



A DECADE OF OPPORTUNITY

As we enter the nineties, old ways are dying or buried. We are seeing the bankruptcy of materialism - the hunger for something more from life is growing strong around us. A flexible friend, a company car and a timeshare in Spain are not enough in life!

What's more we have seen the death of Christendom - most non-believing adults in the West are now quite clear that they are not Christians. While we can thank God for the end of that centuries long confusion there is a downside: most people assume that the church is a relic of an old order, with nothing relevant to offer their life today.

We also see signs of hope. Alternative medicine, meditation and new age religions all show a new responsiveness to the intuitive, non-rational and spiritual dimension of life. Such interest is not without considerable danger, yet it shows a cultural rebellion against the old quasi-scientific reductionism which left no room for such experiences. Just a few years ago it would have been unthinkable to hear not only Rupert Murdoch but also Cosmopolitan magazine speaking of a groundswell of interest in religion sweeping Britain today.

Here too is a downside. Many who are seeking spiritual reality take it for granted that it's not to be found in the church. Where churches have aped the values of our culture, we have little to offer those now seeking spiritual vitality. The old graffiti "Jesus Yes, Church No" now has a twin "Spiritual Reality Yes, Church No."

Only by the Spirit and Word of God can we bridge that credibility gap. Yet I take great hope from the Wesleyan Revival. When John Wesley looked back at the barrenness and decline of the

previous era he took heart, arguing that God caused "a total disregard for all religion to pave the way for the revival of the only religion which was worthy of God."

The coming decade of evangelism is a decade of tremendous opportunity. But we need to clear the undergrowth. We need to be people of burning passion and clear-sighted focus - it's no good just muddling through. We must ask some pressing questions:

What do we want to achieve for Christ by the turn of the century?

What is expendable to bring that about?

- think in terms of time, money, and church activities
- What must Christ do in us, in order to make us useful to him?
- renewal always begins with a deep sense of personal need.

Graham Kendrick has presented clearly what is needed within and beyond the church - "We are praying... to reintroduce the public to the church as a joyful company of ordinary people, full of life and colour." I hope the Mainstream Newsletter and Conference will help prepare you for the coming decade of devotion, single mindedness and passion, as we seek to live to the full for Jesus Christ in the power of his Spirit. The articles by Richard Foster and Patrick Johnstone set the context for a global spiritual revitalisation. Don't miss out!



NEWSLETTER No. 37 - JULY 1990

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"The World by 2000" - At what cost?



We can be encouraged about the expansion of the Kingdom of God. For the first time in history the possibility exists that our generation could see the completion of world evangelization. Christian strategists speak of "closure", (the job done), and "the World by 2000".

We need to define what we mean, and do it with the clear instructions of the Lord Jesus. These are:

- 1) The evangelizing commission - everyone on earth should have the opportunity to hear the gospel (Mark 16:15,16).
- 2) The discipling commission - every ethnic group should have redeemed representatives to stand before the Throne of the Lamb (Matthew 28:18-20).
- 3) The teaching commission - the whole counsel of God should be taught to all peoples (Lk. 24:45-49).

This does not mean that all will be converted or that the majority of any ethnic group has to be discipled before the task is done. Though we want to win as many and win them as thoroughly as possible!

However, I have a deep concern. The remaining unreached peoples of the world are progressively harder to reach; the political, cultural, religious and spiritual barriers to be surmounted are ever more difficult. Are we willing to pay the cost of closure, the price of penetration? Can we avoid the cross?

The Scriptures are full of references to the need for pruning, crossbearing, weeping and suffering as the normal lot for the harvesters. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross". Can we be any different than the Master?

There is a basic denial of self and willingness to embrace all the implications of discipleship which flies right in the face of our 20th century culture. Unless we are willing for this, we will never get the job done.

Why is it that so many missionaries have a useful beginning, go for further missiological training, but then never get back to their pioneer situations to apply what they learned? Why is it that we have such a short-term mentality - of trying it for a bit, and if it does not work out, try another career? Where has that lifetime commitment gone?

The new generation of first-term missionaries is more likely to go to the field married. Are such

willing for both themselves *and* their children? How simply are missionary families prepared to live? In a tin-roofed little house on the edge of the Sahara with temperatures reaching over 120 degrees Fahrenheit? Far from the conveniences of education and companionship of children of the same culture? Willingness for long separations of husband and wife, parents and children for the sake of the gospel? Are we going to find enough pioneers prepared for the mental anguish that comes from seeing our families suffering because of the calling God has given?

I am not speaking against marriage and family life on the mission field, nor do I agree with the principle that we sacrifice our families for the ministry. But if we are going to see the world evangelized, the will of God must come first whatever the implications for us, our comfort, or our loved ones. Yet wonderfully, God's will encompasses these, too!

We are the "instant" generation. We look for quick solutions. Yet for his three years of ministry, the Lord Jesus had to earn the right in 30 years of manhood. Without some being incarnated into other cultures and becoming as one of them, how will we earn the right to communicate the good news?

It takes time - from seven to 10 years - for a missionary to begin to flow smoothly in a new culture. Some never last that long; others never make it in more years. Sacrificing our way of doing, being and living is hard.

