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Reformed Worship 5

An introduction to the Reformed theology of worship
Louis Igou Hodges, Professor of Systematic Theology, Columbia International University

A History of Psalm-Singing 10

A review of psalm-singing from the Reformation to the present
Earl Linderman, Pastor of New Sterling and Elk Shoals ARP Churches, Stony Point, NC

Implicit and Explicit Messages 15

A look at the interplay between implicit and explicit communication in worship
Robert J. Cara, Assistant Professor of New Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC

Where One Thing Leads to Another 22

Building thematic unity and flow into a service of worship
Clyde T. McCants, Pastor of Bethel ARP Church, Winnsboro, SC

The Event in Worship 30

Developing a sense of expectancy about experiencing God in worship
James L. Klukow, Pastor of Parkway Presbyterian Church, Orlando, FL

More Depth, or Something 36

How hymns make a unique contribution to worship
Robert P. Glick, W. Parker Bowie Associate Professor of Worship and Music, Erskine Theological Seminary

Warming Up the Frozen Chosen 40

Looking at the "Praise and Worship" movement from a Presbyterian worship perspective
R. J. Gore, Associate Professor of Theology, Erskine Theological Seminary

The St. Matthew Passion Today 47

A review of "the greatest piece of music ever written"
Barton Swaim, Master of Divinity student at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC

Worship That Brings Them Back 50

Dispelling the myths regarding contemporary Christian worship
Boyce Wilson, Pastor of Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, Rock Hill, SC

Also Inside

Introduction	2
Let Us Hear From You	21
How Faith and Practice Works	29
A Review of Igou Hodges' <i>Reformed Theology Today</i>	54

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Introduction

Joel Gillespie

I was born in 1957, having had no say in the matter whatsoever. By the time I was seven I had my first Beatles 45. While I was groovin' as a child and as a pre-teen with the Beatles and the Rascals and Cream, I was also being dragged to church. I can't remember much about church except Easter-egg hunts, trying to tie a tie, and that horrid organ music! Needless to say, I didn't want to be there, and I had no idea why anybody else wanted to be there. None of the kids' parents whom I knew at the church had anything I could then or would now recognize in retrospect as a vibrant faith. Many have indeed come to faith in the subsequent years. But back then, well, you went to church, you said the occasional prayer at special meals, and you went about your business. So I had the Beatles, and I had the church organ. No contest!

I was and am a Baby Boomer, birth class of 1957. I have heard that us '57ers are the biggest Baby Boomer class of all. I turned 13 in 1970 (what else needs to be said?). By the time I was 16, I had bought 200 albums, purchased a cool stereo with my own earnings, and been to well over a dozen rock concerts.

Then my friend asked me to a youth group meeting at Trinity Episcopal Church. The girls were good looking and the skits were hilarious. The teaching was about Jesus, was taken from the Bible, and was relevant and thought provoking. To top it all off, the music was superb! Four or five guitarists were lined up, playing in synch, some picking and some strumming, while the 50 or 60 kids sang loudly and with meaning songs which seemed to express a real and vibrant faith – and which were delightful and fun to sing.

Like a zillion other lost class-of-'57ers from cities all over the Southeast, I went to a weekend retreat at Windy Gap, had a great time, and late one night in my bed asked Jesus to "come into my heart," whatever exactly that meant. I guess that at that time He did, since I immediately stopped a terrible habit of lewd and profane language, started to like being around other Christians, and discovered to my heart's unending delight C. S. Lewis' science fiction trilogy.

Thank you Calvin Marshall, Billy Peebles, John Yates, and all the rest of you who loved me to Christ. Thank you.

It took quite a while for me to "fill out the picture," to begin to "get it together" as a Christian, or even to have genuine assurance that I was a Christian. And I grew a little weary of the Christian retreat thing, tired of the silliness, and tired of "Do Lord" and "Pass It On" and "Seek Ye First." Even as I went on to Clemson and tried to be a Christian there, I was frustrated, and still pretty much a lost and mixed up class-of-'57er.

My First Hymn-Sing

At English L'Abri God filled in the missing colors, and understanding and peace came into my Christian life. At L'Abri we would often worship together before or after a meal. I remember no guitars or pianos, just voices. At L'Abri I first learned hymns. The hymn-music genre was pretty much unrelated to the music on my records and eight-track tapes. It was also different from the Christian youth group music. But the hymns well expressed the growing faith within me, and I loved singing them. If I close my eyes and concentrate, I think I can still hear us all singing "Praise to the Lord the Almighty" in the big manor house dining room at English L'Abri.

Then I came home to Columbia and began looking for a place to attend church. Christ Fellowship was a store-front type church started a few years before by a maverick seminary professor out of a group of Christian rock-band members. By the time I arrived the band had broken up and many of the original church members had moved on. Thus, we had a pretty traditional, though informal worship, with piano as accompaniment. Hymns, as opposed to praise choruses or Christian camp songs, were about all we sang. In my year and a half there I came to memorize many hymns.

That year I ran into the Church of Christ version of the "Regulative Principle" – no mu-

Like a zillion other lost class-of-'57ers from cities all over the Southeast, I went to a weekend retreat at Windy Gap, had a great time, and late one night in my bed asked Jesus to "come into my heart," whatever exactly that meant.

sical instruments please while worshipping God! I tried hard to appreciate the logic of the “only that which is prescribed is allowed” rule. At the time I did not see that the rule itself, as stated, was prescribed, so I kept singing the piano-accompanied hymns with a clear conscience. Most of the hymns which I now have memorized I memorized then.

But in some ways I wasn't worshipping as a whole person. The musical genres that over the years had simply become a part of me were absent in my worship of God. I loved the hymns, but I was singing someone else's – some other culture's – music!

Over the next few years I “explored” Christian worship. I discovered charismatic worship, black gospel worship, and folk worship. I loved each in its own way. Each seemed to connect with a part of me that the other did not. I still hated organs, though. There was no connection there.

A New Experience

Despite the constant invitations from friends, it took me months to get up the nerve to attend First Presbyterian in Columbia. Something about going to a large, staid, affluent, downtown – and what I thought was a *mainline* – church, was just more than I could imagine. But finally, after several false alarms in which we would drive up to the parking lot only to chicken out and head off to another church, we finally did it. My wife and I slid our non-air conditioned little Civic in between the fancy cars, found the nursery for our 1-year-old, and slipped into the back row of the sanctuary. I couldn't believe it – the place was packed! I was quietly talking to my wife about how I felt like a fish out of water, when the organ blasted the “all rise” intro to the doxology. My heart lept from my chest. I thought I had been shot. As I tried to catch my breath, the congregation dutifully and joyfully rose. Finally I managed to stand for the “Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” part. Then, mostly recovered from the shock, I sat down.

Soon the choir arose to sing. I felt like I was in a music appreciation class. “Now choir, would you do an aria for the boys and girls?” My wife showed me the words in the bulletin

so I could follow along. The words were biblical, solid, and worshipful. They were words of faith, and they expressed my faith.

Sermon time finally came around. At this point, I was glad for the experience, but would probably not have returned to First Presbyterian Church. Then Pastor Knecht started to preach, and it was as if God Himself were speaking right to me. I was hooked. We never attended any other church in Columbia.

And oddly, as time went on, I began to appreciate both the quiet solemnity and awesome majesty of the organ. I learned to value the offertories and the oratorios, which, among other things, made me feel a connection with the Church of other ages. I will be honest. Had the youth group I attended in high school played an organ, and had the youth leaders sung classical oratorios, I never would have returned. And I understand why many Baby Boomers like myself, who were dragged while young kids to mostly-dead churches, cannot to this day make themselves sing a hymn, and cannot bear to hear an organ. The associations are too strong, and too negative. (I will grant that many other Baby Boomers, when they get the urge to go back to church, want at first to hear the familiar worship forms of their youth, for their hankering for church is as much nostalgia as anything else.)

But the music at First Presbyterian grew on me, as did the quiet and reverent mood of worship. There I was – worshipping in Columbia in a mainline-turned-evangelical church with a huge organ. Who would have thought it!

God has given me appreciation for all kinds of ways of “singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” unto Him. I am deeply grateful for this. I believe that I can enter gladly into worship in almost any church that is faithful to the Scriptures, and which seeks to bring honor and praise to the Triune God. What matters to me now is not so much style but the orientation and focus of worship. Does it exalt the Lord Jesus Christ or elevate people? Does it lead me out of myself and toward God, or does it encourage me to sit back and be entertained?

I think that when it comes to worship style issues I am flexible and open. I want to be. I suppose there are those who would find me too open, at least too open for a “Presbyterian.” There are many today who are calling the “way-

When the organ blasted the “all rise” intro to the doxology, my heart lept from my chest. I thought I had been shot.

ward" Presbyterian flock back to a truer "Presbyterian" worship. At first notice, that call to me is like water off a duck's back, for I do not have a sense of personal identity as being a "Presbyterian." And it often appears to me that the call to a truer "Presbyterian" worship is really a call to a worship form culturally contextualized to, and stuck in, a bygone era.

But as I have listened to many other of my Reformed and Presbyterian brethren, what I am really hearing is a desire – even a hunger and a passion – for a proper God-focused and Christ-centered worship. What I detect is a yearning to be given over in worship, personally and corporately, to the God of the Bible. So when I hear folks speak of "Presbyterian" worship, I know now that they mean "biblical" worship, for this is what they yearn for really. And I have discovered that, historically, Reformed worship seeks to be, and is indeed, deeply biblical in its focus.

As a "recent implant," I can feel a bit disconnected from many whose roots go deeper than mine into the soil of Presbyterian tradition. But as I stop and listen to my brethren, I find they have much to teach me about a proper biblical theology of worship. This gives focus to my work of service as a worshipper, and as a worship planner.

God calls me as His child to worship Him. But it is the *me* that must do the worshipping. And the *me*, among other things, is Baby Boomer, birth class of '57. And so now I seek to wed the "who I am" with the "what God wants." This is a learning process, an exciting process, and sometimes a difficult process, but a process that has been helped along considerably by the articles in this issue of *Faith and Practice*.

This issue of *Faith and Practice* is about worship. Although a discussion of worship could have a number of different possible focuses of concern, given the expansive nature of the subject, this issue of *Faith and Practice* concentrates on the purpose and style of our corporate worship as the people of God.

Igou Hodges starts us off with an overview of the Reformed theology of worship. I think this article will help you put things into perspective, and help you get the lay of the land.

Earl Linderman follows with an historical

overview of the psalm-singing tradition in the ARP Church. It has excited me to read this, since we at Covenant Fellowship in Greensboro are committed to including psalm-singing in our worship, and are even writing our own music for various Psalms. Mr. Linderman's article "connects" me up with a long-standing tradition which I am growing ever more to appreciate.

Next Bob Cara gets us thinking with his analysis of the various messages coming to us in a service of worship. Bob, I was doing just fine, and you came along and made me have to think!

All of us have attended worship services that seemed disjointed and unfocused, and as a result we left not having worshipped as we would have wanted. Clyde McCants leads us through a discussion of how to build thematic and Scriptural unity into a service of worship.

Sometimes we go to worship expecting nothing, and we get nothing in return. Jim Klukow helps us to anticipate God's active presence as we gather as His people to worship Him.

Next, Bob Glick shows us how and why it is that hymns make a unique and invaluable contribution to our worship of God. So fellow Baby Boomers, let us not throw away our hymns! They do something that nothing else can do.

On the other hand, R. J. Gore shows us how we can understand contemporary worship movements as containing elements consistent with the best of the Presbyterian worship heritage.

Barton Swaim then opens up for us the beauty and splendor of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. We may not sing this in a worship service, but we can worship as we listen to this most beautiful piece of music, written by a fellow worshipper of our God.

Then Boyce Wilson gives practical advice about how to begin to incorporate contemporary worship elements into the worship of your church. You will appreciate his wisdom and gentleness of approach.

And finally, Jack Whytock brings to us a review of Louis Igou Hodges' *Reformed Theology Today*, from which we have excerpted Mr. Hodges' opening article. It is my hope that *Reformed Theology Today* will find a place in your library.

Do enjoy this issue of *Faith and Practice*!

But as I have listened to many of my Reformed and Presbyterian brethren, what I am really hearing is a desire – even a hunger and a passion – for a proper God-focused and Christ-centered worship.

Reformed Worship

Louis Igou Hodges

The following article, outlining a Reformed theology of worship, is taken from Louis Igou Hodges' *Reformed Theology Today*, which is reviewed at the end of this issue of *Faith and Practice* by Jack Whytock. Mr. Hodges' chapter 15, entitled simply "Worship," has been slightly edited and modified for this issue of *Faith and Practice*.

Simply said, the worship of the church should be its central activity. Every theological doctrine should lead into adoration and praise, and every facet of polity ought either directly or indirectly to facilitate worship. In a real sense every part of both the personal life of the believer and the corporate existence of the church should be regarded as an act of worship. However, the impetus and pattern for this way of life is learned in the formal public worship of the congregation. Worship is of supreme significance for the church because it glorifies God (Psa. 96:8-9), it is an act of gratitude to Him (I Pet. 2:5), it is commanded in Scripture (Heb. 10:25), and it is a means of spiritual edification and renewal (I Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16-17).¹

Theology for Worship

The instinct and the context for worship ought to gush from the theology of the church. Theology is so intimately related to worship that it not only supports worship; it is fundamentally an act of worship.² While the propositional character of theological language must not be dismissed, at the same time theology articulates the personal relationship of an individual to his Creator and Redeemer and should therefore be an expression of love and praise.³ This personal dimension means that the emotive content of Scripture cannot be ignored. It also opens up imaginative and creative possibilities for the theologian.⁴ Paul demonstrates this reality as he pauses, in the midst of his most systematic epistle and at the end of a difficult

theological argument, to voice one of his most profound doxologies (Rom. 11:33-36). Similarly in Calvin's *Institutes* it is as though the author's spiritual fervor breathes on every page. Proper theological activity therefore awakens, motivates, and compels men and women to bow in worship and adoration before the One from Whom, through Whom, and to Whom are all things (Rom. 11:36).

As the church offers a doctrinally informed and theologically prompted response to God, its worship will contain a number of elements which God requires for acceptable worship. It is presupposed that true worship will arise from a church which is organized and governed by biblical principles, including discipline, and from a church body which has unity in Christ.⁵

Worship Through Jesus Christ

First, God will be worshiped as the Triune God through the Second Person, Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator. Jesus Christ in all the fullness of His being and work must be the decisive center of all liturgical theology. Since every part of worship grows out of His great self-offering, His sacrifice must be prominent in all services of worship. A complete liturgy will also include reminders of His glorious return which will bring God's salvation to its magnificent conclusion.⁶

Worship in Spirit

Second, God must be worshiped in the Spirit (John 4:24). Because such worship is beautiful, whatever aesthetical elements facilitate spiritual worship should be encouraged, while anything that distracts from the centrality of God ought to be eliminated. It is the Spirit who, in the various parts of a service, transforms human acts into the true worship of God. The Spirit is not at man's disposal to be manipulated, but He acts sovereignly to make God's presence actual in the experience of faithful worshippers. Furthermore, since the Spirit must not be

The instinct and the context for worship ought to gush from the theology of the church.

quenched or grieved by sin, it is appropriate for each service of worship to begin with the corporate confession of sin.⁷

Worship in Truth

Third, Jesus indicates that God must be worshipped in truth (John 4:24). For this reason Calvin insisted on the biblical and theological integrity of worship. He resisted human innovations and insisted that because of man's sinfulness, he can worship God only as he is guided by the Scriptures. True worship means that God must be approached and honored in a manner thoroughly consistent with His own self-revelation. While Luther permitted in worship whatever is not specifically forbidden in the biblical text, Calvin followed what since has become known as the "Regulative Principle": only what Scripture explicitly prescribes should be included. While this rule, which is the standard for Reformed churches, allows for a degree of variety, it means that those elements mandated by Scripture must be included in worship.⁸

Intelligible Worship

Fourth, true worship implies intelligibility. If worship is to be a total personal act, it must proceed from the understanding. Therefore there should be instruction and the expounding of the significance of every part of Christian worship. Intelligibility also requires that worship be in the language of the people and implies a literate congregation.⁹

Worship for His Glory

Fifth, worship is giving unto the Lord the glory due unto His name (Psa. 96:8). Since worship is for His glory, the primary movement is Godward. There should therefore be conveyed in worship a sense of His overwhelming greatness and mystery as well as His gracious character. Those present would sense both His distance and His nearness. Though there are important results in the lives and experiences of worshippers as God meets their needs, these effects are secondary. Worship should never be regarded as getting or receiving from God, but rather as an offering to Him of spiritual sacrifices. These

obligations include praise, good works, monetary offerings (Heb. 13:15-16), and the dedication of the worshipper's entire personality to God (Rom. 12:1). In fact all psalms, hymns, prayers, and gifts should be signs and tokens in a worship service of the self-offering of the believer's whole life before God.¹⁰

Worship as Dialogue

Sixth, worship is a dialogue in which God addresses His people and they respond in reverence and obedience.¹¹ No part of the service – whether music, prayer, or preaching – is primarily for personal enjoyment. In each activity either the voice of God is heard or His people respond to what He has said. It is imperative that God's people wait in hushed silence with a readiness to receive what He would communicate. In the Reformation, the active participation of the people in worship, which had been lost in the Roman Catholic Church, was to a great extent restored. Sadly, however, not much of the element of human response remains among Westerners with their spectator mentality.¹² The sense of dialogue needs to be rekindled in worship.¹³

Well-ordered Worship

Seventh, every part of the worship service should be carried out in a well-ordered and purposeful manner (1 Cor. 14:40). Whenever a group of people worship together, some liturgy or ritual is both inevitable and essential, whether the structure is articulated or not. Because the New Testament provides no fixed order of service, there have been different liturgies in Reformed churches. However Reformed worship could be accurately described as semi-liturgical; that is, it falls between the formal "High Church" order and the often careless informality of many Protestant bodies, particularly in the American setting.¹⁴

Worship for Edification

Eighth, there is the rule that everything is to be done for edification. Nothing ought to be received or practiced which does not produce greater spiritual maturity in God's people. Thus

Worship should never be regarded as getting or receiving from God, but rather as an offering to Him of spiritual sacrifices.

there is a pragmatic criterion: true worship should include that which increases love, faith, and loyalty to God as well as love for one's neighbor.¹⁵ Edification also requires complete sincerity and rules out all pretense or suggestion of unreality. That which is untruthful can never edify the soul.¹⁶

Simple Worship

Ninth, Reformed worship is remarkable for its simplicity. The Reformers repudiated much of what was being employed in the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church of their day, including the rich vestments of the clergy, the ornate trappings of the sanctuaries, and the elaborate rituals. Certainly Calvin was not without aesthetic appreciation, but he was motivated by the conviction that worship must honor God and not aim primarily at pleasing man's sense of beauty, especially since the latter objective had led to degeneration of worship in the past. Calvin encouraged an economical style of worship, without pomp and ostentation. Characteristically, therefore, buildings used by Reformed churches are not cluttered with nonessentials which easily detract from the spiritual significance of worship. They are plain, providing the context where worship in spirit and truth can ascend from God's people through their Great High Priest to their Creator and Redeemer.¹⁷

Worship, containing these elements, will center around a number of specific activities. The preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments are always of fundamental importance as means of grace by which God is known and the believer's union with Christ is intensified. The centrality of the word and the sacraments ought also to be reflected in the design of the sanctuary. The pulpit and the communion table belong together in the center of the platform, not separated as is customary in Anglo-Catholic structures where the table is placed between a reading lectern and a preaching pulpit. Accompanying the word and the sacraments will be the practice of prayer. It has been observed that whenever prayer is offered, the church is engaging in Reformed theology, acknowledging that which may be denied in its theology or praxis.¹⁸ Though God has sover-

eignly decreed everything which will ever take place, He has ordained prayer as a means by which He accomplishes His ends.¹⁹ The Christian not only has the assurance that God hears the petitions of His people; prayer is also part of the Christian's identity. In fact, prayerlessness indicates an absence of spiritual life.²⁰ Christian prayer, the only prayer which God promises to answer, is founded on His revelation in Scripture, particularly the model prayer ("The Lord's Prayer") in which Jesus demonstrates the proper content of our petitions: it includes adoration, thanksgiving for God's gifts and provisions, confession of sin, and submission to God's reign.²¹ It is also intentionally directed to God through Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. Though God may be addressed in any tongue, public prayer must always be in the language of those present so that they may understand and participate.²²

The Praying and Singing Church

Because the praying church is also the singing church, music has also been an integral part of Reformed worship, as it was in both the worship of Israel and the apostolic church. For Calvin and his colleagues hymns used in corporate worship had to meet three requirements. First, they had to be faithful to the doctrinal teaching of Scripture, and not merely the expression of experience or tradition. For this reason many Scottish and Dutch hymnals have been dominated by metrical psalms and psalm paraphrases. Second, they had to magnify God, not just entertain. Thus hymns had to be God-centered and God-directed, not centered in human emotions or experience. Third, they had to be of the highest literary and musical quality. This demand for excellence is evidenced in Calvin's *Genevan Psalter*, composed with the help of Clement Marot, a poet, and Louis Bourgeois, a musician, which contained the finest hymns in the French language.²³

With the preaching of the word, the right administration of the sacraments, the practice of Christian prayer, and God-centered music, the church offers sacrifices of praise which are acceptable to God, and which magnify and exalt His name and His attributes. In so doing His people in turn are edified, encouraged, and spiri-

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tually strengthened. And, moreover, testimony is given to the surrounding world that God lives, reigns, and dwells among His redeemed people.

