

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 1, Number 11 ♪ November 2006

THEME: Unity

What's Wrong with Worship?

My dear Woodworm,

It's truly delightful to see what havoc we have caused around the world by perverting, of all things, the worship of the Enemy. In insisting that all honor and praise be directed to Himself He is certainly setting the creatures up for failure—just because so much of their existence is wrapped up in themselves and their individual wants and desires.

So stay the course! We are seeing marvelous results. Above all, promote the idea that the purpose of worship is each individual's enjoyment, satisfaction, and sense of well-being. This will result in a delightful clash of personalities and temperaments, since of course no two people will agree on what will bring the desired results. The more you can get people to focus on their own needs and preferences (which, after all, should not be too difficult, people being the selfish beings that they are!), the further they will stray from their apostle's admonition to "consider one another more important than yourselves" and to "prefer one another in love." Delightfully, it never even occurs to them that the Enemy might want them to apply these principles to their practice of worship! How successful we have been to keep such dangerous ideas out of their minds! Most of them haven't any clue that worship is for anything other

than their personal fulfillment. This is wonderful, because with such a self-focused attitude (which has been easy to exploit, from the Garden until now) they will never realize that worship was intended by the Enemy to focus on Himself and to bring Him glory (horrors!) and satisfaction. As long as we can keep the Christians looking to themselves and their own personal agendas, rather than to Him and His priorities, they will continue to be pathetic, narcissistic beings with little impact in the world.

Needless to say, our efforts to put a wedge between their generations (which has always been relatively easy) has succeeded more wildly than ever in the arena of worship. Each side is utterly convinced that their way is right, that they presume to know exactly what is and what is not acceptable to the Enemy, and that there is nothing at all to learn front the other side. And all the while they hide behind a smoke-screen of supposed "biblical warrant" or "cultural necessity,"

when in reality all their studies of the subject inevitably end up where they started, with their foregone conclusions firmly and immovably in place. What they *like* always turns out to be identical with what they think is appropriate and correct! This is now so widespread that it is seldom questioned, and our work is that much easier for it.

Biblical Principles of Worship*

#10 Worship should promote the unity and edification of the body.

And how delicious it is that music, like so many of the Enemy's supposedly "good" gifts, we have been able to twist to our purposes. Music now separates rather than unites the Enemy's people. They can indeed be a powerful and unified force when they sing together, but we have managed to shift their focus so that even if corporate singing does happen, half of the people are stewing over the song selection, the absence of their favorites, the volume, the types of instruments used, etc. etc. And the other half seem to just be reveling in their preferences being as least temporarily satisfied. Hardly anyone focuses on the Enemy as the subject and object of the songs! We owe all of this to our incredibly fruitful

efforts to promote radical individualism as the prevailing philosophy of the day. Such chilling concepts as "the good of the whole" and the "health of the body" fortunately never occur to them as they go about their selfish ways.

Our "divide and conquer" strategy seems to be progressing on schedule!

Affectionately yours,
your uncle Tapescrew

**"Biblical Principles of Worship"*
(treating twelve principles, of which the tenth is dealt with here) may be downloaded at www.worr.org/articles.

QUOTABLES

Unity in Worship

"We've made worship self-centred instead of God-centred. We lobby for what we want: 'I don't like the songs,' 'I don't like the volume.' It's as if we're worshipping worship instead of worshipping God.

If worship is a decision, then the greatest worship happens when someone who doesn't like a church's music or liturgical style prays, 'Not my will but yours be done, God—I'll worship you in spite of it.'

(Geoff Bullock)

"I fear that attempting to satisfy personal preferences may honor selfishness while further destroying the unity of the church. Further, I fear that gearing the 'worship service' toward unbelievers who may be present will perpetuate the revivalistic confusion between the church in the

world and the church in worship. Our focus is not on the 'unbeliever in the audience,' but on the edification of the church and its corporate submission to God."

(Robert A. Pyne, "Worship in the Bible and in Church History: Some Observations," Worship Task Force, Northwest Bible Church, Dallas TX)

"The unity, diversity, and mutuality of the church abound when worshipers serve and servants worship."

(Kenneth O. Gangel, "Spiritual Formation through Public Worship," *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, 122)

"Worship that does not contribute to unity is not the worship embraced by Christianity."

(Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*)

- The Sunday morning service was a real downer.
- *Sunday was powerful for me – a feast of worship. I appreciated the reverence and awe.*
- Sunday morning seemed like a funeral.
- *Sunday was super!!!! – simple but profound.*
- Sunday morning worship was extremely boring and difficult to sit through.
- *The time of worship on Sunday was a very special blessing.*

(survey comments about a recent Sunday morning worship service)

“Which style of music pleases God the most? This basic question has generated innumerable different answers from sincere Christians. In the first 800 years after Christ, most worship music was simply unison melody. One day someone added a second part, and harmony invaded the church, despite staunch opposition. Soon there were quarrels over which musical intervals were appropriate. Later, the introduction of various instruments caused great controversy—even the organ, which some early Puritans called ‘the devil’s bagpipe.’ To this day, there are countless conflicts over lyrical content and the use of musical styles that originate outside the church.

A 1999, article in Christianity Today was titled ‘The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat Out the Organ in the Worship Wars.’ The author writes, ‘Conflicts over worship in general and music in particular have erupted in churches of every denomination. . . . The contemporary proliferation of different worship and music styles may well be the next century’s test of our commitment to Christian unity.’”
(Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters* . October 14, 2003)

“If your church is going to really reflect the diversity of the body of Christ then everybody needs to sing songs they don’t like.”
(Marva Dawn)

“MINDLESS WORDS, BAD THEOLOGY, AND EMOTIONAL TUNES!”
(written in 18th Century about Isaac Watts’ hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”)

“Jesus’ voice is what counts, not ours; and his voice in ‘the great assembly’ is as rich and complex as the constitution of his people. There is a unity and diversity in the voices of his assembly which we would not be able to hold together on our own.”
(Reggie Kidd, *With One Voice*, 145)

“Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty Father, now and forever.”
(Great Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman Mass)

“The New Testament churches were made up of people of different ages, genders, races and socio-economic levels, who came together because of their common belief in Jesus. Christ gave them their identity and, consequently, their unity.

In an era of marketing niches-of builders, boomers, and busters—we have grown accustomed to having things our way. But do we really need single-taste congregations?

What would happen if people with different musical tastes got along because of their common commitment to Christ? What a testimony to the outside world!”
(Steve Bierly, “Sparring over Worship,” *Leadership* Winter 1997, 37)

“A wise friend had told me that when his heart is unable to worship in a given moment or situation, for whatever reason, he looks around the congregation to find a person most engaged in worship and begins to pray, ‘Lord, let that person’s worship be mine.’ At times when the worship seems to my musical sensibilities as a diet of cotton candy I remind myself first, that the worship isn’t there for me (so I can ‘be fed’) and second, that there are many in the congregation for whom that musical expression is authentic, even empowering. In turn, this reminds me that I am a small part of a congregation that is so much bigger than me. It has enabled me to transcend the limitations of the styles that I prefer and even to worship, dare I say, ‘vicariously’ through others. It’s a great fix for the ‘me generation.’”
(Greg Roig)

“Worship is singular in its power to form a solid unity out of great diversity.”

C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*, 221)

“And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.”

(*Augsburg Confession* [1530], Article VII)

“Maintaining unity among the diversity of the church’s membership requires that we defer to one another in love, being willing to sing one another’s music rather than insisting on the music we most enjoy.”

(John Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*, 28)

“We should conclude that in music as in every other area we must seek to love one another, honoring the diversity of the body to protect its unity. As we have seen, diversity presents problems of musical communication. But we can now see that problem is at least in part a problem of love. When sophisticated members of the church insist that worship employ only the most sophisticated music of their own culture, what has happened to their love for those for those who are poorly educated or of a different cultural stream? Or, from the opposite side of our musical wars: when advocates of contemporary want to set the traditions of the church completely aside and replace them with something largely meaningless to the older generation, are they acting in love? Are they honoring their spiritual fathers and mothers?”

(John Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*, 25-26)

“Biblical worship takes both the unity and the variety of the church into account.”

(John Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*, 24)

“Modern-day individualism has diminished and diluted the communal emphasis in Scripture. Piety has become compartmentalized, relegated to a private personal pocket of life. The result is a religious consumerism which describes worship as ‘attending the church of your choice.’ Western culture drowns in humanistic religion with its focus on ‘getting something out of the service.’

Biblical worship, on the other hand, sees the Shepherd gathering the sheep, the Father gathering the children. The relational unity which God’s people have with Him is, by its very strength, an antidote to individual loneliness (Ps.106:47; Isa.11:12; John11:52; Eph.1:7-10).”