How can one survive the smell of black beans, dried fish or kimchee, or live with different cultural values for cleanliness, time, money, leadership expectations and methods of resolution of conflict? Yet if we are not willing to make a go of this, how can we claim that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all races? We must be a living demonstration of the unifying power of the gospel.

Praise God, we are actually *speaking* of finishing the task. It could happen; but my plea is that we be realistic about what it could cost *me*. We will never reach our goal without a concerted mobilization of the people of God around the world and on an unprecedented scale. May we go right against the selfish, materialistic culture so prevalent in the West, and increasing in other continents, and be willing for the price that *must* be paid if the world is to be finally evangelized!

Patrick Johnstone

Patrick Johnstone is deputy international director and director of research for WEC International, England, and author of "Operation World", a statistical resource for Christians. Condensed from "World Evangelization" magazine, May-June 1989. Used by permission.

A DEEPER SPIRITUAL LIFE

"Everywhere I go I find people hungering and thirsting for a deeper spiritual life but not knowing where to turn. These are good people who long to be free from destructive habit patterns, who learn to draw close to the heart of God, and who thirst for the intimacy of true prayer."

For eighteen months Richard Foster stopped preaching and writing to concentrate on listening to God. Out of that reflection has sprung the Renovare movement, which seeks a wholesome spiritual renewal, integrating the insights of five key traditions: the contemplative, the holiness, the charismatic, the social justice and the evangelical. We want to give you the opportunity to enter into the Renovare Covenant which Richard has now made available.

1. I will set aside regularly for prayer, meditation and spiritual reading, and will seek the practice of the presence of the practice of God.
2. By God's grace I will strive mightily against sin and will do deeds of love and mercy that lead to righteousness.
3. I will seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nurturing the fruit of the Spirit and experiencing the joy and power of the Spirit.
4. I will seek to serve others everywhere I can and will work for justice in all human relationships and social structures.
5. I will study the Scriptures regularly and share my faith with others as God leads.



WORSHIP...a wholesome meal or a healthy diet

For some, modern charismatic worship is the best thing since sliced bread. For others it's the liturgical equivalent of sliced bread, a convenience food designed to appeal to the widest possible market but nutritionally of dubious value.

One frequently hears complaints that the renewal brand of worship is obsessed with praise and the exercise of spiritual gifts but neglects confession, intercession, bible reading, quiet meditation etc. "Last Sunday I attended such and such a church, and do you know even though the service went on for an hour and a half we never offered a single prayer of intercession." Or perhaps, "That's the second time I've been to the church down the road and I've still to be given the chance to confess my sins." The assumption seems to be that a 'good' time of worship needs to include a whole range of ingredients otherwise something is lacking and people start laying their tongues to such epithets as, "shallow", "superficial" or "unbalanced".

While much of this kind of criticism is based on caricature (for example why is it always assumed that charismatic worship equals noisy worship when so many songs of the renewal have

a beautiful simplicity which encourages quiet adoration and contemplation?) we must admit that it does carry some weight. Praise within our public acts of worship has been so transformed (thank God!) by the renewal that it can be over-emphasised. Gifts can be stressed too much by those who seem to regard them as toys with great novelty value rather than practical tools to aid our worship and our witness.

If this is the case why don't we simply retain the insights of renewed worship within services that include all the ingredients traditionally considered to be necessary for 'proper' worship? There are two aspects of renewed worship which to my mind make such a hybrid very difficult.

FLOW

At the heart of renewed worship is NOT a new style of song (although I would argue that the very simplicity of some of the music, which so often attracts criticism, is a great strength allowing as it does direct, uncomplicated communication of emotions), NOR even the exercise of charismatic gifts but the ability to evoke a fresh and immediate sense of God's presence, to enable the worshipper to enjoy a holy intimacy.

One of the insights on which this ability rests is the recognition of the need for worship to develop, to build or to flow. So the end of a song is not the time to sit down and take out a sweet ready for 'the long prayer' still less to whisper comments to your neighbour, nor is it the cue to switch from praise to intercession before the next song signals a move to Bible reading before a switch back to praise. Rather there might be another song which develops the mood of the previous one before someone leads in prayer to encapsulate and express the feelings of the congregation which might in turn prompt a period of singing in tongues and so on. The worship flows. The sense of God's presence builds as the atmosphere of the service develops. Worship becomes more a movie and less a series of snapshots.

Those of us who have tried to include all the various ingredients of worship into this kind of service each time that our church gathers, simply lose the sense of flow. Worship becomes bitty, jerky and in danger of becoming both spiritually and emotionally superficial.

TIME

The other constraint is quite simply that of time. If praise is to be allowed to develop properly it needs time. So for that matter does serious intercession or confession. The point is that to do justice to all the elements that properly belong in our worship each time that we gather would quite simply make our services too long (in this respect at least the tendency of charismatic worship to be longer than the traditional hymn sandwich is an indication that the renewal movement is moving **against** the tide of contemporary culture rather than being swept along by it as is so often claimed).