ENDNOTES

¹ Books on the Reformed concept of worship include the following: Andrew W. Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1939); Donald Macleod, *Presbyterian Worship: Its Meaning and Method* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965); Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); William Nicholls, *Jacob's Ladder: The Meaning of Worship* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958); James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968); Cecil Northcott, *Hymns in Christian Worship* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964); Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship That is Reformed According to the Scripture: Guides to the Reformed Tradition*, eds. John H. Leith and John W. Kuykendall (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984); Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come Let us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980); Frank J. Smith and David C. Lachman, *Worship in the Presence of God* (Greenville: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992); James R. Snyder, *The Hymn and Congregational Singing* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960); Stephen F. Winward, *The Reformation of Our Worship* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965). Also helpful is the periodical *Reformed Worship*, published by the Christian Reformed Church in North America (2850 Kalamazoo SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560-1433). Other helpful works which may be consulted include the following: David R. Breed, *The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn-Tunes* (New York: Revell, 1903); Scott F. Brenner, *The Art of Worship* (New York: Macmillan, 1961); Neville Clark, *Call to Worship* (London: SCM Press, 1960); L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution* (London: S.P.C.K., n.d.); Paul Waitman Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971); John Julian, ed., *Dictionary of Hymnology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892); William D. Maxwell, *Concerning Worship* (Lon-

don: Oxford University Press, 1948); Nathaniel Micklem, ed., *Christian Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Oswald Milligan, *The Ministry of Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941); C.F.D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964); John R.P. Sclater, *The Public Worship of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970); J. J. von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

² T. F. Torrance, in *A Calvin Treasury*, ed. W. F. Keesecker (London: SCM Press, 1968), VIII.

³ Frame, pp. 321-322.

⁴ Frame, p. 339. While Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* is lauded for its careful organization, logical argumentation, comprehensive documentation, and exegetical support, it has been criticized for a lack of feeling and not inspiring a sense of worship. See Bratt, p. 135. The glory and music of heaven ought to resound through the pages of a systematic theology. This deficiency in Berkhof is also to be found in many Reformed systematics. It is the occasion for the charge that many theologians are sound – sound asleep.

⁵ See Coppes, p. 189.

⁶ Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, pp. 104, 112-114, 133.

⁷ Rayburn, pp. 106-109.

⁸ Rayburn, p. 114; Leith, p. 166; Coppes, pp. 185-189; Osterhaven, p. 56; Murray, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1: pp. 167-168.

⁹ Leith, pp. 166-167; Osterhaven, pp. 56-57. In Reformed history the primary purpose for establishing schools has been to enable men and women to read and to understand the written Word of God.

¹⁰ Rayburn, pp. 131-136; Osterhaven, p. 59.

¹¹ By God's speaking is not meant revelation and inspiration, since direct revelation has ceased, but His speaking in terms of illumination, conviction, guidance, encouragement, calling to salvation or to ministry, and stimulation to good works.

¹² A common but deadly misconception is that the minister has all the spiritual gifts while the people have none. As a result it is expected in worship that the minister will "perform" while the people observe passively. However, the minister should be seen as the leader while

The glory and music of heaven ought to resound through the pages of a systematic theology.

all who are present participate.

¹³ Rayburn, pp. 118, 121, 125-129.

¹⁴ Rayburn, pp. 116-117; Hesselink, pp. 21-22. Bratt observes that the Dutch Reformed group had great difficulty with the "Vaudeville with Xylophone and frenzied indignity" of some Fundamentalist services (p. 133).

¹⁵ Coppes, pp. 174-175; Leith, p. 167.

¹⁶ Rayburn, pp. 115-116.

¹⁷ Leith, p. 167; Osterhaven, pp. 57-58; Coppes, p. 185. For an excellent treatment, which includes many photographs, of the Reformed view of church architecture, see Donald J. Bruggink and Carl H. Droppers, *Christ and Architecture: Building Presbyterian/Reformed Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

¹⁸ *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Reformed Theology."

¹⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3: p. 699; Peter F. Jensen, "Prayer in Reformed Perspective," *The Reformed Theological Review* 44/3 (September-December 1985) p. 68. Prayer is in no way inconsistent with the doctrine of predestination.

²⁰ George S. Heyer, Jr., "Prayer in the Reformed Tradition," *Austin Seminary Bulletin* 101 (October, 1985) pp. 39-43; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3: p. 692.

²¹ Jensen, pp. 69-70; Heyer, p. 43.

²² Heyer, p. 40. There is no legitimate prayer offered either to saints or in the name of saints. God may be rightly approached only through Jesus Christ. While prayer to the Son and to the Holy Spirit are proper, the normal biblical pattern is prayer to the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. Effective public prayer requires careful preparation and should be well ordered and disciplined. See Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:702-708. Helpful books on prayer also include the following: Herbert Lockyer, *All the Prayers of the Bible: A Devotional and Expository Classic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959); B. M. Palmer, *Theology of Prayer As Viewed in the Religion of Nature and in the System of Grace* (1894; reprint, Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1980); Alexander Whyte, Lord, *Teach Us to Pray: Sermons on Prayer* (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.); Andrew Blackwood, *Leading in Public Prayer* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958); James Oliver Buswell, Jr., *Problems in the Prayer Life: From a Pastor's*

Question Box (Wilmington, Delaware: Cross Publishing, n.d.); Wayne A. Spear, *The Theology of Prayer* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Board of Education and Publication, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1974).

²³ Hesselink, pp. 27-29; Coppes, p. 177.

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A History of Psalm-Singing

Earl Linderman

The question of which songs ought to be sung in the worship of God was a point of disagreement among reformers.

Worshippers in Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregations have long been known as "psalm singers." For many years the exclusive use of metrical versions of the biblical psalms stood as one of the denomination's "distinctive principles." How this tradition of psalm-singing developed in the life of the worshipping Protestant Church, and how the exclusive use of the biblical psalms developed and eventually changed within the Associate Reformed Churches is an important element in her now long and fascinating history.

THE REFORMATION

People sang psalms both inside and outside the services of worship in the early centuries of the Church's life. But as services became longer, and more ornate, trained choirs began to assume increasing responsibility for music. By the twelfth century, all the sung parts in the service were done exclusively by either clergy or the choir.¹

By the time of the Reformation in Europe, the people's participation in worship had become an issue of urgent concern. In 1523, Martin Luther wrote, "I also wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing during Mass...for who doubts that originally all the people sang these which now only the choir sings or responds to while the bishop is consecrating?"²

The translation of the word of God into common language which was sparked by the Reformation led, among other things, to changes in the practice of worship. The question of which songs ought to be sung in the worship of God was a point of disagreement among reformers. Luther wanted to reform only the elements of worship that needed change. Luther, who was himself both a musician and a poet, loved the old German folk songs, and was well versed in the music and hymnody of the Roman Church. He immediately turned to congregational song in the vernacular through which the people might express their faith and carry it to others.

Luther dearly loved the ritual of the old church, but he also knew the power of folk music in the home and the ale-hall. He urged capable followers to write hymns and wrote many himself. Luther utilized with great enthusiasm the means well known to reformers of ages past – hymnody as ammunition for the battle and nourishment for those fighting it.³ Luther saw no objection to the Roman custom of using hymns or of making very free paraphrases of the psalms, instead of limiting himself to closely translated metrical versions of sacred Scripture.

The Reformed church in Geneva, Switzerland, however, was led by John Calvin, whose conviction it was that folk songs of the time were "frivolous." He did not want these tunes to intrude upon worship. The concern of Calvin was to avoid pomp, elaborations, embellishments, and frills which might dazzle the senses and deaden the mind. Calvin did not despise beauty. The point was not so much austerity as the concentration upon the purpose of worship and the elimination of distractions.⁴

John Calvin was a man of disciplined and solid scholarship. He was not a musician, but he paid careful attention to the details of public worship. Calvin was convinced that psalmody was the only fit body of poetry appropriate to be sung in the church. Calvin felt that nothing should be sung in public worship which had not been received from God. He insisted that only Scripture be sung. He decided that the best way to keep from embracing "false doctrine" was to sing exclusively the 150 psalms which were divinely authored. In settling on the psalms as the sole source for congregational song, Calvin appealed to the church fathers: "Now what Saint Augustine says is true – that no one can sing things worthy of God save what he has received from Him. Wherefore, although we look far and wide and search on every hand, we shall not find better songs nor songs better suited to that end than the psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and uttered through him."⁵ This approach led to the Reformed tradition of singing only from the 150 psalms. Thus psalm-singing soon

became as characteristic of the Reformed church as hymn-singing was characteristic of Lutheranism.⁶ John Calvin also chose French translations of the psalms in metrical verse – that verse which has a regular recurring pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables – as opposed to the prose form. This device of setting a metrical text to music traditionally has been useful in assisting the memory and was the common form of popular song in Calvin's time.

It took a special talent to compose a metrical setting of the psalms for Reformed worship. Fortunately, one of France's most talented poets had begun this work even before Calvin issued his famous *Institutes* (1536), in which the plan for Reformed worship was outlined.⁷

Clement Marot, a well known writer and favored friend of French royalty, had translated some of the psalms into French verse in 1532 as a project of his own. They were eagerly received, for many people had no other access to the Bible in the vernacular. A version of some of Marot's psalms was authorized by Calvin for use in worship at Geneva. When these verses were published in 1542, Clement Marot was charged with heresy and forced to flee to Geneva to protect his life. He was welcomed by Calvin and encouraged to continue working on the psalm translations. Unfortunately, after completing only nineteen more, he died under mysterious circumstances while traveling.⁸

The significance of Marot's contribution to metrical psalmody at this critical period of its development is amplified by Waldo Pratt in a paper delivered before the Hymn Society. We are reminded that the excellence of Marot's verse undoubtedly was in no minor way responsible for its wide acceptance and use by large numbers of people in varied stations of life. "The contagion of Geneva spread far and wide," he says, and "everywhere the *French Psalter* flew like a flag at the head of aggressive Calvinism."⁹

The work of translating the psalms was not completed until the arrival in Geneva in 1547 of Theodore de Beza. Calvin assigned him responsibility for completing the full psalter and gradually drew de Beza higher into leadership of the Reformed Church.¹⁰

In the preparation of this French *Genevan Psalter*, Calvin was as fortunate in his musicians as in his poets. From 1542 to 1557 the tunes

were arranged by Louis Bourgeois, though it is not known which of them he composed and which he derived from other sources. When he left Geneva in 1557 eighty-eight psalms had been provided with tunes. The complete *Psalter* of 1562 contains 125 tunes, the finest being those arranged by Bourgeois. Originally they were printed with only the melody line and were probably sung in unison, but editions with other parts were soon published. No small part of Calvin's success at Geneva was due to the enthusiasm with which Bourgeois' melodies were sung.¹¹

SCOTLAND

Many thought that the chorales of Luther would become the accepted songs of the Church of Scotland during the Reformation period. This, however, was not to be the case. It was John Knox who influenced the church to use the psalter of the Old Testament. When he returned from exile in Geneva in 1559, Knox found that the Scottish people were already familiar with the singing of psalms. They sang from a twenty-two-psalm version printed in 1542 and 1546. With these psalms, the Scottish people were able to sing a portion of the biblical psalter in their native tongue. Since the people already enjoyed the singing of these twenty-two psalms, it was relatively easy for John Knox to convince the first General Assembly of the Scottish Church in 1560 that they ought to print a psalter.

The first Scottish version, the work of the Reformer John Knox and two brilliant assistants, Robert Pont and John Craig, was completed in 1564. By the 1620s, however, this version was found to be too difficult and too refined musically for the common people. The style of poetry found in the first *Scottish Psalter* left much to be desired. The translators were concerned first with an accurate rendering of the Hebrew original, and thus the English wording was often awkward. More tunes than texts from the first psalter survive today, most notably Dundee, Martyrs, Old 100th and Old 124th.

The next milestone in Scottish psalter history is the great *Scottish Psalter* of 1635. The editor of this important work of Scottish psalmody was Edward Millar. Millar decided to

Thus Psalm-singing soon became as characteristic of the Reformed Church as hymn-singing was characteristic of Lutheranism.

Research into early colonial music indicates that most colonial American Protestants sang only the Psalms, and without accompaniment.

separate his material under three headings. The most prominent were the "Proper Tunes." The goal was to set a psalm to its own tune in such a way that the words of the psalm were perfectly married to the tune. The hope was that hearing the tune would remind the worshipper of the text. In the eyes of many writers of church history, this 1635 *Psalter* is considered to be one of the finest psalters ever published. However, the church never authorized its publication, so its use was short-lived.

It was soon replaced by a "second" *Scottish Psalter* in 1650. This 1650 version psalter was based on one submitted to the Westminster Assembly by Frances Rous, an influential member of the Puritan party in England. The 1650 version of the *Scottish Psalter* has been known as the "Rous Version."

The "Rous Version" had many fine qualities, but one severe flaw. It was printed without music. This made it necessary to "line out" the psalms for congregational singing. In lining out, a leader or precentor quickly reads or sings over a line of psalm text. The congregation responds with the same line in the stately psalm tempo. This exchange continues line by line through the entire psalm. Despite its weakness, this 1650 *Psalter* has been reprinted in 650 editions in the 300 years since it first appeared.

NORTH AMERICA

Research into early colonial music indicates that most colonial American Protestants sang only the psalms and without accompaniment.

The French collection reached this country first when the Huguenots in the 1500's landed in Florida and introduced the Indians there to the sturdy Calvinist tunes of the *Marot Psalms*. Indians came from all around to hear the psalms sung, and learned many by rote.¹²

The Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam brought with them the official music of the Reformed church in the Netherlands – a direct translation of the *French Psalter* by Peter Dathleen, using Bourgeois tunes.¹³

The *Ainsworth Psalter* is another collection which must be noted in connection with metrical psalmody used early in American colonial history. It was published in 1612 in Amsterdam

and brought to the New World aboard the Mayflower.¹⁴

The first book of any kind printed in the English-speaking colonies on this continent was the *Bay Psalm Book* printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1640. It was the work of thirty colonial ministers who desired a metrical translation of the psalms which expressed the meaning of the original Hebrew as precisely as possible. The early editions of the *Bay Psalm Book* contained no music, possibly because no one in the colony was capable of engraving it.¹⁵

Almost every Presbyterian body to settle in America sang only the psalms and without accompaniment. The biblical psalter was the "hymn book" of most of colonial America.

By the time the Scottish Reformed Presbyterians, better known as the Covenanters, came to America starting in the 1650s, psalm-singing was already the custom in most churches. The Scottish Presbyterians who arrived in America during the last half of the seventeenth century were either sent here as prisoners or left Scotland to escape persecution. These Covenanters brought the *Scottish Psalter* of 1650 with them to be used for singing of praise in the worship of God. Since no tunes accompanied these psalm versions, the practice of lining out became necessary. Precentors applied the words of the psalter to tunes they knew either from Scotland or from the then popular "singing schools" open to precentors from many denominations. In 1864 William Keys, a United Presbyterian from Philadelphia, set music to the 1650 *Psalter* texts. The tunes he used probably came from a number of sources, including his own memory, old hymnals and psalters, and "singing school" melodies. This was the first opportunity for Presbyterians of Scottish descent to sing from a music-text psalter since 1635. It was Keys' purpose to have each psalm recorded with its own tune as Millar had done in the 1635 edition of the psalter.

THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

For more than two centuries, psalm-singing in the South has been closely linked to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and its predecessor bodies – the Associate Presbyter-

rians (Seceders) and the Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters). Immigrants came to America from both of these groups in Colonial times. The two groups joined in 1782 in Philadelphia to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Eventually, the Southern churches in this merged group found what they considered unorthodoxy among leaders in the North. This, combined with the distance from Philadelphia where the Synod always met, caused them to ask and receive permission to set up their own independent Synod, which they did in 1822. This new denomination developed as a regional Synod, the Synod of the South. At the same time the Northern Associate Reformed churches grew rapidly in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. In 1858 this Northern Synod united with a continuing Associate body which remained after the merger of 1782. This combined body took the name United Presbyterian Church. In 1958 the United Presbyterians merged with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

After the disappearance of the Associate Reformed name in the North in 1858, the Synod of the South in 1912 took the name of Associate Reformed Synod. It changed its name in 1935 to its present name – the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Too Free a Rendition

The Synod of the South gained several new congregations in the Carolinas during the 1820s and 1830s. The new members came from other Presbyterian denominations who were beginning to use hymns. A controversy arose which involved not just a choice between psalms and hymns. The Associate Reformed faction also opposed Isaac Watts' paraphrased version of the psalms, charging that it was too free a rendition, and insisting upon metrical versions that kept as close as possible to the original wording.

In the United States, the old United Presbyterian Church published a revised psalter in 1912. This psalter was the result of committees dating back to 1895. In 1909 it had been approved by a joint committee from nine churches of the Presbyterian family in the United States and Canada including the Associate Reformed

Presbyterian Church. When the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church decided in 1926 to publish a book of praise, it relied heavily on the 1912 *Psalter*. In the preface to the *Psalter* published by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1931 is this statement: "To the United Presbyterian Board of Publication we are indebted for permission to use the version of 1912."

The devotion of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church to psalms resulted in the translation of the metrical versions of psalms into the native languages of Mexico and Pakistan, where they are still used by thriving overseas branches of the denomination.

Bible Songs

In 1931, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church also printed and made extensive use of the *Bible Songs*, a somewhat freer translation of the psalms, many of them set to the melodies of popular "gospel" songs that were used in other denominations. The result was at least a limited concession, as compared to the *Psalter*.

During the second quarter of the twentieth century, sentiment arose in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church for the optional use of hymns. The argument was that visitors and potential members did not feel at ease with an exclusive psalmody, and that Associate Reformed Presbyterian young people felt an attraction to other churches that used hymns. The General Synod of 1945, therefore, submitted to the presbyteries the question of whether to permit local churches to sing hymns. The vote in the presbyteries, by 1946, favored the proposed relaxation, and since that time hymns have been accepted by all but a few local churches.

Even so, the change effected in 1946 still carried the requirement that "a large place in our service of worship" be given to the psalms, so "that by wise selection and interpretation they may be so used as to endear themselves to the hearts of people."¹⁶ Some congregations took liberties with the new privilege, and now give little attention to the psalms.

The General Synod of 1974 approved a new *Book of Worship*. When the initial version was read on the floor of Synod, it was found that the committee had omitted any reference to giv-

The new members came from other Presbyterian denominations who were beginning to use hymns.

ing, as did the older version, "a large place in our services" to the psalms. In fact, psalms were not even mentioned. A lay delegate introduced an amendment, which carried by a vote of about two to one, stating that "It is strongly recommended that special attention be given to the use of one or more metrical versions of the psalms in each worship service."¹⁷ The presbyteries by the next year had ratified the revision, including the amendment that restored special attention to the singing of psalms.

A Living Tradition

Psalmsinging is a living tradition. Its practice has declined, but it has not died out. If one visits a typical cross-section of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian churches and of the larger mainline Presbyterian churches, one will find that generally the Associate Reformed Presbyterian churches use more psalms than do the other groups. In addition, the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and its presbyteries still close each meeting by singing the 133rd Psalm. Some congregations occasionally have psalm-sings, in which neighboring churches get together to sing the psalms. The *Bible Songs* book is generally used on these occasions.

A kind of contemporary psalmody is also developing within the "Praise and Worship" movement, as psalms or parts of psalms are being incorporated into contemporary praise choruses. Some ARP congregations are even writing their own new psalm music for corporate worship. Within the liturgical renewal movement there is a resurgence in interest in the chanting of psalms.

As the contemporary Church rediscovers the *Psalms* as a book of prayer and praise, and once again incorporates the singing of psalms into her corporate worship, perhaps she will take a moment to "tip her hat" to the psalm-singing tradition of Reformed denominations like the ARP Church.

ENDNOTES

¹ Marilyn Kay Stulken, ed., *Hymnal Companion To The Lutheran Book Of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) p. 58.

² Ulrich S. Leupold *Luther's Works, Vol. 53*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965) p. 36.

³ Stulken, p. 58.

⁴ John Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977) p. 167.

⁵ John Calvin, in the Forward to the 1543 edition of the Genevan Psalter, as found in *Source Readings In Music History*, Oliver Strunk, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950) p. 346.

⁶ Henry Wilder Foote, *Three Centuries Of American Hymnody* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940) p. 7.

⁷ Stulken, p. 59.

⁸ Stulken, p. 59.

⁹ Waldo Selden Pratt, "The Significance of the Old French Psalter," *Hymn Society Paper IV*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰ Stulken, p. 60.

¹¹ Foote, *Three Centuries Of American Hymnody*, pp. 8-9.

¹² Stulken, p. 63.

¹³ Stulken, p. 63.

¹⁴ Stulken, p. 64.

¹⁵ Stulken, p. 65.

¹⁶ Minutes of the 1946 General Synod.

