral agenda, they would ask the society to set theirs. The disaster of this tactic is now plain . . . We should not now repeat the mistake with the language of our worship. The chief thing we must do

to avoid it is remember which God we want to worship.

Robert W. Jenson, "Joining the eternal Conversation," *Touchstone*

Spontaneity

Show me a Christian who only goes to church when he or she feels a deep, spontaneous, overwhelming need to praise God, and I will show you a rather weak, insubstantial disciple.

William Willimon, *With Glad and Generous Hearts*

Worship

The polarization over worship services . . . is the result of very different understandings of the nature of the service and very different criteria in planning. What are the guidelines for our satisfying the consumer demand of people who measure us against other forms of amusement? Is our service designed for "seekers" who visit the assembly?

With his reminder of the central Christian convictions in 1 Timothy 2:3–7, Paul intends for Christians to place their worship in the larger context of God's plan for the world. The criterion for public worship . . . is neither the taste of the worshipers nor the demands of outsiders. . . . Paul challenges us to place Christian worship in the context of God's plan for the world and its salvation.

James Thompson, *Equipped for Change*

Youth Groups

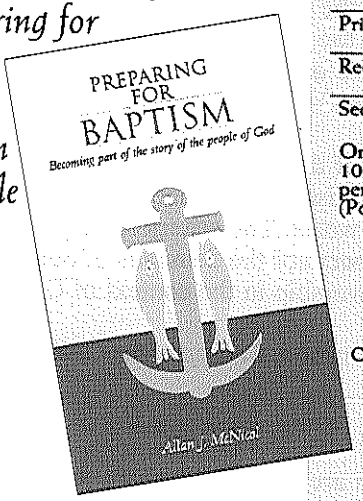
Young people who are bored with their youth groups are often the victims of programs that attempt to compete with the kinds of fun that the local high school or athletic club can provide. Let us give youth instead what the world cannot give them—Bible study, meaningful involvement in service projects with definite Christian orientation, participation with their families or other elders in joint efforts to relieve suffering, Christian camps . . . How much do our churches engage in actual *Christian* formation experiences for young people, or are we letting our children be formed primarily by television and by their peers?

Marva Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?*

"An engaging style... in simple language.

The time is past that we could assume that our children would learn the basics of the Christian faith simply by osmosis. We must be more intentional about grounding them in the faith. Preparing for Baptism will make this task easier. Written in an engaging style and in simple language. I recommend it highly."

Ron Highfield
Pepperdine University



Written by
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Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 19