(Kenneth O. Gangel, “Reexamining Biblical Worship,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* April-June 1985, 169)

“When I first became a Christian . . . I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and wouldn’t go to the churches and Gospel Halls; . . . I disliked very much their hymns which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren’t fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit.”

(C.S. Lewis, “Answers to Questions on Christianity,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, 61-62)

GUEST EXCERPTS

I read about a group of clergy who met at a Christian college in the northern part of Michigan to discuss the appropriate use of instruments in worship. Many felt the instruments were loud, distracting, and in general, a hindrance to the work of the Kingdom. One brother voiced concern and lack of biblical support for the use of any instrument, other than the organ, in the worship of a majestic and holy God. Another pastor stood and gave hand extended dissertation of the evils in using instruments

associated with the barroom. “How could God be pleased with such a carnal instrument in worship as a piano?” he asked. And one rather divisive and intense moment erupted. In response, a brother called the group to order and asked for a show of hands of those willing to go back to their churches and discipline any member actively engaged in playing church music with saxophones and trumpets. Another brother, the pastor of a large and well-established congregation, stood and lamented the passing of old hymns and spiritual songs. He expressed concern over the perceived lack of respect by a younger, less spiritual group of pastors. He reminded the congregation of God’s gift of heritage.

Others made persuasive arguments for Christian liberty and tolerance. Some told of how God was working in their midst and reminded everyone to be engaged in a spiritual ministry. A compelling speech by an older pastor dealt with changes taking place in America and how the assembly should meet people at their Him point of greatest need. He concluded his speech by making a plea for unity and oneness in ministry. The group spent considerable time talking about worship and how the body of Christ across the country struggles with the idea of change.

During the course of their meetings to discuss music practices appropriate for worship, people argued. Some stormed out of the meeting with fury, showing obvious hostility and resentment towards those in authority. Harsh, angry words were spoken by many. The meeting on music and worship was characterized by hurt feelings, harsh and angry words, divisive attitudes, and spiritual casualties.

This historic meeting convened in the fall of 1870. For three days at a small Christian college, sincere pastors and influential men argued about worship. Not once in the recorded minutes is there any indication that these men ever engaged in any form of worship.

from Vernon M. Whaley, *The Dynamics of Corporate Worship* (Baker Books, 2001), 95-96

The British journalist and author G.K. Chesterton was once asked by the London Times to answer the question, “What is wrong with the state of the world?” Submitted amongst the voluminous responses by scholars, statesmen and other famous people who went into great depth about economic inequalities, ineffective political leadership and so on, Chesterton offered a two-word answer that rang loud and clear: “I am.” Chesterton was what was wrong with the world.

What’s wrong with . . . worship? That’s simple. Me. I am what’s wrong with . . . worship.

For every service that I take for granted that wherever two or more are gathered I miss an opportunity to meet with God. For every time I let my personal likes and dislikes rule my being and cloud my judgment. For every time I forget I am a small part in a large Body. For every time I forget worship is more about my personal motivation than it is about what everybody else is doing. For every time I forget worship is more about giving to God than what I personally receive. . . .

Worship is . . . chock full of things that you don’t really care for and probably wouldn’t do the same way if you were the one making the decisions. But tolerating a bit of what you might not like seems worthwhile in the hope of those moments when the Spirit comes and massages your heart unexpectedly. And those times can be powerful. They can be meaningful. And if taken in proper measure, they have a funny way of drowning out the noise of your own personal worship likes and dislikes.

from David Di Sabatino, “What’s Wrong with Contemporary Worship?” [applicable just as much to any other kind of worship too!], *Worship Leader* May 2002, 62.

Sacrifice always goes with spiritual maturity. We’ve found most in our church ready to live that kind of sacrifice in the name of denying themselves, taking up their crosses, and following Jesus.

A great opportunity to teach this shared sacrifice presented itself at a retreat. I preached on the topic several times that weekend, and between my sermons, our song leader led the congregation in an informal time of singing. He would ask participants to suggest their favorite hymns, and then the group would sing the selections.

At one point, when the song leader asked for a new round of suggestions, I popped up and said, “Why don’t we apply this principle of shared sacrifice? From this point on, you can only suggest singing a hymn that is NOT one of your favorites but one that you know is valued by others here.”

People looked at me as if I had just shown up, uninvited, to their party.

“Then, let’s pass the acid test,” I continued, “by singing those songs as passionately as we would our favorites.”