¹⁷ Minutes of the 1974 General Synod.

Implicit and Explicit Messages

Robert J. Cara

The following paper is offered to the reader in an attempt to stimulate discussion about the interplay between the various factors which bear upon us as we gather to worship our great God. Bob Cara would be the first to admit that he is not a communications specialist. He is neither an artist nor a marketing/advertising expert. Nevertheless, as a theologian, and more importantly, as a worshipping Christian who desires to worship God in Spirit and in truth, he goes boldly into uncharted waters here in order to help the rest of us become better worshippers. He welcomes your responses to this article.

INTRODUCTION AND THESIS

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James and John saw Jesus become dazzling white. God the Father then thundered forth, "This is my chosen Son. Hear him." The reader of Luke's Gospel is aided in his understanding of this event by combining the *implicit* message of Jesus' transfiguration and the *explicit* statements by God the Father (Luke 9:28-36).

When Jesus associated with unscrupulous tax collectors, the Pharisees interpreted the *implicit* message to be that Jesus had concern for the tax collectors and approved of their deeds. Jesus corrected this interpretation with his *explicit* statements: while, yes, he did have concern for the tax collectors, he did not approve of their deeds, for he came to "heal" them (Luke 5:27-32, 19:1-10).

In worship, the architecture, furniture, design of the bulletin, pastoral style and dress, the type of music, and level of formality – all these have an effect on how we worship. These things affect how we as worshippers think and feel as we worship. They create mood and ambience and atmosphere. They also to some degree communicate implicitly about the nature of the Church, and more importantly about the character of God.

Generally one would hope that these implicit messages complement the explicit messages

coming forth from the word as it is sung and preached. This is not always the case, however. To use a simple example: if one worships in a large, high-ceiling church, the architecture creates a mood of transcendence, and communicates implicitly a message that *God is transcendent*, that is, different from and greater than ourselves. Conversely, if one worships in a low, flat ceiling church, the architecture creates a mood of nearness and closeness, and communicates the implicit message that *God is immanent*, that is, concerned for and close to His people. But the God of the Bible is *both* transcendent and immanent. Is one therefore saddled by virtue of the architecture of their worship environment with having an unbalanced view of God in worship? No; explicit messages in the form of spoken or written words balance, correct and complement implicit messages. The written and preached word can overcome any culturally implicit message. Hence I suggest that if one worships in a high ceiling church, one may need to take more pains in explicit communication, or in the use of other implicit communication, to emphasize the immanence and closeness of God. But one can also rejoice when presenting explicit messages about the holiness and splendor and majesty of God, that the implicit message of the architecture is helping and aiding the explicit message, which can make for a powerful synergistic effect.

In sum, my thesis is as follows: 1) in worship, matters of architecture and style give tacit or *implicit* messages, and have real psychological effects, whether intended or not; 2) *explicit* spoken messages can have the result of either complementing or countering implicit messages and effects, and in the context of corporate worship can do so with greater rank or communicative power; and therefore, 3) explicit messages should be used to balance, correct and complement the implicit messages so that the "whole counsel of God," in all its splendor, is presented in worship, and so that worshipping person can worship with all his humanity.

Notice that I am assuming that almost *ev-*

Explicit messages in the form of spoken or written words balance, correct and complement implicit messages.

In the case of this church, the implicit message of the puny pulpit is balanced out by the forty-five minute thundering sermons.

everything in a worship context gives an implicit message of one kind or another, although certainly not of equal magnitude. Note, also, that for sake of simplicity, I equate verbal and written statements with explicit messages. I am told by those that know these things that technically this is not the case, that art for example may have a strong explicit albeit non-verbal communicative element. It is also true that verbal and written communication may have a strong implicit aspect. Thus we often may complain about a verbal communication, even a pastor's verbal message, "It wasn't what you said, it's how you said it!" But my thesis relates to the worship environment, where, I would maintain, verbal messages are more generally explicit, and non-verbal messages implicit. Finally, I would suggest that in a worship setting as contrasted with a more general life setting (in which the implicit message in many situations may prevail over the explicit), the explicit message prevails over the implicit.

Worshippers should endeavor to be aware of the implicit messages in worship. When implicit and explicit messages complement each other, it certainly makes worship more enjoyable and powerful as one combines these messages about our glorious God. Those who serve on worship committees, new building committees, and who lead in worship can especially benefit from a consideration of implicit messages in worship.

MISCELLANEOUS EXAMPLES

Several examples may serve to drive home my distinction between implicit and explicit messages. Consider the corporate reciting of an ancient creed. What implicit messages does it give? Many of the Reformers purposely used creeds to connect to the ancient church, showing that the gospel is not new; it is not a fad.¹ It was not only the explicit statements of the creed, but the fact of its use and the associations created by its use that had communicative value. These said implicitly that God does not change with the times. Of course God is also relevant to all cultures in all times, and so an overuse of elements like creeds could give an implicit but false message that God is mainly for people who are long dead! Since the truth of God's present

relevance should also enter into worship, one needs to consider implicit messages that convey that God is also a current event. This could be explicitly stated from, say, the words of the sermon; but it could also be implied by, for instance, the use of a laser-printed bulletin.

Most church architecture today, unlike that of centuries past, has the choir seated in front of the congregation. In our culture, this probably suggests that the choir anthem is a "performance." Short of building a new sanctuary or eliminating anthems, one could occasionally mention, from the pulpit, that the choir is singing for the glory of God and that the congregants are to join their hearts to the words and music.

There is a fine church in Charlotte that meets in a gym and has a small "lectern" for a pulpit. In the architecture of many older church buildings designed and built under the influence of a Reformed worship tradition, pulpits were elevated, very large, and located front center to lend weight to the pre-eminence to the preached word of God in the worship of the congregation. In the case of the Charlotte church, the puny pulpit architecture might suggest something about the relative importance, or lack of it, of the preached word. Yet, in the case of this church, the implicit message of the pulpit is balanced out by the forty-five minute thundering sermons. These sermons, owing to their length and forcefulness, counteract the architecture by conveying the eminence of the preached word of God.

There is another fine church in Manhattan that meets in a theater with a large stage. How would one match the elevated pulpit idea? During the service at this church, no one ever stands in the middle of the stage until the sermon. The announcements, song leading, etc. are all done from the side; then, in order to emphasize the importance of the preached word of God, the pastor moves to the front center of the stage for his sermon.

Continuing with the pulpit architecture theme, some worshippers may get the implicit message from a centrally located elevated pulpit that the minister himself is elevated, or even trying to elevate himself. The architecture may communicate to the worshipper that the preacher is on a different plane as a person. In this case it would be right to teach about the

intended message of the centralized pulpit – that it is not meant to elevate the sinful preacher, but the word from which he is preaching.²

While discussing the question of whether the preacher should wear a suit in the pulpit, a seminary student argued that the *form* of Gospel does not matter, only the *content*. Hence, what he wore in the pulpit was irrelevant. In my scheme, *form* matches to implicit messages, *content* to explicit. Therefore I disagreed with the student. Form and content *both* matter, and are related and intertwined, but not so much so that content cannot overcome the limitations of form. In this particular case the dress of the one delivering a sermon does in fact convey implicit messages. One friend of mine never wears a tie when he preaches in order to grant permission to people not to dress up for church, and to give the implicit message that it is what is in the person's heart that matters in worship. Another always wears a suit in order to convey that God should get our very best when we gather to worship, and that the importance attached to the preached word should not be undermined by sloppy appearance.

Style Messages

Is it possible that musical style used in worship gives implicit messages? Many of my seminary students complain that unchurched people cannot relate to the style of the "traditional" songs with organ accompaniment. It has no connection to anything in their lives; it is "too different." In their minds the style of music, which is foreign to anything they otherwise know musically, conveys the implicit message that what is being sung about has no bearing on their lives. But maybe, if I may offer this provocative and somewhat tongue-in-cheek question, maybe that is not such a bad thing: perhaps a worship service should convey the implicit message that worshipping the God of the Bible *is* a different sort of thing than jamming to The Boss, or cranking up some Hootie after the ball game. On the other hand, the students have a point; an unchurched visitor may feel that God is irrelevant to his life, even as an organ is irrelevant to many, but not all, unchurched Americans.

Another way of considering the music question is to ask whether a certain style of music

or method of performance is inward (self) focused or outward (God) focused. Does the music or its performance point to the musician or does it point to God? Admittedly there is a subjective element here. But I do think, although many will disagree, that certain styles of music better point toward God and away from the performer.³ One need only compare AC/DC with Henry Purcell.

Meaning and Melody

Calvin, who himself composed psalms for singing and brought congregational singing into Reformed churches, insists, "We should be very careful that our ears be not *more attentive* to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words."⁴ Calvin's point is that the explicit message of the words of the music are more important than the implicit messages one gets from music style and melody. My complaint about most discussions of music style is that there is little concern for the accuracy of words or, for that matter, the overall picture of God's character being presented in the worship song. Perhaps the issue is that the musical accompaniment should not hinder or distract the mind from the words that are actually being sung, and, to the extent possible, should direct the mind to the meaning of the text.

Worshippers themselves give implicit messages to other worshippers. The way one stands, sings, and pays attention makes an impact. When I visit a new church, I tend to notice whether the members bring their own Bibles, and also whether they open their Bibles during the sermon. Although there are exceptions, this usually gives me an idea of the biblical literacy of the congregation and their concern for God and his word.

In sum to this point: there are both explicit and implicit messages in a worship service. Some implicit messages are very minor (e.g., the type of print in a bulletin), while others carry more weight (e.g., a solemn look on the minister's face during the Lord's Supper), while still others are fairly well-defined symbols (e.g., a cross). In any case, the explicit messages from the word of God are primarily important and can balance, correct and complement the implicit messages.

Worshippers themselves give implicit messages to other worshippers. The way one stands, sings, and pays attention makes an impact.

JUSTIFICATION OF CONCERN FOR IMPLICIT MESSAGES

Why should one be concerned, to some degree, about the implicit messages in a worship service, even though they are not the most important aspect of worship? Primarily, because they exist!

Implicit messages are everywhere in the architecture of the Old Testament Tabernacle, not only in the actual implements of worship and artistic symbols, but in the mood and atmosphere created by the temple. Not all of the intended imagery is explained: the lamp stand, for example, relates directly to a tree (Exo. 25:31-36), which implies, though it is never stated, a connection with the original tree of life (Gen. 2:9) and with the eschatological trees of life (Rev. 22:2). The Tabernacle itself conveys, by various symbols, that it is a representation of heaven and God's throne (e.g., the ark is a footstool, cherubim guard the throne), although this is not directly mentioned until much later in redemptive history (1 Kings 8:29, Heb. 8:5).⁵ Of course, for the Tabernacle, the architecture was specifically and divinely commanded; today, it is a matter of "circumstance," but it is still important.⁶

In the Corinthian church, certain members were eating food that had previously been related to idol worship (1 Cor. 8:1-11:1). Apparently one could purchase the "leftovers" at a reduced cost. Paul, after noting that, in principle, there is nothing wrong with this, was concerned about its impact on the weak Christians who had come out of pagan worship. Possibly this food was used in worship (1 Cor. 10:14-22). Paul was concerned about the implicit message involved in eating left-over idol feast food.

Chapter 22 of the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), which concerns "Holy and Ecclesiastical Meetings," discusses, among other things, church architecture and decorations. The church buildings are to "be purged from all things as do not beseem the Church." The guiding theme of the chapter, which is quoted at the end, is, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) and "Let things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26). This Reformed creed realized that the nature of the place where one worships does have impact on the worship.

Colonial New England church architecture was plain and rectangular in order to emphasize the simplicity of the Gospel and the preaching of the word.⁷ Although I take exception to the extent of their views on "plainness," these New Englanders were aware that architecture and decorations, or lack of them, do give implicit messages to the worshippers.⁸

Finally, the classical concept of art, architecture, and music operates on the assumption that there is some objective meaning inherent in these items. Works of art have no explicit verbal messages (assuming, that is, the absence of associated words). The visual and musical arts, by their very nature, consist of non-verbal and predominately implicit communication. But they do convey powerful meanings, which may come at the observer in various ways. There may be clear objective meanings to the implicit messages as well. Now obviously, the objective meaning may not perfectly define itself, and is significantly influenced by the viewer, but there are, nevertheless, some objective implicit meanings. For example, no one looks at Michelangelo's "David" and concludes that David was a weakling. The implicit message from this sculpture forbids this conclusion.⁹

IMPLICIT MESSAGES ARE SECONDARY

Although implicit messages in worship are important to some degree, the explicit messages are more important. You may object to this. Is it not true, you may say, that often in everyday life the implicit message eclipses the explicit? As the proverb puts it, "Actions speak louder than words." Yes, this is true. In worship, however, God Himself speaks through His word to give us the explicit message (1 Thess. 2:13, Rom. 10:17, Eph. 2:17).¹⁰ The preached gospel has power to overcome all obstacles (Acts 19:20, Rom. 1:15-16). It is the Holy Spirit working, by the word of God, that changes people through the preached message (Acts 4:31, 13:48-52, 1 Thess. 1:5). The gospel can overcome any incorrect or irrelevant or distracting implicit messages in a culture, architecture or style. The gospel positively impacts all cultures and types of people – both Jew and Greek, slave and free, men and women (Gal. 3:28). Nothing can stop

Implicit messages are everywhere in the architecture of the Old Testament Tabernacle, not only in the actual implements of worship and artistic symbols, but in the mood and atmosphere created by the temple.

the preached word of God from accomplishing its purposes (Isa. 55:11).

Whatever else one thinks about it, the Reformed tradition's focus on the preached word of God has proved true to the Bible: preaching, after all, is that part of worship in which God Himself speaks through His agent.¹¹ Moreover the Reformed idea that churches ought to be fairly plain in appearance adheres to the New Testament proclamation that Christ is our glory, not external symbols (Heb. 10:1). The Reformed tradition, which has long emphasized preaching the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6, Westminster Larger Catechism Q 159), has articulated this biblical idea well; whence the goal of presenting the whole character of God through both explicit and implicit means.

There are Christians, who, wrongly in my opinion, do see the implicit messages from art and architecture as primary. Among the Christian traditions, Eastern Orthodox worship has most emphasized art at the expense of preaching. This is shown in their view of icons, paintings, or mosaics depicting a biblical (or post-biblical) scene or character. These icons, as they put it, are to be "venerated." "When Orthodox people enter a church, their first action will be to buy a candle, go up to an icon, cross themselves, kiss the icon, and light the candle in front of it."¹²

In addition to arguing that the pictures help those who cannot read, Orthodoxy justifies this by its view of worship as "heaven on earth."¹³ Orthodox believers hold that the beauty of heaven should be matched by the outward beauty of the church architecture and icons. They also argue that icons are required, not simply recommended, in order to emphasize that it is the created world that is to be redeemed.¹⁴

What can we learn from the Eastern Orthodox tradition? It is a good biblical instinct to stress that God is both the Creator and Redeemer (Psa. 19, Isa. 44:1-8, Col. 1:15-20).¹⁵ The embrace of the created order in all of its splendor and beauty is biblically sound and instinctively right. One would admit that plainness can become ugliness, and convey a message about God's lack of care for this world, or even convey a message about the barrenness of God Himself. The aesthetics of the church building is not

everything, but it does give implicit messages about God the Creator. However, as most Protestants have maintained through the centuries, Orthodoxy is extremely unbalanced in its concern for the communicative role of icons as over against the preached word of God.¹⁶ The New Testament certainly focuses far more attention on the other means of grace (word of God, sacraments, prayer) as the instruments for growth in Christ.

FURTHER NUANCES AND COMMENTS

It is truly difficult to represent all aspects of God's character in any one worship service. It is difficult for the Christian worshipper to grasp hold simultaneously to all aspects of God's nature at one time. Because of this, the service of worship may focus one day on the theme of God's holiness and justice, and on another day His mercy and compassion. Thus one needs to evaluate the implicit and explicit messages that cumulate as different themes are presented over time. For most churches, the architecture and worship style generally remain constant, while the explicit messages may change from week to week. If the architecture and style are always reinforcing just one aspect of God's character, the explicit messages will have to be used to balance out this effect.

One important advantage of the implicit-explicit paradigm is that it applies equally to those who favor the Genevan worship of the 16th century and those engaged in the recent "progressive" style of worship. In either approach one needs to be aware of the implicit messages. If one were inclined toward one or the other of these worship paradigms because of one's preference, say, for either the immanent or transcendent aspect of God's nature, one would need to be wary of creating a worship environment that merely reinforced an unbalanced perspective of God. Do we want to create separate churches for touchy-feely immanence people on the one hand, and dour and somber transcendence people on the other? By no means! It is God in all of His fullness that we must worship and adore.

Implicit messages many times are not well defined and may convey a variety of messages

For most churches, the architecture and worship style generally remain constant, while the explicit messages may change from week to week.

One goal of worship is to present, as best as possible, the full-orbed majestic character of God.

to different audiences, or to different members of the same audience. An individual church may have both rich and poor, black and white, young and old, artists and engineers, converted and unconverted. Again, the church leadership needs to be aware of the variety of implicit messages that may be going out to those gathered for worship. On the other hand, I also want to point out that the learning that takes place in a worship service can embrace both implicit and explicit factors. One could explain, in a sermon perhaps, some of the intended implicit messages so that all may be on the same wave length. For example, I periodically attended a very large church in Jackson, Mississippi, where the architectural design created an odd seating arrangement; or so I thought. About the fifth time I was there, the pastor, in a sermon about the centrality of the cross, pointed out that the pews were purposely arranged in a form of a cross. From then on, I was always reminded of the glorious cross every time I attended that church.

CONCLUSIONS

Both implicit and explicit messages convey God's character in the worship service. Implicit messages of architecture and style are important, but not as important as the explicit word of God, which, of course, can overcome any obstacle. Ideally, explicit and implicit messages complement each other. One goal of worship is to present, as best as possible, the full-orbed majestic character of God. Leaders: evaluate your worship services with the goal of reflecting more accurately the fullness of the God of the Bible.

At the next worship service you attend, enjoy the implicit messages about God's character from the architecture and style as you prepare to receive the explicit message from God's word.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Reformers were especially doing this to rebut the claim by Roman Catholics that their theology was new. On this topic see Hughes Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975) and Geoffrey Bromiley, "Promise of Patristic Stud-

ies," *Toward a Theology for the Future* (eds. C. Pinnock and D. Wells; Carol Stream: Creation House, 1971) pp. 125-155.

² The *Second Helvetic Confession* 2 recognized the possibility of confusing the preached word of God with the one who preaches. "The Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, *not the minister; who, although he be evil and a sinner*, nevertheless the Word of God abides true and good."

³ If one wishes to pursue this line of thinking further, Ken Myers' *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians & Popular Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1989) is a good place to start. For a more guardedly optimistic use of postmodern trends than Myers, see Gene Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994).

⁴ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.20.32 (my italics). For a summary of Calvin's use of the Psalter, see Jeffrey T. VanderWilt, "John Calvin's Theology of Liturgical Song," *Christian Scholars Review* 25 (1995) pp. 63-82.

⁵ For an excellent discussion of implied messages in the Tabernacle, see Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1991) pp. 9-40.

⁶ Reformed theology distinguishes between the *elements* and the *circumstances* of worship. The *elements* are the only acts of worship allowed in that they are actually prescribed by the Bible (e.g., preaching the word, prayer, almsgiving, sacraments). The *circumstances*, which are not prescribed by the Bible, include the time of the service, size of pulpit, etc. For a good brief discussion of the Reformed view, see Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Contours of Christian Theology; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1995) pp. 117-126. Also see *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.6, 21.1-7 and the *ARP Book of Worship*, chapter 2.

⁷ Many Reformed churches in Europe were more semi-circular which allowed better access to the sacraments.

⁸ For a brief summary of Reformed church architecture, see John Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (rev. ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) pp. 207-210.

⁹ For justification of the classic concept of art, see Kenneth Clark, *What is a Masterpiece?*

(New York: Thames and Hudson, 1979).

¹⁰ The *preached* word of God is in fact the "word of God" as it is derivative of the *written* word of God.

¹¹ Calvin *Institutes* 4.8.13; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (4th rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941) pp. 610-612; *Second Helvetic Confession* 2; *Westminster Shorter Catechism* Q 89; *Heidelberg Catechism* Q 83-84; G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture* (Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) pp. 327-345.

¹² Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (rev. ed.; New York: Penguin, 1993) p. 271.

¹³ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 4.16.

¹⁴ This argument then moves into one about Christ's incarnation which was debated at the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 787. Orthodoxy argues that the icons show the reality of Christ's human nature. See Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 30-35.

¹⁵ Reformed theology from the beginning has emphasized God as both Creator and Redeemer. Calvin's *Institutes* were set up with this pattern.

¹⁶ Not to mention that icons present theological problems related to the second commandment (Exod 20:4-6; Deut 5:8-10). See *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q 109.

Your Letters Are Welcome

The Editorial Committee of *Faith and Practice* invites your feedback. We would welcome several different kinds of letters from you.

How Can We Improve?

First, we ask for your input as to how we can make *Faith and Practice* a better publication. We may not be able to implement all recommendations, but we will consider all suggestions seriously. Please let us know how we can improve.

Can You Help Get the Word Out?

Second, we invite you to let us know how you can help get the word out about this new publication. Perhaps you would like to run a subscription campaign in your church. You may have ideas about how we can promote the journal better.

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Third, we invite you to interact with the authors of the various articles. If you have a question, a follow up comment, or a challenge,

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Where One Thing Leads to Another

Clyde T. McCants

In one very important sense, worship is the one act that we are called to do for God that He cannot, by its very nature, do for Himself.

In many a community of the not-too-distant past, when the weather encouraged and often even when it did not, the men of the congregation would stand outside the church building under the trees for twenty minutes of good conversation seasoned with the pungent aroma of pipe and cigar tobacco. Meanwhile, inside, the organist or pianist played the prelude, the congregation sang two or more psalms or hymns, the choir offered an anthem in praise of God, the pastor made the appropriate announcements, prayed, and read the Scripture lesson. Only then would the men join the women for Sunday morning worship. After all, they had come for "preaching," not for the "preliminaries."

Time and television have somewhat altered, if not necessarily improved, our perception of worship although occasionally a church member will still refer to Sunday morning worship as "the preaching service." My guess is that repeated exposure to the weekly musical spectacular at the Crystal Cathedral and its East Coast imitators has led many people to see worship primarily as a form of inspiring spiritual entertainment, and to measure the resulting success or failure in terms of whether or not they enjoyed the experience, a criterion somewhat more appropriate for "Roseanne" or "NYPD Blue."

No doubt some of the fallacies in either of these approaches—worship as preaching and worship as entertainment—are obvious. If worship is only preaching, then every Sunday morning at eleven o'clock we are wasting thirty valuable minutes with prayer and praise, and we could either go to dinner earlier or allow the minister an extra half-hour to explicate the text. And if worship is primarily for entertainment, then most of us will be forced to confess that NBC, PBS, and Ted Turner do it far better than the average minister and church musician, and that the sermon is often the *least* entertaining event in the corporate worship service.

The truth, of course, is that corporate worship is far more than preaching alone. Worship is controlled by the word, both the general word of Scripture and the word as specifically preached in a given service. But the sermon is not, as we say, "the whole show." It is equally true that the main purpose of worship, properly understood, is precisely the opposite of entertainment. The joy of entertainment is that it is done to please the audience; the joy of worship is that it is done primarily to please God.

This article is intended to help worshippers claim more fully the joy, as well as the responsibility, of participating actively in a complete, organized and unified experience of public worship. Before we can discuss what actually happens as one act of worship in the service leads to another, however, we need to consider for a moment the nature of the true worship of the gathered church.

Just what is it that we are setting out to do in a complete corporate worship service? Many years ago, Andrew W. Blackwood wrote that "worship is man's response to God's revelation of himself."¹ Of course, as Blackwood commented, "worship includes both the revelation and the response."² The revelation, however, comes from God. Our human role as worshippers is the response.

Worship Is a Transitive Verb

In one very important sense, worship is the one act that we are called to do for God that He cannot, by its very nature, do for Himself. Everything else that we do at the call of God, we do because in His love and grace He wills to share the task with us. When we witness to others and intercede for them, when we feed the hungry, house the homeless, and clothe the naked, when we provide for widows and orphans, we do what God could certainly, in His limitless power, do Himself. But when we pray to

God, when we praise Him, when we confess to Him, when we thank Him, when we hear His word, we perform those deeds of faith that would be meaningless if God had to do them for Himself. *Worship*, as a transitive verb, requires both an object and a subject. God is the object. The worshippers are the subject. Remove either object or subject and we had just as well delete the verb itself from our vocabularies.

Participants in Worship

The worshippers, then, those who sit in and stand or kneel at their pews in the sanctuary, are essential to the worship, not just the minister who preaches from the pulpit. They are part of the service, not as mere observers, but as actual participants in the total act of worship. Mere observers, like the audience in a theater, are present only for what the worship can do for them. Participants, on the other hand, are there primarily for what they can do for and in response to God, not only by listening to a sermon, but by entering into the movements of worship from beginning to end, from prelude to benediction.³

If the service has been carefully planned, those movements should have about them both an overall unity and a sense of progression from one act of worship to the next. As we seek during the service to discover both the underlying unity and the progression, we are beginning the process of becoming actively involved in the worship experience.

Just what is it that unifies a well-planned service of corporate worship? There was a time when I would have suggested that the unity must be stylistic in nature so that if a tone of quiet dignity was established at the beginning then that tone must be maintained throughout. If we began by singing one of the great chorales – “A Mighty Fortress,” for example – we could not later in the service appropriately introduce a popular gospel chorus such as “A Closer Walk With Thee.” A Scripture lesson from the eloquent, time-honored “King James Version” could hardly be followed by a reading from “The Cotton Patch” version. Style, however, is often little more than a matter of personal taste, and an unvaried stylistic unity may actually tend to

exclude worshippers whose taste varies from the local norm or the pastor’s preference.

There is, I believe, another far preferable source for the unity of a worship service, and it is to be found in the control of a clearly perceived Scriptural center. The minister, we may assume, has chosen a text and prepared a sermon which presents effectively the significance of that text for the lives of the worshippers. That text and its implications become, then, the unifying focus of the entire worship service. The result is a thematic Scriptural unity, rather than a purely stylistic unity. In so far as possible, every act of worship grows from and leads back to that text. Hymns, psalms, and anthems are chosen with the text in view. An organist or pianist truly concerned with the validity of the worship service keeps the text in mind in the selection of prelude, offertory, and postlude. Supplementary Scripture readings from other portions of the Bible help us to see more deeply into the meaning of the text. Prayers assist us in confessing our failure to respond to the call of the text and encourage us to accept the challenge of the text or to claim its promises. Our Associate Reformed Presbyterian *Book of Worship* instructs us that “all worship services shall be conducted in full accordance with the Scripture,”⁴ and one of the ways we ministers can honor that instruction is by permitting the text truly to control the content of the service of worship.

Beyond the thematic unity controlled by the text, however, it is also possible, and I believe essential, to have a logical and Scripturally based progression as one act of worship leads to the next. Every worship service, from the most informal, spontaneous experience to the carefully structured set forms of the highly liturgical denominations, has a certain order to it, whether or not we label it the “order of worship.” Something happens, that is, and then something else happens as a result until the service is finally completed. The order may appear to be entirely haphazard or we may perceive it as carefully controlled and structured, but the order is always present.

The question for us is whether or not the minister has planned the order of worship on the basis of a clear Scriptural understanding, and then whether or not the worshippers can grasp

Beyond the thematic unity controlled by the text, however, it is also possible, and I believe essential, to have a logical and Scripturally based progression as one act of worship leads to the next.

that order and, as we sometimes say, "buy into it." In other words, does the order of worship, in and of itself, help us to understand and claim the truth of the gospel that the church professes?

We in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church have no set order of worship.⁵ As we are told in *The Book of Worship*:

Public worship ... should include any or all of the following acts of worship: Prayer and thanksgiving; singing of praise, the reading, hearing and preaching of the Word; the administering and receiving of the sacraments; the giving of tithes and sacrificial offerings; an appropriate response to the Gospel; an affirmation of faith; and the dismissing of the people with a Biblical benediction.⁶

How these various elements should be combined into a unified worship experience, however, is never precisely spelled out for us in the Bible.

We are not told, however, in what order any of these acts should be done, nor does the Bible ever offer us a clear-cut formula for the arrangement of a service of corporate worship. The Psalms give us a model for religious song. We find in the Scriptures, as well, numerous examples of prayer, and occasionally what may be quotations from early Christian liturgies, for example the "Christ Hymn" in Philippians 2:6-11. How these various elements should be combined into a unified worship experience, however, is never precisely spelled out for us in the Bible, and it is surely possible to imagine a number of different orders of worship that would effectively reflect the Scriptural foundations of our faith.

In my own ministry I have found it helpful to understand the service of corporate worship as a holy drama in which the worshippers are invited each week to experience anew the life-changing truth of the gospel. Worship, Donald Macleod writes, "is the outcome of belief in a God who has done something for us and our salvation, and the shape of the liturgical act is determined by the nature of the divine work and of our response to it."⁷ The result of ordering worship to reflect "the divine work and ... our response to it" can produce a kind of high drama, like the Medieval *comedia*, which was not necessarily "comical" at all, but began in the potentially tragic and ended in ultimate triumph. Like all true drama, worship is dynamic

in so far as it is concerned with a process of divine encounter and change in human life as we move from one to another through the various "acts" included in the service.

Over the years of my ministry, I have developed an order of worship which I believe meets two important criteria: it honors the best historical traditions of Christian worship as they were observed both prior to, during, and following the Reformation; and it is grounded in Scriptural truth. I offer it not as the only model for a service of worship, but rather as an example of how the Scriptures, as they confront us with what Macleod referred to as "the divine work and ... and our response to it," can be used to shape the total worship experience, and also of how ordered worship can remind us of and tie us to certain of our historical foundations.

Here, in brief outline, is that order of worship:

PREPARING TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

- The Prelude
- The Choral Introit
- *The Psalm (or Hymn) of Praise
- *The Prayer of Confession
- *The Assurance of Pardon
- *The Psalm of Response
- The Greeting

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

- The Children's Worship
- The Anthem
- The Prayer for Illumination
- The Old Testament Lesson
- *The Scripture Psalm (or Hymn)
- The New Testament Lesson
- The Sermon
- *The Creed
- *The Gloria

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

- *The Offertory Prayer
- The Offertory
- *The Psalm (or Hymn) of Commitment
- *The Benediction
- The Postlude

* The asterisk marks those portions of the service during which the congregation stands.

To many people this order of worship may seem excessively complicated and overly formal. Let me suggest, however, that the complexity has more to do with the fact that we have it here printed out item by item than with the actual content. Most of the various acts of worship are found in one form or another in the majority of corporate worship services. As to the formality, that, too, is more a matter of appearance than necessarily of reality. Formality and informality are matters of style, and any individual act of worship may be performed with greater or lesser formality depending on the preference of the officiating minister, the church musicians, and the congregation.

A more important question is whether or not this order truly reflects the historical foundations of Christian worship, particularly those appropriate to the Reformed tradition.

Early Christian Worship

A few words about historical backgrounds might be helpful at this point. Precisely what happened in corporate worship during the first 300 or 400 years of the Christian era is almost impossible to establish. From the temple worship, based as it was on the sacrificial system, early Christian worship inherited primarily only a theological understanding of the Cross and of course the singing of the Psalms.⁸ It was the synagogue service, not the sacrificial worship of the temple, that provided the primary model for Christian worship in the early centuries. Although there were local variations, according to the C. C. Richardson, the synagogue service often included a responsive recitation of the Decalogue and the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9, which is, in effect, *the Jewish credal statement*), a number of "blessings of God," a read and translated lesson from the Pentateuch, the singing of Psalms, and sometimes a sermon.⁹ The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was, of course, the distinctive act of Christian worship, and it is probable that early in our Christian history an adaptation of the synagogue service came to precede the sacrament.¹⁰

It is from that "ante-communion" service, that is, the portion of the service before the Lord's Supper, that much of our Protestant worship derives. This is the case even in those

churches, like most of our own, that do not observe the sacrament every Sunday. The order of the Roman Mass, for example, probably set in its form by the beginning of the fifth century,¹¹ began with a litany of praise, followed by a prayer of confession and pardon. There were then Epistle and Gospel readings and perhaps, but not always, a sermon and the creed.¹² Even earlier, at least in Antioch, the sermon had been preceded by four Scripture lessons, one each from the Law, the Prophets, the Epistles, and the Gospels, perhaps separated by the singing of Psalms.¹³

Our greatest Reformed theologian, John Calvin, designed in 1545 the following worship order for use in Strasbourg: a prayer of confession, a Scriptural assurance of pardon and a declaration of absolution, the singing of the Ten Commandments and a Psalm, a prayer for illumination, the Scripture lesson, a series of general prayers, and another Psalm. If it were to be observed, the Lord's Supper would follow before the pronouncement of the benediction.¹⁴

When the Westminster theologians took up the task of preparing their "Directory of Worship," they kept in mind the same basic model. The service begins with the acknowledgement of:

...the incomprehensible Greatnesse and Majesty of the Lord, ... and then [the acknowledgement of] their own vilenesse and unworthinesse to approach so neare him ... And humbly beseeching him for Pardon, Assistance, and Acceptance in the whole Service then to bee performed; and for a Blessing on that particular portion of the word then to bee read....¹⁵

Notice that the service begins with acts of praise and confession, followed by a prayer for divine forgiveness and for a blessing on the reading of the Scripture lessons. After the lessons, a psalm is to be sung and general public prayer to be offered before the sermon. The sermon itself leads to another prayer, to be followed by the Lord's Prayer, the singing of a Psalm, and the Benediction. Concerning the Scripture lesson(s), the "Directory" makes the following suggestion:

How long a portion shall be read at once,

***It is from that
"ante-com-
munion" ser-
vice, that is,
the portion of
the service
before the
Lord's Supper,
that much of
our Protestant
worship de-
rives.***

is left to the wisdom of the Minister: But it is convenient that ordinarily one Chapter of each Testament be read at every meeting....¹⁶

Of course, we cannot merely embrace an order of worship from the past and assume that it will meet our needs today. We would be hard pressed to determine which of the historical models to follow, and one of the lessons from the examples above is that the structure of the worship service varied from place to place and underwent changes from time to time. It is true, as well, that we do not live in the past and that our understanding of the spoken and sung language and the other music of worship has changed over the years. In any case, since we have no precise biblical rule to shape the order of corporate worship, we are granted a large measure of freedom to pick and choose among those historical foundations, to add to and subtract from them in the attempt to enable worshippers to enter more fully into the dynamic of the service.

The Communion of Saints

On the other hand, our fellowship in the communion of the church is not only with the present, but also with the past, with those who have gone before. The liturgy of the Church, Hughes Old comments, "is participation in a fellowship of suffering and joy which has gone on for centuries."¹⁷ A carefully adapted historical base for our worship, provided the congregation is led through the teaching ministry of the church to understand it as part of our heritage, can be an important reminder of the debt we owe to the men and women who have gone before us in the worshipping community of the Church. After all, it is possible in worship to be simultaneously both ancient and contemporary, and we can surely use the past without being imprisoned by it.

My own order of worship certainly draws heavily on a number of the historical precedents. Notice, for example, that early in the service, the worshippers are engaged in the praise and adoration of God, a characteristic of both the early Roman mass and the order presented in the Westminster "Directory of Worship." A prayer of confession followed by either a prayer

for or a statement of divine forgiveness appears toward the beginning of most orders of worship. In the Westminster "Directory," we encounter the prayer for divine blessing on the reading of the Scriptures, the reading, if the Westminster recommendations are followed, of both an Old and a New Testament lesson, the sermon, a final prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and a benediction. The use of an appropriate creed after the sermon, as in the old Roman order, serves to place the specific truth presented in the sermon in the larger context of the Church's faith and doctrine.

Other Elements

There are, of course, in my order of worship, elements that do not appear in our early historical precedents, the prelude and postlude, for example, or the children's worship time and the offering, at least in its contemporary form when tithes and other financial gifts are presented. "The Greeting" may in some sense replace the kiss of peace, which was often part of the early communion service, although I also use that time in the worship service to emphasize important events in the life of the congregation and to make those announcements that somehow failed to find their way into the printed bulletin. I am aware that some worship leaders object to announcements within the worship service, but I see them as an opportunity to bring to the attention of the congregation special causes for prayer and to remind them of our shared responsibility for participation in the life of the church. Because of the freedom we have, we can certainly adapt the worship traditions in order to meet contemporary needs without violating our responsibility to our historical foundations.

More important than our responsibility to the past, however, is the relationship of the order of worship to Scriptural truth, and particularly to the dynamic truth of the gospel that through His Son, Jesus Christ, God transforms human lives from lost to redeemed and brings His people out of darkness into light. When the congregation is enabled to participate in that movement from human tragedy to divine triumph, the dynamic drama inherent in worship will be realized.

It is possible in worship to be simultaneously both ancient and contemporary, and we can surely use the past without being imprisoned by it.

The Bible, as we have commented, gives us no specific or in-depth instruction for shaping an order of worship. But we do have a description of at least one relatively detailed worship experience. That is the account in the sixth chapter of Isaiah of God's encounter with the prophet:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple (Isaiah 6:1).

Isaiah may well have been in the temple at Jerusalem, although it is possible, David Paine reminds us, that the experience is purely visionary and that the "temple" here is intended to be "God's heavenly dwelling-place."¹⁸ In either case, it is a worship setting, and we are immediately struck with the prophet's awareness of the presence of God and of His absolute holiness so that even the cherubim cover their faces and call out to one another an anthem of praise:

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory' (Is. 6:3b).

Here is the first great movement of the worship service, the experience of God's holiness, power, and majesty. It begins in our order of worship as the minister and the choir call the congregation to the worship of God and as the worshippers sing a hymn or psalm of adoration and praise.

His Holiness, Our Unworthiness

For Isaiah, as for the worshipping member of the congregation, acknowledging the holiness of God leads inevitably to a confession of his own unworthiness. As Hughes Old has commented, "praise and the confession of our sin go hand in hand."¹⁹

"Woe to me!" I cried, "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

For Isaiah and the gathered worshippers, confession is the prelude to divine forgiveness. In my order of worship, in order to maintain Scriptural unity, the unison prayer of confession relates, in so far as possible, to the text and sermon. For that reason, I usually write a new prayer each week and use with it a Scriptural "Assurance of Pardon."

Assurance of Pardon

From time to time I have been challenged by colleagues and church members who apparently believe that an assurance may be understood as priestly absolution. It is, of course, not my forgiveness that is announced in the "Assurance of Pardon." Rather, what is announced is the promise of God's forgiveness for sinners who confess and repent, and that promise is given not in my own words, but in the language of God's written word. If the members of the congregation have been led to confess their sin, it is unconscionable that the minister should leave them without the good news of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

It is only after this preparation in adoration, confession, and repentance that Isaiah is prepared truly to hear the word of God. On this occasion the message was a call and challenge to prophetic ministry:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8a)

In our worship order, we arrive now at that section headed "Hearing the Word of God." You may notice that this portion of the service includes a worship time for children and an anthem from the choir, as well as the reading of the Scriptural lessons and the sermon. There are admittedly some practical considerations involved here; the anthem, after all, needs to fall somewhere in the service, and if, as in many cases, younger children will leave the sanctuary for an extended educational time, it is well to get them there as quickly as possible. I will not apologize for my practicality, but I will add that the children's worship should certainly be based, as the rest of the worship is, on the Scriptural

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foundations of our faith, and that a carefully chosen anthem will also reflect biblical truth and may well underline specifically the message of the text and sermon. Also, if we understand the great creeds of the Church as broader summaries of biblical truth, then the significance of a creed immediately following the sermon becomes obvious.

An Ideal Worshipper

Isaiah, we notice, turns out to be the ideal worshipper. He hears, and he responds:

And I said, 'Here am I: send me!' (Is. 6:8b).

The way worshippers respond to the word of God will vary from person to person and from service to service. There may well be those blessed days when the response of an occasional parishioner will indeed be, "Here am I: send me!" The challenge of the word in a valid sermon, however, always calls for a response either in action or faith or both. It is important, for that reason, that we understand the offering not only as a time to contribute to the financial support of the ministry of the church, but also as a time to claim the message of the word and to commit ourselves to the call and challenge of that message. These are commitments that will be expressed verbally in the prayers and also musically in a carefully chosen final hymn or Psalm.

The drama of worship is involved in the progression from event to event as one thing leads to another, and in the simple fact that if we have truly entered into those worship experiences from beginning to end, we have claimed the specific call of the gospel in the text and sermon of the day, and at the same time have reaffirmed the dynamic action of God in Jesus Christ to bring us out of the tragedy of sin into triumph of salvation.

When worshippers have sincerely and truly participated in the total service; when we have acknowledged God's holiness, confessed our sin, accepted God's forgiveness, heard His word, and responded appropriately to that word; then the biblical benediction, God's blessing on His people, takes on its full and beautiful significance. Those who have truly worshipped are truly blessed not only at that moment, but, be-

cause of this dramatic encounter with the gospel, blessed in all the days ahead.

ENDNOTES

¹ Andrew W. Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1939) p. 14.

² Blackwood, p. 14.

³ From time to time, we ministers hear church members comment at the conclusion of a worship service, "That really helped me" or "I really needed that" or even "I enjoyed the service." Standing at the church door at noon is hardly the place or time for a theological lecture on the nature of worship, and indeed those comments may be honest and sincere. At some point in the teaching ministry of the church, however, members can perhaps begin to learn that what worship does *for them* is actually an extra gift of God and a kind of fringe benefit of worship that is truly offered to and for God.

⁴ "The Book of Worship" in *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Greenville: The General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1986) IV.A.

⁵ "There is no set form required by our Church." *Book of Worship*, III.A. paragraph 3.

⁶ *Book of Worship*, II, paragraph 3.

⁷ Donald Macleod, *Presbyterian Worship: Its Meaning and Method*, revised edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), p. 1.

⁸ C. C. Richardson, "Worship in NT Times, Christian," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) IV, p. 884.

⁹ Richardson, p. 884.

¹⁰ Richardson, IV, p. 889.