Silence, and a profound pause. Then a few, softly-spoken, uneasy suggestions were offered. Before the weekend was out, however, the suggestions came easier and faster. Some huddled to ask others about their preferences. The singing was never better.

Several weeks later, long after the points of my sermon were but faint memories (if that), people were still talking about the great worship times during that weekend. I heard comments: “I didn’t realize how satisfying worship could be just by demonstrating love for God and others by intentionally refusing to please ourselves.”

from Michael Lewis, “Can You Teach an Old Church New Tricks?”

This article first appeared in the Summer 1993 issue of *Leadership*.

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT

chronicling unfortunate takes on worship

Marketing worship, part 3

BOLD CLAIMS

(ad for worship conference)

“The search for His presence is over.”

. . . and after all this time!!

(album blurb)

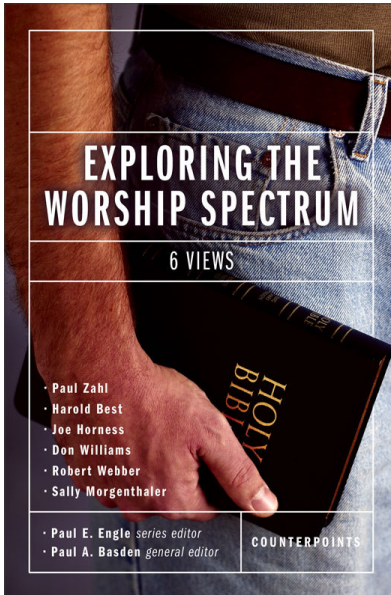
“[The artist] ushered the crowd into His Presence with uplifting praise and worship melodies throughout the night.”

. . . and I thought that was *Christ’s* job.

(ad for projected video backgrounds)

“Imagine . . . your message over stunning moving visuals . . . your congregation captivated. It’s enough to give you goose bumps— isn’t it??

. . . captivated audience, goose-bumped leaders . . . what more could one ask for?



Exploring the Worship Spectrum: Six Views

edited by Paul A. Basden
(Zondervan, 2004)

This volume consists of a spirited debate among proponents of six different worship styles. The styles presented and their champions are:

Formal-Liturgical Worship (Paul Zahl)
Traditional Hymn-Based Worship (Harold Best)
Contemporary Music-Driven (Joe Horness)
Charismatic Worship (Don Williams)
Blended Worship (Robert Webber)
Emerging Worship (Sally Morgenthaler)

Obviously there are plenty of other gradations and varieties of worship, but these categories do cover a broad range of worship styles practiced today. In his Introduction, editor Paul Basden (himself the author of *The Worship Maze: Finding a Style to Fit Your Church* [InterVarsity Press, 1999]), explains the approach taken:

Each chapter summarizes a particular view of worship. The author explains the philosophy and practice inherent in this approach, examines its strengths and benefits, and acknowledges its limitations. Then each of the other five authors responds from his or her specific viewpoint by celebrating commonalities, suggesting inconsistencies, and highlighting blind spots. By the time you finish reading this book, you will understand the richness of worship as practiced in six major traditions as well as recognize clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the dominant approaches to worship in today's world.

It has ever been the case that worship is multiform, not uniform. God is not threatened by this reality—he ordained it; he expects it; he glories in it. As followers of him who said, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), we should celebrate every honest attempt to express love and devotion to God. Concurrently, our commitment to truth calls us to offer humble critique whenever we believe that a worship style has failed to provide a faithful expression of praise and sacrifice to God.

This book intends to be a forum where this kind of healthy dialogue can take place. May God use it to renew his people—the body of Christ—and make our worship more and more worthy of the One who deserves our all.

It is indeed a healthy dialogue. Most readers will find plenty to agree and disagree with in each view presented; but the irenic tone of the debate, and the common commitments to God-centered, Christ-honoring and Word-guided worship, present a heartening unity in the midst of much far-ranging diversity.

WORSHIP EVENTS

CALVIN SYMPOSIUM ON

WORSHIP

WORD MUSIC VISION ACTION

January 25-27, 2007

Calvin College

Grand Rapids, Michigan

www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos

EUROPE WORSHIP LINK 2007 Conference

April 18-21, 2007 Malenovice, Czech Republic

for more information please see ewl.shorturl.com

or contact Ron Man at RMan@gemission.com

COMING NEXT MONTH:

Young and Old in Worship



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