¹¹ Brad Thompson, ed., *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1961) p. 32.

¹² Thompson, pp. 54-69.

¹³ Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship That Is Reformed According to Scripture* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984) pp. 62-63.

¹⁴ Thompson, pp. 197-203.

¹⁵ Thompson, p. 357.

¹⁶ Thompson, p. 352. The "Directory of Worship" was approved by the Westminster Assembly and adopted by the Church of Scotland, February 3, 1645, although the Church of Scotland retained the authority to use the exist-

The drama of worship is involved in the progression from event to event as one thing leads to another.

ing worship traditions of the "Kirk." The original "Directory" is little studied in the modern church. It is, however, a document well worth our careful attention.

¹⁷ Old, p. 163.

¹⁸ David F. Payne, "Isaiah," *The International Bible Commentary*, revised edition, F. F. Bruce, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI., 1986) p. 724.

¹⁹ Old, p. 41.

How Faith and Practice Works

Faith and Practice is overseen by an Editorial Committee that works under the authority and oversight of the Board of Publications. Members of the committee read and critique articles, help plan future issues, and oversee the work of the Managing Editor.

The Editorial Committee presently consists of John Ball, John Blumenstein, Bill Evans, Jamie Hunt, Ben Johnston *ex officio*, Peter Kemeny, Ray King, Clyde McCants, Vice Chairman, Lee Campbell *ex officio*, David Robinson, Mark Ross, Chairman, Randy Ruble, George Syms, Jack Whytock, and Joel Gillespie (Managing Editor).

Once the Editorial Committee decides upon an issue topic, articles are solicited through general letters and personal contacts. This eventually involves one or two detailed conversations with a prospective writer about various aspects of the article – content and focus, deadlines, matters of style, copyright, etc. *Faith and Practice* does not remunerate those who write the articles. Their's is a gift of love to all of you readers. Rather, the journal has what is called "first rights" to the article, which means that the author owns the article and lets *Faith and Practice* have the right to publish the article before anyone else (this of course not being the case with reprinted articles).

Then the author sets to work, and eventually submits a first copy to the Managing Editor for review. All going well, a copy of the article is then sent off to each of four editors, three of whom are members of the Editorial Committee, and one of whom is a member of a team of other volunteer editors who enjoy helping out *Faith and Practice*. These editors use red pins and go to work, making comments about content, flow of argument, grammar and style,

endnotes, etc. They then mail the articles, often with detailed typed summaries of their thoughts, and often with painstakingly written suggestions about how aspects of the article could be reworked, back to the Managing Editor, who sends it all, with some summary observations, back to the writer. Usually there is a subsequent phone call. The writer then considers all of the various editors' notes, and revises the article as he or she thinks best. This revised article is sent back on disk to the Managing Editor, who sends copies off again to one or two copy editors. They go over the articles with a fine toothed comb, and send back marked-up copies to be edited on the computer by the Editor. Sometimes further conversations with the author are needed to clarify points here and there.

Finally the documents are put into the right format and are imported into Pagemaker, the desktop publishing program. Then, after the set up and lay out work is done, plain white copies of the final journal are sent again to three copy editors, who check things over. Sometimes, even after all of this, we miss things! Then the disk goes to the printer, which for the first three issues has been Martin Printing in Easley, S.C. After all the copies are printed, we have a bulkmail party at the ARP Center, and the next issue of *Faith and Practice* is on the way!

We are very grateful to the authors of the articles, the staff of the ARP Center, the members of the Editorial Committee, and the following volunteer editors who have each given many hours of their time to help *Faith and Practice* work: Susan Gillespie, Gail Griffin, Mike Montgomery, Eric Moore, Christine Probes, Kate Stewart, and Barton Swaim.

Thank you!

Faith and Practice does not remunerate those who write the articles. Their's is a gift of love to all of you readers.

The Event in Worship

James L. Klukow

Before I began public worship services for a new mission church in Orlando, Florida, I visited large and small, prominent and obscure, Reformed and Arminian congregations. I visited thirty different churches. After every service I asked myself, "Why were people coming to this particular church? What was attractive to them? What was the event?"¹

When visiting the largest and most influential church in Orlando to see what kind of worship experience it provided, I found it to be a good, but predictable, service. The greeters were friendly, the sanctuary was attractive and the people were warm and kind. The choir sang well, the deacons collected buckets of money, the special music was provided by a member of the church and the preacher preached an exegetical sermon with concrete applications. Everything went well and according to schedule. But nothing inspired me. Nothing motivated me to change. Nothing caused me to consider God in a richer way because I had attended. Everything was acceptable, but nothing arresting. It didn't matter in my life that I had attended this service until the last item on the order of worship appeared.

A man with cerebral palsy was asked to give his testimony. With the help of a few deacons he managed to reach the pulpit. After propping himself up behind the pulpit he began to speak in almost unintelligible English. He told us how his childhood disease left him in a terrible physical condition. He once heard the doctors tell his mother that he would never amount to much. Yet she loved him and taught him the ways of God. As he told his story of losing both parents, there was not a dry eye in the sanctuary. The only person who ever affirmed him, his mama, died while he was still in his teens. But he belonged to God, and eventually Jesus Christ turned this man into a loving husband, an active father, an author, an evangelist and a world-class speaker. With the love of his mother and his God, he overcame insurmountable odds. Then he lowered the axe on us. He asked us why we don't serve Jesus Christ with all our

hearts. "What's your excuse?" he thundered. God had spoken. Because of the message of this man, I will never live like I did before I attended that service. I had experienced a divine event during that testimony.

This testimony for me became *the* event of the whole service. And it was the element of the service that had the biggest impact on the congregation. The Holy Spirit used it to cause the people in attendance to consider what Jesus required of their lives. Hearing this man's story brought an audience of over 5,000 people immediately to the throne of Jesus. We were ready for change. We were aware that God was in our midst.

What is an event within a worship service? What are the characteristics of an event? And what are our responsibilities before God to encourage such an event to take place?

THE EVENT DEFINED

This story of a dynamic personal testimony is a perfect example of what is meant by having an "event" during worship.² An event can be described most simply as an encounter with God.³ The event may not be the same for everyone, but there should be an event every time we worship. Unfortunately, an encounter with God may not be what we regularly experience in worship. Yet, God's presence in corporate worship should make an impression upon our senses.⁴ How is it that the Creator of the universe can visit us in worship and we not sense His presence? Either He has not visited us, or we have been blinded to His presence. Neither proposition is a good one.

When I began Parkway Church's public worship celebrations, my goal was to ask God every Sunday for an event to happen in the lives of the attenders. My heart-felt desire was to offer to these people, many of whom had never attended a worship service, a personal relationship with the Holy God.⁵ Often after the services my wife and I asked ourselves, "What was the event? What did God use to change His

An event can be described most simply as an encounter with God.

people and motivate us to obey His commandments?" Not every service at Parkway Church has an identifiable event, but we pray that God will move among His people to the point of changing us on a regular basis.

Numerical size, worship venue, or style of worship make no difference in the frequency of divine events in worship. Physical dynamics may encourage our awareness of God's presence; however, they, in themselves, do not create events.

Most worship-attenders, in describing their expectations of a worship service, would not include in their description the idea of an event taking place. Yet, every believer is consciously or unconsciously hoping to see God move in his life.⁶ Everyone desires to confirm the reality of God in his life. True worshippers have a hunger to grow closer to God.

God desires to make Himself known to us.⁷ He is a God who reveals Himself to us as a living God.⁸ Thus, we are able to see His hand upon our lives. In an event God becomes real to us. The benefits of His covenants become manifested in our presence. A divine event touches every part of our being. Our minds are stimulated. Our hearts are motivated. Our wills are challenged. Our emotions are touched. Our spirits are directed to serve God more fully. However you perceive the constitution of a human being, each element of man is impacted by the truth of the presence of God when God makes Himself known in an event.

THE EVENT CHARACTERIZED

First of all, undergirding the perspective of an event in worship is the notion that God is already involved in the intimate details of His children's lives.⁹ God can be known and desires to make Himself known in concrete ways.¹⁰ God desires that His people experience Him.¹¹ This is a by-product of God's omnipresence.

A second concept behind this notion of event is that God is in control and is the primary actor during worship.¹² He is the One who draws us to Himself. He is the One who administers grace to the needy and judgment to the proud. He alone is the One to be worshiped. He is sovereign and shares His praise with no one.

A third idea behind the notion of event is that God expects us to change to be more like His son Jesus Christ.¹³ He is the One who effects that change as we cooperate with the Spirit in the transforming of our nature.¹⁴ Since God is immutable, when He manifests His presence in an event, we are the ones who experience change.

When people claim God is doing a "new" thing in worship, they may accidentally be claiming that God is mutable.¹⁵ God does not do "new" things in worship. He gives new perspectives on ageless truths. We don't need to look for novel spiritual events. We need a fresh understanding of unchangeable spiritual realities. It is not a new experience we need, but an experience of renewal.

God in Action

If God is who He claims to be, we should expect Him to penetrate our world. We should be able to see Him act. We should see the effects of His presence. I can't imagine a world in which God is not active among His people. Yet we often settle for less than an awareness of His presence. We become content with obeying God from a distance. We miss experiencing Him because we are afraid that if we trust Him to make Himself known He will disappoint us.

God is like the wind. We cannot see Him because He is invisible; He is a spirit.¹⁶ Yet, as with the wind, we can see His acts and effects. The wind blows and we see it sway the palm trees. The wind can take a piece of paper and move it swiftly along a road. Like the wind, God cannot be seen; we can see only the effects of His presence. He persuades and changes the minds of His children. He motivates them to move in particular directions.

An event in a worship service is a visitation of God.¹⁷ It is something in the service that steers us out of our daily routines and into the presence of Almighty God. It is something that refocuses us on who Jesus is rather than on what the church building looks like. We stop counting the rafters and begin counting our sins. We quit looking at the stained glass windows sparkling with light and begin to see the glory of the Lord as He shines through His people.

We don't need to look for novel spiritual events. We need a fresh understanding of unchangeable spiritual realities.

THE EVENT EXPERIENCED

An event can invade any aspect of worship. Four key aspects of worship that have always characterized the church are prayer, praise, preaching and the presentation of resources.¹⁸ God can invade any of these categories with a manifestation of His presence. We can see an event anywhere in a worship service.

I once experienced an event in prayer when, after a stirring rendition of a favorite song, the worship leader bowed his head and began praying. When he finished the prayer he looked up to find the senior pastor leading the whole congregation in a passionate time of prayer. People got off their chairs and onto the floor. They became aware of God's presence in a powerful way, so they knelt on the floor and began to pray. Several were weeping as they realized just how much God loved them and how unworthy they were to receive His blessings. Hundreds of people were spontaneously praying, confessing sin and glorifying God. This was an event.¹⁹

Praise can include public testimonies, singing, or times of thanksgiving. It is not unusual for God to break into a praise time and touch the emotions of the people. Sometimes spontaneous activities such as applause, or the singing of a simple chorus will simply erupt from the congregation. As mentioned earlier, a personal testimony can touch the minds and hearts of the people and make all the difference in a service.

Another event occurred during an Easter service at our church. Three elements were thematically planned with the prayer that the Holy Spirit would use them to impact the worshippers. First, we had a dramatic presentation about what it means to be a Christian. Immediately after the drama came the sermon. A special musical piece was presented after the drama and sermon. Entitled "I Died For You," this piece was a song written by our worship leader. Special music is usually scheduled before the sermon, but in planning for this service we thought the song would really bring the message home to the people better if it followed the message.

And it happened. The thoughts of the sermon solidified in the song, emotions were stirred in the people, and we began to sense the presence of God. The truth of God's love for us

overwhelmed the audience and tears began to flow. Many bowed their heads and prayed. Some paused to focus upon God. Conversations afterward reflected a desire to apply God's love to their lives. God had been experienced. He used that beautiful, yet simple song to make His presence known. We knew we had been visited by God.

The preaching of the word, when delivered with passion and based upon biblical truth, can and should bring about a change in the hearer.²⁰ As a preacher, I can see when my words make an impact. Once – and every minister must experience this once in his lifetime – I left my sermon notes on my desk in the office. I had practiced the sermon and memorized the major points. But I never enter the pulpit without a manuscript. I'm not the kind of speaker who likes surprises. There were papers in my preaching Bible which I had assumed were my sermon notes. Since the sermon was clear in my mind, after a pastoral prayer I jumped right into the introductory story. As I told the story I headed to the stand that held my Bible, only to find that my sermon notes were missing. Thus I didn't know until after I had finished the introduction that I had left my sermon notes on my desk in my office! The adrenaline began to pump through my veins. What was I to do? I was committed to the topic now. No one knew the manuscript was missing except me. Fortunately, I remembered the opening Scripture. So, stalling for time, I had everyone turn to that passage, and while they were doing so, I gathered my thoughts, held the Bible up with confidence and read the story boldly. Then I proceeded to preach straight from the text (what a novel idea!). Afterwards many came to me exclaiming that was the best sermon I had ever preached. Little did they know I was shaking in my shoes as I desperately tried to remember the outline.

That sermon, with a diligently prepared but absent manuscript, became an event in the lives of the people. The sermon was full of fire because I was on the hot seat. I had to listen to myself and pay close attention to the Scriptures. I had to trust God and not my notes. The zeal and passion in my heart that morning were transferred to the people of God by the Holy Spirit and made an impact on their lives. Person after person sought me out after the service

***The sermon
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because I was
on the hot
seat.***

to recount how God had given them direction through that sermon. While I wish I could take credit for the effectiveness of that sermon, it was clearly the grace of God that was lived out among the people that day. It was an event to see!

The presentation of resources (tithes, gifts, and offerings), which many of us think of as uneventful, can be a time of seeing the grace of God. The giving of money, time and talents to the service of Jesus Christ can be among the most rewarding experiences. A need arose in one congregation that ten thousand dollars could meet. Knowing the resources of his congregation, the minister called for a special collection and challenged the people to respond to this unique opportunity. They collected the monies and reported the results to the congregation before the worship service was over. Can you imagine the excitement in that fellowship as they saw God prompt His people to give ten thousand dollars?

Another congregation had been meeting in rented facilities for years. The landlord told them they must move. This was the last straw. Over the past decade they had moved several times and it began to effect the quality of the church's ministry. The minister and elders notified the people to bring in the tithes and offerings that Sunday because they needed to purchase land and build a building. That one Sunday millions of dollars were collected! It was the largest single offering in the history of the Christian Church. With cash they were able to purchase land and build a sanctuary seating thousands of people. I wish I had been there to witness that. Only God could pull off that kind of an offering.

Must an event be characterized as unusual, spectacular, or odd? Not necessarily. When a particular event is out of the ordinary it clearly stands out in people's minds more readily. However, the important issue is not whether the event stems from unusual or ordinary circumstances, but whether the worshipper's mind and heart have been impacted by the presence of God. God promises to be among believers whenever two or three are gathered in His name. Yet often His presence is not recognized. It is like going to a worship service where everything is acceptable but nothing arresting. Perhaps the

real problem with a typical worship service in that we worshippers do not allow God's Spirit to make an impact upon us. Many of us become accustomed to our routines in worship, and we lower our standards and expectations. We become complacent regarding the personal nature of our God. We end up getting what we expect.

God can and does use simple things to create worship events in the lives of His followers. Take for example the ordinary and expected elements of communion in a worship service. The regular taking of communion can become an event in which the people's minds and hearts are impacted through the simplicity and directness of the sacrament. Tears begin to flow, emotions are touched, and the people are more tuned to the personal presence of God as the elements are described and distributed.

THE EVENT ENCOURAGED

We, as worshippers, can experience God in great ways if we are looking for events during worship.²¹ Many of us are too limited in what we pray for, hope for, and look for. We need to consider the great riches of the spiritual inheritance which God has promised to us through faith in Jesus Christ.²² This inheritance, based upon our position as sons and daughters of the great King, is immeasurable and unlimited. Let us not limit our experiences with the eternal God. He desires to bless us with His presence. An expectation and anticipation that God will move in a worship service, impact our lives and change our world are healthy elements for continued Christian growth.²³

A worship leader can encourage events in worship in several ways. First, he can be aware of the need for them in the lives of God's people. Most people's lives are full of mundane activities. Even in their private times with God they rarely experience the presence of God. Worshipers want and need God to invade their senses. Second, the worship leader can carefully plan celebrations and services which will provide the Holy Spirit with tools to impact a life. Take one of the four elements of a worship service and consciously design it with the notion that God desires to reveal Himself to His people. Plan an interesting testimony. Organize a thematic or dramatic reading of the Scriptures.

An expectation and anticipation that God will move in a worship service, impact our lives and change our world are healthy elements for continued Christian growth.

Present eternal truths in different and interesting ways for the sake of awakening the congregation to the reality of God's presence. Plan various elements in the service that, if God so desires, can break through the mundane and predictable and confront us with His presence.

Finally, and most importantly, both worship leader and worshipper can pray that God will make His presence known to His people during worship. God promises to answer the prayers of His people to know Him better.²⁴ We need to experience God, but in the context of truth and order. Most dynamic experiences of God are relegated to experiential models of worship such as pentecostal or charismatic forms. Yet our people need the confirmation that the God of the Old and New Testaments who did great and mighty things is still active in the lives of twentieth-century believers. Worshipers long for a knowledge that Jesus is personally concerned with them and is intimately acquainted with their needs. God's people need divine events in worship.

As with every divine dynamic there are counterfeit events. A true event in worship is not simply emotionalism. It is not the showmanship of a circus arena master of ceremonies. There are no gimmicks or tricks used to pump up the people. There is no manipulation of the emotions or focus upon man.²⁵ A divine event is not entertainment. Entertainment is only a shadow of life; an event is life. Entertainment is passive; an event is engaging. Entertainment is an end in itself; when God visits in an event, we are projected into ministry. A divine event is never outside of God's character. God always acts decently and in order.²⁶ He acts according to His nature. Events in worship are never void of Biblical support. They are done in openness and in the context of solid Scriptural backing.

We need to pray that God, through His grace, will allow us to experience Him often. God is as personal as a family member; He calls Himself our Father. Our Heavenly Father desires to have a vibrant relationship with us. He wants to create events in our lives as we publicly gather to honor Him in worship.²⁷ As the holders of the keys of life we need to open the experiences of our people to a relational and covenantal God. We must long by prayer and expectation for Him to reveal Himself in cor-

porate worship.

APPENDIX

A Study Guide for "The Event in Worship"

- A. Description of an event in worship
 1. What is an event (according to this article, according to your understanding, according to the Bible)?
 2. What events can be illustrated from the Scripture?
 3. What are the characteristics of events in the Bible (what happens, who is the primary actor creating the event, what is the result of the event)?
 4. Are there false events in worship today? If so, what are their characteristics?
- B. Expectation of an event in worship
 1. How often should we anticipate an event to take place in worship?
 - a. At every worship celebration/service
 - b. A frequent but not weekly experience
 - c. The exception to our normal activities on Sunday
 2. Have you ever experienced an event (the presence of God) during:
 - a. A prayer time (personal or corporate)?
 - b. A praise time (singing and testimony)?
 - c. A preaching time (sermon or teaching)?
 - d. A presentation of resources (tithes, gifts and offerings)?
 3. Must an event be characterized as unusual, spectacular or odd?
- C. Preparation for an event in worship
 1. Regarding our spiritual growth, what is the value of expecting and anticipating God to reveal Himself during corporate worship?
 2. Is it possible to plan worship so that events will more likely occur, without feeling that we have tried to manipulate God?
 3. How can we prepare our hearts to experience the presence of God in a more regular and personal way than we do currently?

ENDNOTES

¹ The focus of this article will be on the practical aspects of experiencing God during corporate worship. This author understands that the primary reason for attending worship is not to

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Entertainment
is only a
shadow of life;
an event is life.
Entertainment
is passive; an
event is en-
gaging.***

receive a blessing but to give honor to God. God has commanded us to worship Him. He has created us to be worshippers of Him. However, there is a dynamic that needs to be addressed regarding the human motivation behind attending worship. This practical consideration, our responsibility to obey God's commandments and laws, is often overlooked when we plan worship services and when we attend worship services. The point of this article is to challenge the reader to worship God with an expectant attitude. We are to have a spirit of anticipation that God will personally affect our lives as we worship Him. This article will illuminate this point in order to encourage the reader to seek communion with God on a regular basis.

² The idea of an event in worship was stimulated by two thoughts. First, the desire of the Psalmist was that he never leave God's presence (Psa. 51:11). He desired to remain in an all-day walk in God's presence (Psa. 89:15,16). The experience of the presence of God affected the Psalmist physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Psa. 114:7; 16:11; 41:12). In other words, God was encountered and it was common for this to take place during worship. The second idea was the notion that many of the people of faith in the Bible experienced personal encounters with God (Adam, Gen. 3:8,9; Abraham, Gen. 22:1-13; Jacob, Gen. 28:10-22; Moses, Exo. 3:1-6; an unnamed prophet, 2 Kings 6:5-7; Isaiah, Isa. 6:1-8; Mary, Luke. 2:21-40; all believers, 1 Cor. 3:16). The conclusion is that believers experience God through their senses, in the context of the real world and have this experience on more than one occasion. Therefore, when planning worship or when planning to attend worship, the human motivational element needs to be considered.

³ Worship in Scripture is equated with entering the presence of God (Ezek. 46:3; Psa. 86:9; 95:6; 96:9; 100:2).

⁴ 1 Thess. 1:5.

⁵ John 17:20,21.

⁶ Phil. 3:10.

⁷ John. 17:26.

⁸ Matt. 22:32; John 1:14, 6:57.

⁹ Psa. 139:1-4,13; 1 Cor. 8:2,3.

¹⁰ Throughout the Old and New Testaments God manifested Himself to His people. The incarnation of Jesus is the ultimate example of

God's concreteness regarding the revelation of His presence (Gen. 3:8; 17:1; 18:1; Exo. 3:2; Deut. 5:22; Jn. 1:14; Heb. 1:2).

¹¹ The life and ministry of Jesus illustrate this truth (John 4:10,26). It continues to be illustrated through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26, Acts 2:4).

¹² Isa. 45:9-19; John 4:23, 17:6; Phil. 3:3.

¹³ Rom 8:29.

¹⁴ Matt 18:3; Rom. 12:1,2.

¹⁵ God is able to change things without changing Himself (Num. 16:30; Isa. 42:9; Jer. 31:22). However, some erroneously connect a new move or experience of God with a change in the character of God or with a new (hidden) revelation of God (Mt. 24:24).

¹⁶ John 4:24.

¹⁷ God appeared to many in the Bible in many ways. Each visitation brought direction and a deeper sense of the authority of God (Gen. 18:1,2; Deut. 31:15; Acts 5:1-11; 9:4,5 are only a few examples).

¹⁸ 1 Thess. 5:17; Acts 4:24; Rev. 4:8,11; Acts 7:7-53; 1 Cor. 16:2.

¹⁹ The Greek term for "prophesying" in 1 Cor. 14:24,25 can be understood to mean more than future-telling. It has a broader meaning which is to proclaim the gospel. The event has been seen when the sinner "falls down and worships God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (vs. 25).

²⁰ Rom. 10:14.

²¹ Isa. 6:1, 55:6; Mt. 6:33; Acts 8:56.

²² 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 1:18,19; Col. 2:2,3.

²³ Psa. 24:7-9, 105:4; Zech. 12:10.

²⁴ Eph. 1:17; 1 John 5:15.

²⁵ It is interesting to note that Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers imitated the acts of God (Exo. 7:10-12); But the imitation of God's presence was limited and exposed for being a counterfeit (Ex. 8:17-19).

²⁶ 1 Cor. 14:29-33.

²⁷ Rev. 3:20.

The point of this article is to challenge the reader to worship God with an expectant attitude.

More Depth, or Something

Robert P. Glick

The burden of this article is to establish the point that hymns and psalms add an element to worship that cannot be replaced by any other medium.

He was a fifteen-year-old member of my youth choir, a product of Presbyterian worship in the traditional style. But for the past year he had been joining some friends for Sunday morning services at one of Greenville's fastest-growing independent churches. There he experienced the type of religious music he had come to know at his home church's youth meetings and summer youth conventions at the beach – praise choruses accompanied by guitars, drums, and synthesizers. But here it happened on a Sunday morning! Here was something magnetic, alluring, and ... well, intoxicating.

So this same youth, a keyboardist in an amateur rock band (thanks to a few piano lessons I gave him), really caught my attention one afternoon when he casually remarked, "You know, I miss the old hymns."

"Why do you think that is?" I asked, without concealing my surprise.

"I don't know. There's just something to them; they have more depth, or something."

For some reason, I have never forgotten that passing comment. "More depth, or something" says a lot about the genius of the noble, if currently battered, hymn – more, I suspect, than my young friend probably knew. The format of the traditional hymn or psalter selection invites a certain degree of depth – depth of theological development in the text and depth of sophistication in the musical setting. The "or something" part of my friend's quote also revealed more than he likely knew. There is something quite intangible about artistic forms of expression such as poetry and music. They are rightly considered a form of communication, albeit non-verbal communication. Much could be said of the ways in which God fills creation with nonverbal communication, and uniquely equips our brains both to send and receive such language.¹ But that is the stuff of another essay. Suffice it to say that when my friend added "or something" to his statement, he was attesting to a subconscious sense that he was being more richly edified by the actual musical and poetic

aspects *themselves* than he had been for some time.

The burden of this article is to establish the point that hymns and psalms add an element to worship that cannot be replaced by any other medium. One may rightly protest that certain of the propositions about music which are offered below to support this claim are applicable to more worship modes than just hymn and psalm-singing. It is my hope, however, that when considered as a whole, the combined evidence will show that hymns and psalms do indeed make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to worship.

HYMNS DO WHAT SERMONS DO

Like a sermon, a hymn is a carefully outlined exposition of a biblical passage or theological idea. The subject may be inspired praise, an exposition of the person and work of Christ, key attributes of God's nature, or instruction on prayer, to name a few of the possibilities. And just as sermons are usually preached by trained ministers, the majority of hymn-writers have received formal theological training. We in the Reformed tradition place much importance on well-trained clergy. We reason that seminary training equips the preacher to proclaim the word of God with accuracy and depth. We can rejoice that so many of our hymn texts, mini-sermons that they are, have the theological depth and incisiveness that comes from minds and hearts disciplined by rigorous theological training.

But today's average hymn or psalm of four stanzas is criticized for being too long and complicated.² It is striking to observe the number of recently published books warning us about the "dumbing down" of American culture and of Americans themselves. When the average TV scene has been whittled to about nine second flashes, our tolerance for following a well-reasoned line of logic is similarly diminished. If a three-minute hymn is criticized for requiring too much mental energy for the modern churchgoer,

is not a twenty-minute sermon open for similar criticism?

HYMNS ADD THE ELOQUENCE OF POETRY

Why do people go to the trouble of setting down their thoughts in the rigorous format of poetic line and poetic meter? Words, at times, do not carry necessary weight in themselves to quite make the point. The charm and grace of the well-turned phrase, the poignancy and beauty of "a word fitly spoken," the stately order of the poetic meter – all these communicate a wealth of God-given meaning which words in ordinary prose simply cannot attain. Poetry adds the nonverbal dimension mentioned above. In poetry, the meaning plumbs far greater depths than the mere sum of the words.

HYMNS DOUBLE THE NON-VERBAL IMPACT BY COMBINING POETRY WITH MUSIC

This is a true "double-whammy!" And herein lies the key to a phenomenon observed by many, that "the basic beliefs of most Christians have been formulated more by the hymns they sing than by the preaching they hear or the Bible study they pursue."³ One may question this statement's validity or find it a sad commentary on our lives as worshippers, but it is true that many people can remember a Bible verse, or any text for that matter, far better if it is set to music. This educational value of singing is why music is, or should be, a key ingredient in any Christian education program. This is also why church leadership should be very careful to oversee what is being sung in all church programs. We are dealing with a potent medium. And, of course, it is a prime argument for not abandoning the traditional hymn. The well-written, theologically accurate hymn is quite an effectively in helping Christians internalize biblical truth and even the very words of Scripture. To this day I cannot read the book of Isaiah without my memory bombarding with section after section from Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*.

HYMNS CAN TELL STORIES

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No, I was found of Thee. (Anonymous)⁴

O God, we have heard
what our parents have told,
What wonders you did
in the great days of old.
The nations were crushed
and expelled by your hand;
You gave to your people
the victory, the land....
But you cast us off
and brought shame to our boasts;
no more into battle
you go with our hosts.
You gave us like sheep
to be slaughtered and slain;
the sale of your people
has brought you no gain.⁵

Because of their greater length and multiple stanzas, hymns and psalms can tell the story of God's saving deeds throughout the ages. Over and over we are called in Scripture to remember what God has done, to recall the goodness of the Lord's saving mercies. In the retelling of the story we are encouraged and admonished. It is, after all, *the Story*. Psalmists and hymn-writers do this both by recalling how God has worked in their personal past and by rehearsing the biblical stories. Psalm 105 is one of many psalms that urges us to "sing praise to him; tell of his wonderful acts," and then goes on to enumerate many of these acts. Or consider such a hymn as "Amazing Grace," with its strong testimony of God's providence.

How important is this telling and retelling of stories? I, along with many others, would propose that it is the very heartbeat of Christian worship. When we hear the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:7) calling the *whole assembly* to "remember the days of old; consider the generations long past"; when we consider how baptism calls us to remember all the water stories of Noah, Moses, and John the Baptist; when we picture our Lord with bread and wine saying, "Do this in remembrance of me;" *then* we begin

Because of their greater length and multiple stanzas, hymns and psalms can tell the story of God's saving deeds throughout the ages.

to see that telling the Story is what worship is all about. Since earliest times Christians have organized the Christian Year around recalling the events of Christ's life in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Hymn and psalm singing gives us an active way corporately to tell and to remember the Story.

HYMNS REMIND US OF OUR HERITAGE AND OF THE LARGER BODY OF CHRIST

Hymns remind us that we are a part of something much bigger than our own congregation, our own denomination, and our own times.

Hymns remind us in other ways. They remind us that we are a part of something much bigger than our own congregation, our own denomination, and our own times. And anything short of a stick of dynamite to jar us out of our reflective scorn for anything older than the current trend or fashion, to open up to us what is happening beyond our local sphere of concern, deserves at least to be taken seriously. Through hymns we join with our brothers and sisters struggling through the triumphs of the Reformation, the joys and wonders of personal conversion, and the perils of past persecutions, wars, and plagues. These are not abstract accounts. Real people, people with families and dreams and fussy kids and the same kinds of problems we have, people who loved the same Lord Jesus we love, took the time and trouble to sit down and write out their Christian experience in the form of poetry.

When Martin Rinkart wrote "Now Thank We All Our God" during the Thirty-Years' War in Germany, he was the only pastor left in a besieged city where, included among the hundreds dying each day, were his wife and many of his friends. When Horatio Spafford wrote "It is Well with My Soul," he was mourning the loss at sea of his four daughters and the near loss of his wife. Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," though a paraphrase of Psalm 46, still paints a vivid picture both of his own struggles against "the Prince of Darkness, grim" and his breath-taking encounters with the Church of Rome.

These people are part of our family; we walk in their footsteps, and one day we shall meet them and live with them forever. One day we will all sing the one song together. Until then,

we can still share in their experiences in a special way as we join them in singing the hymns that came forth from their own joys and pains. This is the communion of the saints we affirm in our creed. Stated another way, a hymnbook is a sort of family album. Each hymn is a snapshot, a window into time, portraying some key event in the lives of one or more of our brothers and sisters of times past and present.

Throw out the hymnal? Are you kidding? You might as well take my family album off my shelf and burn it! There is very little difference.

HYMNS ALLOW THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST TO OFFER A UNIFIED WORD TO GOD AND TO EACH OTHER.

If hymnbooks allow us to know our heritage, to join forces with family members gone before, to be strengthened and exhorted by the communion of saints, they also provide the means of uniting with our contemporary spiritual family. Where else in a worship service do we have a chance actively to praise God and to exhort each other so profoundly?

A key verse of Scripture in this regard is Colossians 3:16. The complexity of this verse is shown by the many different renderings in modern translations.⁶ My studies lead me to believe that Paul is here proposing the use of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs *as a means of* teaching and admonishing one another, not merely as a second way to let the word of Christ dwell (the first way being through the teaching and admonishing). If my take on this verse is correct, we have here another important insight into how hymns are to be used.

Consider your own singing church (you *do* sing, don't you?). Has it occurred to you that your singing is not just communication between yourself and God, is not only unto God, but is also a means of teaching or even admonishing (warning or correcting) those sitting around you? Our knowledge of ancient Israel's worship confirms what is inherent in the very structure of the biblical psalms. One easily notes the parallelism of the psalms, how a verse so often seems to say the same thing twice.⁷ Psalms were sung antiphonally – back and forth between leader

and choir, or between the leader or choir and the people. As this rhythmic interchange went on – this mutual teaching and admonishing from the word of God – we can see how the word, corresponding to the “word of Christ” in the Colossians 3:16 passage, came to dwell more richly among them. At Erskine Seminary, we sometimes turn to face each other across the aisle and sing stanzas of hymns back and forth to each other to reinforce the truth of Colossians 3:16. Hymns, indeed, offer a unique and blessed opportunity for us to proclaim and experience our oneness in Christ and to exercise our priestly role with each other.

TWO PRESENT TRENDS

There are currently two major revolutions to be noted in relation to congregational song. One is the proliferation of “Praise and Worship” music and choruses based on a verse or two of Scripture and miniature songs of praise, often accompanied by electronic keyboard instruments and guitars. The other revolution centers on a virtual explosion of new hymn-writing that has taken place since the mid-1970’s. All the major denominations and a host of smaller ones (well over forty of them by now), have published new hymnals in the last eighteen years. The main reason for this is the incredible increase of quality hymn-writing currently taking place after a lengthy period of comparative drought in hymnic output.⁸ One need only explore the Index of Authors in almost any of these hymnals written in the immediately preceding decades as compared to a hymnal published in the 1950’s or 1960’s.

So, while in some circles the use of hymns is increasingly considered quaintly antique, in other circles the hymnic tradition is being energized with an influx of timely new material. One ought not jump too hastily to conclusions about who is in each circle. There is a growing tendency throughout the American worship scene to combine the best of both traditions. Robert Webber of Wheaton College labels this trend “Convergence Worship,” and it may be one of the healthier winds blowing in the midst of all the culture wars raging within and without the church.

We all like to chuckle at Mark Twain’s witty

retort regarding reports of his demise, “The news of my death has been greatly exaggerated.” My guess is that this will likely be true of the hymn as well. I don’t know. There’s just something to them; they have more depth, or something.

ENDNOTES

¹ See Psalm 19:1-4.

² Hymns of six to twelve stanzas were not uncommon in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Consider that Charles Wesley’s *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* (1739) originally had ten stanzas.

³ Harry Eskew and Hugh McElrath, *Sing with Understanding* (Nashville: Broadman) p. 59.

⁴ *The Hymnbook*, 1955; #402.

⁵ *The Psalter Hymnal* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1987) Psalm 44.

⁶ The issue revolves around how to understand the relationship between a number of seemingly equal participial phrases. Different translations (and commentators) interpret the relationship between the participial phrases differently. By adding the word “and” at various points, and by varying the location of commas, the translators can give the verse varying senses. Note the wording in the Authorized (King James) Version, the James Moffatt Translation, or the New American Standard Bible as opposed to that in the Revised Standard Version or New International Version.

⁷ Note, for example, Psalms 102 or 103.

⁸ A second reason is a growing commitment to the singing of psalms in a variety of formats. Many new hymnals give vastly increased resources for the corporate singing of the psalms.

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Warming Up the Frozen Chosen

R. J. Gore

A perception exists that these innovations do not capture the ethos of Presbyterian worship, an ethos that is often identified with doing all things "decently and in order."

At an 1898 celebration commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Westminster Assembly, Wallace Radcliffe, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., complained about the "heterogeneous and irresponsible license which in our day has come to be known as Presbyterian worship, wherein every Presbyterian minister does that which is right in his own eyes."¹ Imagine his consternation today if he were around to view some of the developments in evangelical Presbyterian circles! Psalms and hymns give way to Scripture songs and choruses, stately pastoral prayers are replaced by spontaneous "prayers of the people," and free-flowing services with guitars, pianos, and brass instruments take the place of formal orders of worship with stately pipe organs and anthems.

There is some suspicion in Presbyterian circles over these developments. A perception exists that these innovations do not capture the ethos of Presbyterian worship, an ethos that is often identified with doing all things "decently and in order." Certainly, this new style of worship, a model clearly related to the "Praise and Worship" movement, differs in significant ways from what has become traditional Presbyterian worship.² Are these developments the result of unreflective trendiness? Are Presbyterians buying into a worship model that is, in its underlying theory and overt practice, incompatible with historic Presbyterian concerns in worship? This question is absolutely essential because Presbyterians, historically, have sought to ground all their worship practices on biblical principles. To evaluate the new style of worship, we must address at least three foundational issues. First, what is the "Praise and Worship" movement and why are some Presbyterians adopting it? Second, how should Presbyterians determine and regulate the boundaries of legitimate worship? Third, what theological concerns inform the

Presbyterian practice of worship? With answers to these foundational questions, we will be able to evaluate the "Praise and Worship" model in terms of its ability to satisfy the supreme concern of Presbyterians that their worship be pleasing to God.

THE PRAISE AND WORSHIP MOVEMENT

The origins of the "Praise and Worship" movement are not altogether clear. Robert Webber, a leading scholar in the field of liturgical studies, suggests that "one of the earliest expressions of [these trends] was the rise of testimonial music through the leadership of Bill Gaither in the early sixties."³ Other contributors to this development may well have been the "Body Life" movement, in particular, and the Pentecostal tradition in general. The "Body Life" movement was presented to the evangelical community in Ray Stedman's 1972 volume by that name.⁴ Stedman advocated what he considered to be biblical patterns of worship, including open requests for prayer, immediate and spontaneous responses to those requests, the sharing of personal testimonies, the use of contemporary music as a vehicle of praise, and an emphasis on the giftedness of every member of the body. Although startling at that time, these elements are now a commonplace in the worship of many evangelicals.

The impetus for renewal of worship also came from another, unexpected, direction. The Pentecostal tradition has long favored an open style of worship. It is "an eclectic amalgamation of a variety of traditions ... All, however, are characterized by an attitude of allowing the Holy Spirit to lead, an attitude that means Pentecostal worship tends to be less structured than that of other groups."⁵ Sectarian in their origins, many Pentecostal groups long avoided relations with established denominations. However, as

the Charismatic movement spread throughout evangelical and mainline denominations in the sixties and seventies, traditional Pentecostal and Charismatic practices became more widely known.⁶ Today the lines that separate the Pentecostal tradition from other worship traditions have been greatly blurred.

Along the lines of Stedman's "Body Life" movement, and showing similarities to elements of Pentecostal/Charismatic worship, a new phenomenon developed within the ranks of evangelical Presbyterians. By the mid 1970s, a "New Life" movement arose within the otherwise staid Orthodox Presbyterian Church. While holding to Calvinistic doctrine and Presbyterian polity, the liturgical expression of the "New Life" churches appeared at times more Pentecostal than Reformed. As expressed by one proponent, "We've discovered that when others (besides the minister) participate in worship by speaking out their praise to God and leading other parts of worship, the life of the Church as the body of Christ is more evident."⁷ This phenomenon soon spread beyond the bounds of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Positive Impact

Today it would be fair to say that all evangelical Presbyterian denominations, as well as many evangelical Presbyterians within the mainline denomination, have felt the impact of one or more of the renewal movements in worship. Indeed, all parts of the broader evangelical community have been affected by some aspect of the "Praise and Worship" movement as well. For many evangelicals, this impact has been positive, an opportunity for renewal and transformation. For Presbyterians who have embraced the principles of this movement, the result often has been positive, as well.

It should be noted that among Presbyterians who have embraced the "Praise and Worship" movement, whether in part or in its fullness, the reasons for doing so have not differed significantly from their non-Presbyterian brethren. Among those reasons are that it "involves the laity," "provides meaningful worship," "addresses the interests of our contemporary culture," "contextualizes worship," and, of course, "it's fun!"

THE REGULATION OF WORSHIP

In spite of the apparent good that follows in the wake of "Praise and Worship" renewal, not all Presbyterians consider it an unmixed blessing. Admittedly, there are some whose opposition is due to nothing more than a disdain for all things new. For others, however, the innovations of this movement appear to undermine legitimate Presbyterian concerns. It is not change, per se, that warrants their opposition, but change contrary to the distinctive principle of Presbyterian worship.

To appreciate this principled opposition, it is necessary to understand the historic basis of Presbyterian worship, namely, the "Regulative Principle of Worship." As expressed in the *Westminster Standards*,⁸ and the *Directory for the Publick Worship of God*,⁹ this principle argues "that with regard to worship whatever is commanded in Scripture is required, and that whatever is not commanded is forbidden."¹⁰ Today, some Presbyterians remain quite rigorous in their application of the formula. For example, one of the most important issues for the proponents of the "Regulative Principle of Worship" is the use of "uninspired hymns." Historically, and even today, many proponents of the "Regulative Principle of Worship" would argue that only the 150 Psalms are authorized for singing in worship services.¹¹ Others, in addition, have opposed not only the singing of "uninspired hymns," but also the use of musical instruments to accompany congregational singing.¹²

In the days of the Anglican-Puritan struggle, the "Regulative Principle of Worship" was the rallying point for Presbyterians who sought to preserve freedom of conscience and to limit the power of the church in imposing liturgical conformity. While most Presbyterians appreciate the necessity of preserving conscience in matters of worship, they are generally not willing to embrace the sanctions required by a stringent interpretation of the "Regulative Principle of Worship." Instead of the principle which requires an explicit command for all elements of worship, there is widespread agreement that all elements of worship must be grounded in biblical principles.

A greater latitude in regulating worship than is allowed by the stringent interpretation of the

Today the lines that separate the Pentecostal tradition from other worship traditions have been greatly blurred.

"Regulative Principle" is needed to explain the practice of our Lord Himself. Jesus was an active worshipper in the Jewish synagogue, an institution (from the exilic/post-exilic period) for which there is no explicit divine command in Scripture. Furthermore, Jesus' presence in the temple during the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22f.) indicates his approval of this observance, a festival which also exists without explicit divine command.¹³

We might also observe that even within the clearly prescribed elements of worship, the Scriptures leave much to us for filling out. We are commanded to sing, but no tunes are provided. We are commanded to pray, but the content of our prayers is in some ways determined by our specific circumstances.

Indeed, rather than seeking to find in Scripture an all-encompassing list of commands or prohibitions, as suggested by many who champion a stringent view of the "Regulative Principle of Worship," there is a more biblical, as well as a more fruitful and more dynamic method of establishing the bounds of legitimate worship.

We find such an approach in the practice of Calvin. When we examine the worship offered in 16th century Geneva, and trace the theological motifs in Calvin's own practice, we are able to discover a number of significant concerns. We may briefly list these concerns under the following rubrics: catholicity, simplicity, congregational involvement, sacramental focus, and contextualization.¹⁴

Catholicity¹⁵ was the first and foremost concern for Calvin. He sought to provide a pattern of worship that reflected the biblical data as filtered through the practice of the early church. For Calvin, all his efforts at reform were intended to renew the face of the church, not to bring about schism. His efforts in liturgical renewal focused on recapturing the spirit of the early, undivided, uncorrupted catholic church. As such, Calvin's worship looks remarkably like the liturgies of the first five centuries. Finding no prescribed order of worship in the Scriptures, Calvin did not hesitate to follow the example of the early church fathers whose liturgies he found in keeping with biblical principles. His work stands well in comparison with the work of other reformers. Neither novelty nor a bare

Biblicism characterized Calvin's reform of the liturgy.¹⁶

Calvin's liturgical renewal also sought to reform the liturgy by simplifying the layers of ceremony and ritual that had developed during the Middle Ages. For Calvin, anything that obscured the centrality of the word of God was inappropriate. This did not lead, however, to a barrenness in worship. Instead, a proper liturgy, including the confession of sin, the singing of metrical psalms, the reading and preaching of the word, and elements such as the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer enriched a service patterned after the two-fold worship structure of the early church.¹⁷ Elements such as the Apostles' Creed had no direct Scriptural injunction, but was surely in keeping with the general biblical commands "to declare his deeds among the peoples" (Psa. 9:11, cf. also Psa. 145:4f.). Simplicity was the goal, but since there was freedom in expression, there was no barrenness in the result.¹⁸

Back To the People

Worship, for Calvin, was the work of the people. To that end he included elements of worship that drew the congregation into the service. Through singing metrical psalms (and a paraphrase of the Decalogue), confessing their faith by use of the Apostles' Creed, and participating in the Lord's Supper frequently, the congregation entered fully into the service of worship. By involving the laity, Calvin sought to bring worship back to the people in accordance with the biblical pattern.

For Calvin, there was no substitute for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In fact, Calvin argues that the best way to rid the church of excessive ceremony, the "lifeless and theatrical trifles, which serve no other purpose than to deceive the sense of a people stupified,"¹⁹ would be to promote the practice of weekly communion! Calvin argues for the biblical pattern, noting, "it became the unvarying rule that no meeting of the church should take place without the word, prayers, partaking of the Supper, and almsgiving."²⁰

Finally, for Calvin, since worship was the work of the people, it was necessary to contextualize the service to accommodate the

Worship, for Calvin, was the work of the people. To that end he included elements of worship that drew the congregation into the service.

reasonable concerns of the congregation and its culture. This does not mean, necessarily, that Calvin formulated such a thought in an *a priori* manner. Rather, circumstances forced him to this consideration. Note the following remarkable examples. First, finding himself unable to convince the Genevan magistrates to permit weekly communion, Calvin accommodated himself to their requirement that he celebrate the Lord's Supper only quarterly. He continued to lobby for weekly communion, but outwardly conformed to the requirements of the authorities. Second, in Geneva, Calvin sought to offer an absolution after the prayer of confession, a practice he had adopted from his friend and mentor in Strasbourg, Martin Bucer. Realizing, however, that he could not convince the congregation in Geneva to receive the absolution, Calvin "yielded to their scruples" and abandoned the practice!²¹ Unless we are simply to dismiss such cases as instances of Calvin "caving in to the opposition," we must see them as examples of Calvin abstaining from certain practices which he regarded as in keeping with biblical principles but which were not commanded, and therefore not strictly necessary or essential.

This list of theological concerns from Calvin is not intended to be exhaustive. Nevertheless it is a good summary of the principles which Calvin used in framing the practice of worship. Most importantly, Calvin sought to practice them because he believed them to be biblical concerns. Presbyterians, in seeking to be faithful to their historical Reformed heritage and their biblical roots, must likewise reflect these concerns as they offer worship to God today.

WHITHER?

At the present, Presbyterians are faced with a number of considerations. The questions which confront us demand our time, our attention, and our reflection. First, and most importantly, how should Presbyterian worship be regulated? The "Regulative Principle of Worship" served as a rallying point for Puritans oppressed by a state church intent on imposing its will without regard for what Scripture teaches. Does faithfulness today demand that we return to the stringent interpretation of the "Regulative Principle of Worship,"²² or is there a bet-

ter way to reflect the concerns of Scripture? Some may opt to return to the comfort of the "way we've always done it." In so doing, they may indeed avoid much of the present confusion and minimize the questions they must answer. They do so, however, at great risk – not just that of increased marginalization and minimized impact, but of going beyond what Scripture itself prescribes and thus introducing human traditions as the authority for worship.

Second, if we do not retreat into the comfort of familiar paths, to what extent should we be willing to embrace the latest trends? Presbyterians must ask, do our practices exhibit the same biblical concerns such as Calvin, the father of the Reformed faith, demonstrated in his practice? These questions confront us with the need to examine our culture carefully and to apply the principles of the word of God in a manner both faithful to Scripture and appropriate for our own historical situation.²³ Let's face it, what counted as faithful worship in 1950 may not count as such in 1996. Contextualization must occur not only in our engagement with the culture at large, but more pointedly in our engagement with the ethos of particular congregations. The worship we present must, after all, be *our* worship – *our* offering of praise to God. Worship is never an abstraction, but is always the concrete work of some body of believers. If we would practice faithfulness in worship, we must understand the twin horizons of God's unchanging word and the rapidly changing culture in which we live.

Third, to what extent do we faithfully apply Calvin's biblical concerns of catholicity, simplicity, congregational involvement, sacramental focus, and contextualization? How does the "Praise and Worship" movement fare when evaluated along these five criteria?

Adherents of the "Praise and Worship" movement might well argue that we attain a certain catholicity when we embrace a movement with such broad scope and universal appeal. Not that we receive this, or any other movement, uncritically, just because it has widespread appeal. Rather, we seek to retain that which is biblical and scrupulously discard that which is not. But the process of evaluating and then including the positive and biblical aspects of the "Praise and Worship" movement would

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well model Calvin's process of liturgical renewal.

Have we retained the simplicity that Calvin sought, or have our services become encrusted with our own versions of "lifeless and theatrical trifles"? It is quite possible that the "Praise and Worship" movement offers a needed "recalibration" for some of our practices! Surely, we can use some of the insights of the "Praise and Worship" movement to return worship to the congregation and reform the "spectator stance" that characterizes so much of Presbyterian worship. Presbyterians of all varieties would do well to ask, "How much of our worship is truly biblical?"

If Calvin was concerned that the Lord's Supper be celebrated weekly,²⁴ and he was, what bearing should this sacramental focus have on our considerations? Do we continue our historic practice of infrequent communion, or do we risk conforming ourselves to the biblical pattern of weekly communion? It is true that Calvin never succeeded in achieving his goal of communion every Lord's Day, but he never tired of encouraging the church (and the Genevan magistrates!) to conform to the example of Scripture. The Presbyterian church is, after all, a sacramental church. Those who are open to biblical concerns in the renewal of worship might also want to consider the importance of sacramental renewal. If we can learn from the "Praise and Worship" movement, perhaps we can also learn from the liturgical tradition. The fact that Calvin encouraged weekly communion does not obligate us to practice it. But the fact that Calvin argued that this was a biblical practice gives us good reason to pause and reflect deeply upon our current practice before rejecting his teaching.

Finally, how do we shape our worship in a Godless, normless culture? It is not our aim merely to meet with the approval of the unchurched. But as the gospel goes forth and the unchurched come to faith, it is our responsibility to minister to them and to disciple them. This includes teaching them to worship. We rightly seek to enable them to present to God a worship that is genuinely and authentically *their own*. We no longer have the luxury of being a "churched" congregation in a "churched" culture, well schooled and comfortable in the traditional ways of doing things. For all practical

purposes, we are living in a mission-field environment. Such situations demand an openness to new patterns and practices in worship which, though different, are still in keeping with biblical principles. Such openness puts us at risk of violating our own comfort zone, but it is perhaps more faithful to the God who calls us to worship Him with *new* songs! Are we, for instance, willing to discard cherished but musically outdated psalters and hymnals in order to revitalize the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in our generation?²⁵ Close examination of our traditional practices might lead us to the discovery that some of what we have taken to be "principles" are in reality "preferences" masquerading as something more noble.

CONCLUSION

Many questions have been raised in this brief reflection on Presbyterian worship today and how it has been affected by the "Praise and Worship" movement. There is, of course, no reason to think that everything flowing from this movement is in keeping with the biblical principles governing worship. Yet we have also seen that the quick dismissal of all such practices as are to be found in the "Praise and Worship" movement by appeal to the time-honored "Regulative Principle of Worship" might be premature. If we believe that the "Reformed church is always reforming," then we are duty bound to address the challenges that the "Praise and Worship" movement presents to our established practices. Furthermore, we would be negligent if, after seeing what God is doing to bring renewal to other parts of His church, we failed to ask, "Is there not something here for us as well?" Adopting such practices must not be justified simply on the grounds of expediency or supposed "effectiveness" (however defined), but we must allow ourselves to be challenged by them and to search out from Scripture whether these things be from God or not. Here the wisdom of Gamaliel may be as instructive to us as it should have been to the post-Pentecost Sanhedrin: If this movement is from men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you may be found to be fighting against God (cf. Acts 5:38f.).

It is quite possible that the "Praise and Worship" movement offers a needed "recalibration" for some of our practices!

ENDNOTES

¹ Wallace Radcliffe, "The Westminster Assembly, the Men and Their Work," in *Addresses at the Celebration of the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, edited by Wm. Henry Roberts. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1898) pp. 154-155.

² It is difficult to define Presbyterian worship with all-encompassing categories, because Presbyterians have been influenced heavily by practices from at least three significant liturgical traditions: Zwinglianism (Zurich), Calvinism (Geneva) and Puritanism (England). For a full discussion, see James F. White, *Protestant Worship* (Louisville: John Knox/Westminster Press, 1989) pp. 58-78. If difficult to define, Presbyterian worship is easier to describe. Certain expectations have become traditional, such as the centrality of preaching, a stately and somewhat formal liturgy, and an inclination towards the cerebral. These characterize much of twentieth-century Presbyterian worship, particularly in those congregations where (wittingly or not) the influence of the 1946 *Book of Common Worship* remains strong.

³ Robert Webber, "Enter His Courts With Praise," *Reformed Worship* 20 (June, 1991) p. 9.

⁴ Ray Stedman, *Body Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1972).

⁵ J.W. Shepperd, "Worship," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) p. 905.

⁶ Shepperd, p. 905.

⁷ Bernard J. Stonehouse, "Worship By the Book: It's Important to Be Open to Change," *Reformed Worship* 11 (Spring, 1989) p. 15.

⁸ The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger Catechism*, and the *Shorter Catechism*.

⁹ This document was completed before the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (April 29, 1647) and the *Larger Catechism* (October 15, 1647). A reprint of the Directory may be found in the Free Presbyterian Church (of Scotland) publication: *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1645; reprint, F.P. Publications, 1981) pp. 369-394.

¹⁰ Frank J. Smith, "What is Worship?" *Worship in the Presence of God* ed. by Frank J. Smith

and David C. Lachman (Greenville: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992) pp. 16-7. This is the most recent volume espousing the historic "Regulative Principle" view of worship. For an in-depth analysis and critique of this principle, see R.J. Gore, "The Pursuit of Plainness: Rethinking the Puritan Regulative Principle of Worship" (Ph.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1988).

¹¹ Smith and Lachman, *Worship in the Presence of God*, pp. 179-226. Exclusive psalmody is the official position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, a church with historic ties to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

¹² Smith and Lachman. pp. 365-366. See lists of authors and titles opposed to instrumental singing.

¹³ See Gore, "The Pursuit of Plainness," pp. 229-247, for a more extended discussion of Dominical practices and the "Regulative Principle of Worship."

¹⁴ Certainly the language here is not Calvin's own. For example, it would be an anachronism to impute the use of the word "contextualization" to Calvin's time. Nevertheless, the concern expressed by that term was a concern for Calvin and his ministry to the people of Geneva.

¹⁵ Catholicity refers to a breadth and depth of spirit. Calvin was a churchman, desirous of reforming the entire catholic (universal) church. The modern Roman Catholic Church did not take its current shape until the completion of the Council of Trent in 1564, the year in which Calvin died.

¹⁶ See Bard Thompson's discussion of Calvin's efforts in *Liturgies of the Western Church* (1961; reprint, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) pp. 185-195.

¹⁷ The worship of the early church followed the pattern of Antecomunion and Communion. In today's language, it was a service of the Word (Preaching) and Table (Lord's Supper).

¹⁸ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 194.

¹⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) IV, xvii, p. 43.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, xvii, p. 44.

²¹ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 191.

²² Paul Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971) p. 10, warns us not to embrace "fortress theology," to fasten psychologically on God as the 'Great Conserver' and slip into equating what is true with what is unchanging."

²³ This may appear to be a given. However, some proponents of the "Regulative Principle of Worship" argue otherwise! David Lachman, "Christian Liberty and Worship" *Worship in the Presence of God*, says on pages 98-99 that "there is no indication in Scripture that worship is to vary from church to church or that the aesthetic or cultural taste of believers should have any influence on worship ... the substance of worship ought to be such that Christians from any time or place ought to feel immediately at home—and ought not to find anything which would surprise them." Also, in the same vol-

ume, "Singing of Praise," pp. 197-198, Frank Smith says "There is one authority structure, one set of doctrines to believe, and one way in which to worship.... The worship of the Church in one part of the world should be essentially the same as in every other part of the world...."

²⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, xvii, p. 43. "The Supper could have been administered most becomingly if it were set before the Church very often, and at least once a week."

²⁵ Such a question may lead to answers that are not comfortable. An evaluation of various psalters indicates that many newer versions are available that may have more appeal to a contemporary congregation. Is there a willingness to rehabilitate psalmody – even if it means replacing a cherished older psalter and adopting a musical idiom that is not our preference – but communicates more effectively?

The *St. Matthew Passion* Today

Barton Swaim

The music of Johann Sebastian Bach, though we (or some of us, anyhow) can not imagine Western culture without it, remained almost completely unknown from the time of his death (1750) until the early nineteenth century, when Felix Mendelssohn exhumed the *St. Matthew Passion* for public performance. We ought to be grateful to Mr. Mendelssohn, for his own works, yes, but also because he is primarily responsible for preserving – if I may state an opinion – the greatest piece of music ever written. The *Matthew Passion* invites our attention for many reasons, foremost among them that it *is*, as Mendelssohn knew, a work of unsurpassable beauty, its composer a man to whom we are related, to use Pauline language, in Christ; and that it reminds us, in a beautiful but frightening way, of our Lord's obedience – “to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

To these matters I shall return in due course. A closer look at the work itself, its musical as well as theological beauty, will help us answer the question, What importance does a musical passion, written 269 years ago, hold for *us*?

The *Passion*, a genre common in Baroque music, depicts the betrayal, trial and crucifixion of Jesus with recitatives (the words of Scripture sung by the Narrator, in this case Matthew), arias and choruses (contemplating the narrative), and chorales (or hymns, sung either by the chorus or the congregation). In this work – “the great passion,” it was called, for, in addition to its massive scoring, it lasts for more than three hours – Bach uses all sorts of devices to animate the narrative: the role of Jesus, for example, is accompanied not by the keyboard, as all other parts are, but by the strings. The work is structured in two parts, both divided into a series of scenes, each of which, in turn, concludes with a contemplative piece, sung either by a soloist (aria) or by the chorus (chorale). We know the best-known of these chorales, sung several times during the work, as “O Sacred Head Now Wounded.”

The opening chorus (“Come ye daughters,

share my mourning”), setting the solemn mood, is a dialogue between the slaughtered Lamb's mourners:

See Him—Whom?—The Bridegroom Christ.

See Him—How?—A Spotless Lamb.

See Him—What?—His patient love.

Look!—Look Where?—On our guilt.

As the dialogue takes place, a boy's choir sings a traditional German hymn: “O Lamb of God unspotted, There slaughtered on the cross ... Have pity on us, O Jesus.” Bach's music has sometimes been described as merely “technical” or “pretty.” Here, however, as so often in Bach, one finds the power of Beethoven, the lyricism of Mozart, the gravity of Brahms, all manipulated by Bach's own Christian devotion.

The drama begins with the recitative, sung by the Evangelist, Matthew: “When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples.” “Ye know,” sings Jesus, the bass, “that after two days is the Passover, and the son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.” Here, in the first bars of the drama, we have orthodox Christianity in its richest, most unsettling form: recalling the Servant of Isaiah 53, the Messiah, who, with resolve and submission, anticipates His own vicarious death.

After we find what the Chief Priests intend to do to Jesus, Matthew records the incident of the woman pouring ointment on Jesus' head (Matt. 26:6-13). “To what purpose is this waste?” demands the chant-like chorus, portraying the disciples' indignation, “For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.” Jesus' answer again heightens the solemn intensity:

Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial....

The Passion, a genre common in Baroque music, depicts the betrayal, trial and crucifixion of Jesus with recitatives, arias, and choruses.

Whereupon the alto sings the beautiful but haunting aria, "My Master and my Lord, in vain do Thy disciples chide Thee."

As in the gospel text, we learn of Judas' plot (Matt. 26:14-16) just before the disciples prepare for the Last Supper (Matt. 26:17ff.). Portrayed by the choir, the disciples respond to Jesus' prediction that one would betray Him by asking: Herr, bin ich's? – Lord, is it I? – which they sing only eleven times. After the Supper has taken place, Matthew brings us, as the inevitable approaches, to Gethsemane. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," sings Jesus, the strings pulsating like a heart; "tarry ye here and watch with me." In the following aria, an engaging melody led by the oboe, the tenor, answered by the chorus, reflects on what has transpired. Notice the allusion to the disciples' unreliability:

TENOR

I would beside my Lord be watching ... I am saved from sin and loss; by His cross His sorrows win my soul its ransom.

CHORUS

So all our sins will fall asleep ... His pain and woe and all His sadness, how bitter and how sweet are they.

Jesus, exasperated by the disciples, exhausted by His task, prays at last, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."

And so the drama pushes forth, until Jesus, having been betrayed by Judas, is arrested and taken away. Matthew pronounces, in the last recitative of Part I: "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." The chorus answers with a rhythmic and lyrical, but solemn chorale:

O man, thy heavy sin lament,
For which the Son of God was sent
To die upon the Cross.
He left His Father's throne above
To save thy soul, O wondrous love!
From everlasting loss....

Part II begins the Lord's trial, in which the dramatic flow gains intensity. Once the chorus, which now assumes the role of a malicious mob,

begins to taunt and torture Jesus, Matthew turns his attention to Peter's denials, already foretold, we remember, midway through Part I (Matt. 26:34). The Evangelist narrates the story – the parts sung by Peter (baritone), two maids (soprano) and the crowd (chorus) – which concludes with perhaps the most deeply moving words of the entire passion: *Und ging beraus und weinete bitterlich* – And he went out and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75). The alto aria, with its slow and throbbing pulse, its pleading violin, responds with the sound of Peter's weeping – and ours:

Have mercy, my God, on me.
Regard my bitter weeping, look at me!
Heart and eyes both weep to Thee, bitterly.

There is no relief from despair, however; even the brighter arias, the stirring "Give me back my Jesu," to name one, find their energy only in the intensity of watching the Savior, silent, falsely accused, and dragged to His death. Soon the chorus, to our horror, begins to shout for the blood of Jesus: *Lab ihn kreuzigen!* they cry, with dissonance and cruelty – Let him be crucified!

When, at last, Jesus utters his final words, it is without even the string accompaniment, a haunting *a capella*: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" The crowd taunts Him once more ("Wait! let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him"), and the Evangelist, with arresting finality, pronounces: "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up the spirit." The final chorus, recalling the anguish of the work's opening, is unequalled in power and depth: "In tears of grief, dear Lord, we leave thee."

The triumphant note, needless to say, is absent from the passion: worshippers would have to wait three days to hear of the resurrection, the passion being traditionally performed on Good Friday during the Vespers service. We in the twentieth century, fixated as we are on positive thinking, haven't any room for such – what to call it? – morbid sentiment. Bach, however, a devout Lutheran, understood the "theology of the Cross": Reflection on the Lord's suffering has a way of moving the Christian to gratitude to God and – in due season – love of

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Him. One wonders, for instance, why the Gospel writers (especially Mark) devote such long passages to the story of Christ's death, in all its grotesque and painful detail. Do we, after all, *really* need to know that "someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink...."? This, in any case, is Bach's purpose in the *Matthew Passion* – a purpose which, I dare say, he fulfilled. I, for one, should very much doubt whether any Christian, conscious of what is being sung, can sit through the aria "Have mercy, my God, on me" without feeling some sense of genuine sorrow.

Another reason to apply our attention to the *Matthew Passion* suggests itself. William F. Buckley, in a book entitled *Gratitude*, puts it this way: One correctly *struggles* to distinguish between reveling in the *Passion* and rejoicing in it, because the latter sensation awakens an extrapersonal sense of obligation for the pleasures received." Buckley, thinking specifically of this composition, suggests that *humanity* owes something to Bach. Which, I think, it does. But we, as *Christians*, may call Bach our own. Bach conquered the field of music; and he was, if I may put it this way, *one of us* – even as, for that matter, Rembrandt and Milton and Augustine were. And still are.

Accordingly, I should think, we bear certain, let us say, obligations.

Discography

Having made a case for *listening* to the *Passion*, I am reminded of the matter of discography.

The recording industry, happily, has handled the *Matthew Passion* with care. Several versions recommend themselves, principal among them John Eliot Gardiner's 1989 recording with his English Baroque Soloists (427 648-2AH3). Gardiner is a proponent of "period performance" (authentic instruments, true-to-the-manuscript scores, etc.), although this in no sense detracts from his recording: the chorus is small but ample, the orchestra refined, and, best of all, the soloists (especially the Evangelist, Anthony Rolfe Johnson) are superb. On the other end of the scale we have Sir Georg Solti's 1988 recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (421 177-2LH3). Solti's greatest asset

here is his soloists, particularly Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Solti, to say the least, is *not* an advocate of period performance (he disdains it, in fact), which, at a few points, is a drawback: the choir (under the direction of the famous Margaret Hillis), though never noisy and always awake, is at times overbearing. There is something to be said, however, for the huge soul Solti brings to the *Passion*, which, particularly in the first and last choruses, adds a sense of power Bach would have perhaps appreciated. And of course the CSO's playing is near perfect, as witness "Make thee clean, my heart, from sin." For choral excellence, though, no one outdoes Philippe Herreweghe's Collegium Vocale and Chapelle Royale Chorus (HMC90 1155-7). While the orchestral playing on this recording is, as always with Herreweghe's discs, spic-and-span, it fails to match Gardiner's dramatic touch. Forced to choose, I should probably put my money with Gardiner.

I mustn't neglect to mention one other version, which although an inferior recording, has the distinct advantage of being sung in English. Sir David Willcocks, who here conducts the Thames Chamber Orchestra and the Bach Choir (CS QSS 324), offers a defense of his decision in the accompanying booklet. In a word, Bach would have wanted his hearers to *understand the words*. Quite right, and I must admit, this 1978 recording remains for that reason an attractive option. For a second purchase, anyhow.

What *would* old Bach think? In his day, to hear the "great passion" once required hours of tiresome rehearsal, days of coaching incompetent soloists. Today we may choose from among the best performances in the world and enjoy them – three times a day, if we wish – in the privacy of our homes. One can never be sure, but I think he would have liked that.

The recording industry, happily, has handled the Matthew Passion with care.

Worship That Brings Them Back

Boyce Wilson

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord for He comes, He comes to judge the earth (*Psalms 96:1, 12-13*).

Trees? Singing for joy? With this figure of speech the psalmist describes how all of creation offers uninhibited praises to the Creator. But why should the trees have all the fun? How much more should Christians sing "new songs" of praise to their Creator and Redeemer!

My desire in this article is gently to stretch your thinking with regard to musical styles in worship. To a large degree, that type of worship that "brings them back" has a lot to do with the types of the songs we sing in our services of worship. This is especially true if we want to "bring back" generations that are younger than what might normally fill many of our churches.¹ Within parameters that are both biblical and musically acceptable, there exists a wide range of beautiful, contemporary songs of praise that lend themselves appropriately to the worship of the Trinity. Yet several "worship myths" regarding contemporary Christian music often hinder our use of these beautiful songs of praise. I want to dispel those myths and then offer some practical help for those who desire to incorporate these newer songs into their public worship. There is a warning label on the "back" of this article, but don't be alarmed; my suggestions will not be hazardous to your health, and may even help you sing better than the trees!

MYTH NO. 1 – THE ACCOMMODATION MYTH:

The use of newer, contemporary music in worship indicates without doubt that your church is merely trying to accommodate people instead of glorifying God.

In response to this often-heard objection to the use of contemporary music in worship, our own

A.R.P. *Book of Worship* states the following:

The particular form which is employed (for corporate worship) will be designed, keeping in mind not only the time and location for the service of worship, but the needs and circumstances of the congregation.

Thus our *Standards* encourage flexibility, creativity and "accommodation" in worship.

As I lead worship from week to week, I often make this statement at the outset of the service:

We are not here today to *be* blessed, but to *bless* God. We are not here to *be* entertained, but to "*entertain*" God. At the end of the service we will *not* ask ourselves, "How do I *feel*?" but, "How did I *do*?" Not, "Did I enjoy it?" but, "Did *God* enjoy it?"

The use of "old" or "new" music is really irrelevant. Our purpose is to bring glory to God, to bless Him with our praises.

More than anything else, the theme of the particular worship service helps determine whether I select older or newer songs of praise for congregational singing. One Sunday's worship may include four contemporary songs because they fit best with the theme of that day, while the next Sunday we may sing three older hymns and one newer song.

Remember, too, that accommodation also works the other way. That is, we can put together a traditional service of worship, with old hymns, merely to please people. The "entertainment" mode can be just as real and dangerous within a traditional service as it can be within a contemporary service. The prophet Amos warns that the attitude of our hearts in worship says more than the songs we sing:

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain

At the end of the service we will not ask ourselves, "How do I feel?" but, "How did I do?" Not, "Did I enjoy it?" but, "Did God enjoy it?"

offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps (Amos 5:21-23).

Any style of music is only "noise" (verse 23) if it does not proceed from a repentant, forgiven heart.

As long as churches are made up of people, personal preferences will always enter into what people like and dislike regarding *every* aspect of worship. The use of a blend of musical styles will help accommodate some of those preferences, while maintaining the correct focus of worship – God's glory. I truly believe God is big enough to handle, and that He in fact enjoys, since He created music, the variety of musical styles that we may utilize as we worship Him.

MYTH NO. 2 – THE 'OLDER IS BETTER' MYTH:

Any contemporary music will be inferior to older music because songwriters were 'more spiritual' back then.

Before we buy into this myth, let us remember that once upon a time every hymn in the book was "new" and "contemporary"! I am unaware of any data to indicate that Christian music written prior to 1900 is necessarily "more spiritual," nor that the Holy Spirit cannot give to the Church new songs of praise in 1996 or beyond. Be careful not to discount *old* music because it is old, nor *new* music simply because it is new. Granted, some hymns are better than others in content and musical style. We sing mostly the very best of these hymns, those that have stood the test of time. Likewise some praise songs are better than others in content and musical style. Some may seem fluffy, shallow, or sentimental. Yet many newer praise songs come straight from the Scriptures and are written as prayers or statements of praise. Likewise, the more contemporary musical style of these songs will appeal to the Baby Boomers and Baby Busters in your congregation.

MYTH NO. 3 – THE 'MUSIC STYLE DOESN'T MATTER' MYTH:

Worship and music styles are of little importance as people select a new church.

We may well wish that this myth were true, but, to the contrary, worship and music styles do play a key and sometimes determining role in the "church search." Worship and music styles would definitely be near the top of the list if I were searching for a new church. After all, I am an early Baby Boomer!

I am aware of an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church that now offers a Sunday evening contemporary worship service complete with a praise band made up entirely of church members. With this new format, evening worship attendance has increased dramatically. Indeed, a great transformation occurred once the music style preferences of a large number of that congregation were taken into account. That one example challenges us to rethink how we do worship and how we can better serve the needs of our congregations. As one writer has put it:

Many churches today are reaching greater numbers of people by diversifying their worship styles. Bringing a more contemporary edge to your music ministry can be one of the easiest and most rewarding means to this end.²

Two statements from Terry Wardle's book, *Exalt Him!*, are pertinent at this point: "Fearing wild fire, congregations have opted for no fire at all." And, "Find a church where true worship leads believers into God's presence, and you will see church growth."³

Also, as the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church becomes more international in its makeup, the importance of worship and music styles will be even more crucial. With the addition of Hispanic, Persian, and Korean congregations, we will be stretched to rethink what worship should look like and sound like.

Among the many factors that go into selecting a church – doctrine, philosophy of ministry, friendliness, sermon content, location,

As long as churches are made up of people, personal preferences will always enter into what people like and dislike regarding every aspect of worship.

children's ministry, youth group, missions, evangelism, prayer ministry, Sunday School program – worship and music styles do matter!

MYTH NO. 4 – THE 'OLD AGE' MYTH:

Older members of our church will not sing newer, contemporary songs of praise.

No doubt, musical preferences often fall along generational lines. However, as I lead worship in the Revitalization Program, and as I pastor a church that has a long history of 210 years, I have seen that the above opinion is truly a myth. My greater concern is for church members who do not sing at all!

In my own congregation, I have seen older members who have a heart for worship gladly expressing praise to God without taking into account the song's date of publication. I sometimes ask, "How many know this song?" and not one hand goes up. I am delighted when that happens, because then I say that they are about to learn a new song, which will help us all to obey Psalm 96:1: *Sing to the Lord a new song!* I have seen folks in their 80's singing a praise chorus with joy on their faces! Don't believe the "old age" myth!

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DEALING WITH MUSICAL STYLES

If you desire to experiment and vary your musical styles in worship by introducing contemporary songs of praise, the following ideas may be helpful:

First of all, preach a sermon series on the subject of worship. Such a series will help you address the true meaning of worship. Psalm 100 encourages us to meet with God and joyfully give Him the praise of which He is worthy: Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs.

Second, you may want to purchase hymnbooks which contain a variety of older and newer songs of praise. *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (Word) is becoming popular in many Associate Reformed Presbyterian churches. For use with this hymnal you can purchase accompaniment books for handbells, wind instruments and piano. A computer pro-

gram is also available for this hymnal which will play the tune of any hymn you do not know!

If you print the words of choruses or other hymns in your bulletin or on an insert or overhead, make sure you become a member of Christian Copyright Licensing, International, in order to protect yourself from copyright infringement.⁴

Third, you can introduce songs which are new to your congregation through your church choir, a special ensemble, or an individual song leader. If you desire to make some movement in the contemporary direction, the cassette tape, "Classic Praise for Choirs" (Maranatha Music), features beautiful choral arrangements of a dozen or so contemporary songs of praise. Another tape, "The Majesty and Glory" (Sparrow) blends forty-six hymns and spiritual songs. These resources represent the beauty of some of the contemporary songs of praise appropriate for corporate worship.

Fourth, utilize a variety of the shorter contemporary songs of praise. In the flow of a worship service, these could be inserted during the congregational call to worship, as an offering response, before or after the pastoral prayer, or at the conclusion of the service. Many churches already sing traditional, short praise-responses such as the "Doxology" or "Gloria Patri." I would encourage churches to move beyond the overuse of those two refrains. Consider the use of some of the following. As a call to worship use "I Love You Lord," "Majesty," or the "Doxology." As an offering response use "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" or the refrain from "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." With the pastoral prayer use "Spirit of the Living God."

Fifth, if you are serious about incorporating more contemporary music in your church, attend a worship service which already includes a variety of musical styles or new approaches to worship, but not a church which is extremely different from your own. You know your church's personality. Do not merely copy another church's worship just so you will have something different or contemporary. Within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian family you can find a variety of musical styles and new approaches in worship. Or you might attend one of the Revitalization workshops to see firsthand the worship approach used there.

Within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian family you can find a variety of musical styles and new approaches in worship.

Sixth, get specific input from your congregation. I recently asked our members in a bulletin insert to tell me their "Favorite Hymns and Praise Songs." I will incorporate their selections in our worship from time to time and include in the bulletin a brief history of the song, as well as list the names of those who picked it as their favorite. By doing this, the members make a contribution to the worship service, and contemporary songs are introduced into our worship in a more natural way.

Seventh, if you do not wish to make any changes to your present worship service, pray about starting a second service that features a different musical style (See Myth #3 above). Or utilize Sunday evenings, Wednesday evenings, or small group meetings as times to sing the more contemporary songs of praise.

Eighth, for fresh ideas and biblical insight regarding the topic of worship, subscribe to *Worship Leader*, P. O. Box 40985, Nashville, TN 37204-9902 (\$14.95 per year for six issues).

WARNING LABEL

This last section is a warning label for pastors and other worship leaders. I quote here from Don Moen, senior vice president and creative director for Integrity Music, who, in an article entitled, "Anointed and Qualified" makes the following suggestions, paraphrased somewhat by me:

1. Be content to operate within your gift.... In other words, do not try to be like someone else. Again, you know your church's personality as well as your own strengths and weaknesses.
2. Don't be tempted to make something happen.... It's tempting to create a formula based on last Sunday's song list instead of depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us from week to week.
3. Never underestimate the work of the Holy Spirit.... Psalm 22:3 says God inhabits the praises of His people. Even though we may not "see" or "feel" God's presence during a time of worship, it doesn't mean He isn't with us.
4. Be a worshipping leader.... A church could hire the greatest worship leader in

the world, but if the pastor is not a worshipping pastor, the church will not be a worshipping church.⁵

The worship services of our churches afford us the opportunity every seven days to proclaim publicly to our communities that Jesus Christ is alive! Let's make the most of those opportunities! Not only do we want to offer a style of worship that helps to "bring them back," but, more importantly, we want the power and majesty of Jesus Christ to be so evident in our services of worship that people will fall down before Him and exclaim, "God is really among you!" (I Corinthians 14:25).

I cannot imagine the Christian life without the "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" that speak so dramatically of God's love for His people and His people's love for Him. How many times has God used a hymn or song of praise to awaken within us a greater appreciation for His majesty and glory, or His grace and forgiveness? If "the trees of the forest sing for joy," then how much more so should we! Our weekly worship is but a prelude to that greater heavenly worship, when together we will sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb:

***If "the trees of
the forest sing
for joy," then
how much
more so
should we!***

ENDNOTES

¹ "Younger" is obviously a relative word. When it comes to musical style preferences there exists a general divide between baby boomers (those now between about 30 and 50 years of age), and those who are now older than 50. There is also a more subtle and complex cultural divide between Baby Boomers and Baby Busters, or "Generation X'ers," those now in their twenties. Obviously, these are generalizations.

² Gary Earl, review of *Music Ministry With the Guitar*, by Charles K. Davis, *Worship Leader*, September/October 1994, p. 35.

³ Terry Wardle, *Exalt Him! Designing Dynamic Worship Services*, (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1992) pp. 20-21.

⁴ You may call CCLI at 1-800-234-2446.

⁵ Don Moen, "Anointed and Qualified," *Worship Today*, September/October 1993, p. 6.

Reformed Theology Today

Louis Igou Hodges

A review by Jack C. Whytock

Hodges writes with an orderly style and with excellent logical development within each chapter, clear evidence of his years of teaching.

One is always pleased to read a clearly defined purpose at the outset of a new book, and this is what one finds at the beginning of Louis Igou Hodges' *Reformed Theology Today*.¹ In Hodges' words:

This book is designed to present an easily understood introduction to Reformed theology. Its purpose is not to serve as a systematic theology ... but to explain the gist of thought within the most important areas and to suggest bibliographic sources where more in-depth discussion may be found.

With such a clear purpose in view, the logical question ensues, "Did Mr. Hodges achieve this object?" I believe he did, and I will offer a suggestion or two as to how he could achieve his goal even more excellently in a second edition.

The book's 230 pages can basically be divided into two halves, the first consisting of sixteen topical chapters, and the second consisting of notes or "bibliographic sources." Hodges, a professor at Columbia International University, and a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church of America, writes with an orderly style and with excellent logical development within each chapter, clear evidence of his years of teaching. His sixteen chapters are grouped around three divisions – "Preliminary Background," "Major Distinctive Ideas," and "Looking to the Future." Needless to say, it is the group of twelve chapters under the heading "Major Distinctive Ideas" which receives the greatest attention, as it should.

The section entitled "Preliminary Background," consisting of two chapters, is unique to Hodges and ties in nicely with his aim of providing lay readers and students with a brief look at the roots of the Reformed tradition. The first of these two chapters reads somewhat like a "Who's Who" in the history of Reformed the-

ology. It is rare to find such information all in one place, neatly compacted. Hodges begins with Zwingli and ends with R.C. Sproul and D. James Kennedy. Each of us would likely add some other names to this "Who's Who" chapter, but generally Hodges gives a good overview. In the second chapter in this section, "Modern Sub-Groups," Hodges identifies four "basic camps" within the larger rubric of Reformed theology. Not all would agree with his grouping, and one senses a bit of caricaturing of certain groups, but Hodges is trying to summarize and organize for the reader a lot of material in a mere eight pages of text. The camps Hodges identifies are the "mild" types, the "subscriptionists," the "moderate majority," and the "neo-orthodox." He also sees within the more strict "subscriptionist" camp two recent but related movements – "Theonomy" and "Christian Reconstruction." Hodges spends a great deal of space in an otherwise tightly compacted chapter critiquing these movements. Finally, at the end of this overview chapter, Hodges gives a helpful bird's-eye view of the polarity that exists within Reformed theology regarding the subject of Christian apologetics, laying out neatly the differences between the Evidentialists and Presuppositionalists.

Major Distinctive Ideas

In the larger middle section "Major Distinctive Ideas," Hodges moves from the Reformed understanding of Scripture to the other traditional areas of concern within Reformed theology, providing helpful diagrams as he goes. The chapters are entitled "The Word of God," "The Covenant Structure," "God's Sovereign Rule," "An All Inclusive Perspective," "The Sin of Man and Its Consequences," "The Person of Jesus Christ," "Objective Soteriology," "Subjective Soteriology," "The Ministry of the Church to the Unsaved," "The Church," "The Sacraments,"

and "Worship," the latter which is reprinted as a separate article in this issue of *Faith and Practice*.

These topics are handled in an orthodox and informative manner. The chapter on the Reformed worldview, "An All Inclusive Principle," covers a vast range of topics such as common grace, vocation and labor, the relation of the Christian to culture, the Sabbath, the family, and the purpose of civil government, to name a few. As one reads, it must be borne in mind that Hodges is seeking to introduce these tenets, not produce an in depth critique or presentation.

In the chapter which addresses the theme of God's sovereignty, Hodges carefully walks the reader through Supralapsarianism, Infralapsarianism, and Amyraldianism. I have passed this section along to some in my congregation who have asked for a brief written summary on these subjects; they found Hodges' explanations very helpful and easy to read. His chapter "The Ministry of the Church to the Unsaved" was particularly brief. I suspect many will wish he would have elaborated more on the matter of Reformed theology and evangelism.

Looking to the Future

The concluding section of the first half of the book, "Looking to the Future," offers six items that "must be included on the agenda of Reformed theology" as it seeks to meet the challenge of addressing many of the current issues facing our culture, issues such as ecology, racism, divorce, abortion, feminism, genetic engineering, the AIDS crisis, and radical contemporary theologies. Hodges writes this chapter with a wonderful tone, and we see here his own piety coming through as he calls us to walk humbly as we address the difficult issues of the day and to live a sanctified life in the midst of a broken and fallen world. We would all do well to follow his spirit and counsel.

The purpose of the second half of the book is "to suggest bibliographic sources." Although such listings cannot be completely exhaustive, Hodges' lists are quite thorough and his guidance helpful. However, I could not help but notice that there were some gaps that should have been filled. For example, to list several in-

troductory works on the Puritans without mentioning J.I. Packer's *Quest for Godliness* or Leland Ryken's *Worldly Saints* hinders his purpose.

There are several matters in the printed text itself which could easily be improved upon in a second edition. The occasional typographical errors for names should not occur. Perhaps the publisher did not have strict enough guidelines to ensure consistency in the final published form. In addition, an introductory book such as this should endeavor to be as user-friendly as possible. In some cases within the endnotes Hodges makes brief reference to other sources that presumably have been noted elsewhere, without telling where the bibliographic information on those sources can be found. I would suggest that Hodges either include a full bibliography after the endnotes, allow each chapter's notes to stand alone without cross referencing to other notes, or, if he keeps the present format, direct the reader to wherever the cross referenced note can be found.

Overall I commend Hodges for his efforts. His organization is very good, and his surveys very helpful. *Reformed Theology Today* would be best either as a "next step" book after having mastered John deWitt's booklet, *What is the Reformed Faith?*, or as a helpful review for those needing a refresher in Reformed theology.

¹ Louis Igou Hodges, *Reformed Theology Today*, (Columbus, Georgia: Brentwood Christian Press, 1995). Order direct from Louis Igou Hodges, 1114 Blakely Court, West Columbia, SC, 29170-3511, or phone, 803-739-0051, \$19.95.

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