The point is further strengthened when one listens to the arguments that confession should cover personal, corporate and indeed structural sin and that intercessions ought to embrace the needs of individuals (both within and beyond our own fellowship), the needs of the church as a whole (that is the local church the national church and the international church), the needs of society (again local national and world wide)..... Clearly we cannot do it all. Nor should we try to. Nor should we criticise any one service of worship because certain ingredients are missing.

DIET NOT MENU

As we said earlier though, the critics do have a point. The various ingredients of worship that we have mentioned (and others) are important and should not be jettisoned just because we have discovered how good praise can be. The problem is, how do we ensure that our worship is fully rounded without it becoming destructively

'bitty' or unacceptably lengthy? A clue to the answer lies in the word 'ingredient'.

Perhaps we should encourage those who plan and lead services to think of the various aspects of worship not so much as ingredients for a meal but more as elements in a diet. The point is not to worry about including everything every time that we meet but to ensure that over a period of time our worship is both varied and well balanced, a healthy diet. One week our approach to God may be in the form of exuberant celebration as we follow the injunction of Romans 5 and exult in our salvation, the next we might approach God in a more meditative frame of mind perhaps concentrating on confession for failing him. Then again our response to God's word may take the form of concentrated intercession, quiet reflection or joyful thanksgiving as is appropriate.

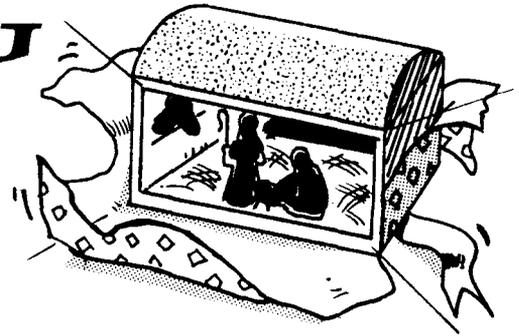
BON APPETIT

Charismatic worship has come in for much criticism. Because some of this criticism has been based upon caricature, those of us who are committed to renewal in worship have tended to react in a rather uncritical, defensive manner. When fellow Christians complain that renewed worship is often shallow because it majors too much on praise at the expense of other important elements, we need to listen. They do have a point. It does happen. Perhaps by seeing worship as a diet rather than a menu we can learn from the objectors without creating the kind of hybrid service which usually falls very cleanly between two stools. Maybe we really can have our cake and eat it - along with our greens, roughage and proteins of course!

Glen Marshall



UNWRAPPING CHRISTMAS



In December '89 we ran just over 100 restaurants but next Christmas our target is at least 500 when Christmas Crackers will run again under the umbrella of "Christmas Unwrapped" as one of 6 evangelistic ideas we are recommending to local churches.

So what is Christmas Unwrapped? Christmas is the one time of year when everybody's thinking about Jesus. Even though he's no longer its focus he's still very much part of the frame. He's the subject of every school nativity play, the carols that everyone still loves to sing or listen to and a good percentage of Christmas Cards. 17 million people go to Church over Christmas, that's nearly 5 million more than on a typical Sunday. These are some of the reasons Christmas provides us with a unique opportunity to explain who Christ is if we use imaginative and creative ways of presenting the message. While others are working hard to hijack and use Christmas to their own ends, it's time for the Church to work together and make sure its real meaning is unwrapped. Christmas Unwrapped is designed to do just that.

Next Christmas Oasis is asking churches all over the country to get involved in putting on local evangelistic events under the Christmas Unwrapped banner. But we're doing more than that. Just as we provided step-by-step advice and information to those launching Christmas Cracker, so this year with the help of The Bible Society we will be producing literature on another 5 imaginative ideas which you can use this December, as your Church becomes part of Christmas Unwrapped.

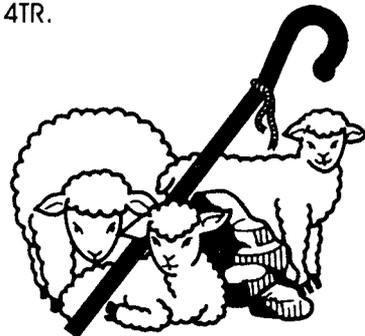
As Christmas Cracker has already proved, when we work together under one logo it's possible to make a real impact in our local communities and on a nation. David Coffey pointed out at Mainstream in January '89 that one of the most important facets of Billy Graham's ministry has simply been that he attracts media attention and so creates the climate in which people start to think and talk about God and the Christian message. Billy Graham gives thousands upon thousands of Christians the opportunity to chat about their faith. Christmas Unwrapped aims to do the same thing as people all over our country begin to ask, "What is Christmas Unwrapped?" Christmas Unwrapped is designed to take evangelism out of

the hands of trained experts and make Jesus the topic of conversation for every sitting room, school gate, factory and corner store. Already Oasis, building on the success of Christmas Cracker have secured several T.V. and other important media opportunities for later this year which will give national prominence to the name of Christmas Unwrapped. Local churches across the country can tie into what is happening to give their events added profile in the community. As Christians are inspired and non-Christians fascinated enough to ask "What's this all about?" "That's the same name as was on the television the other day", "I read about this in the paper". Then it's down to just how good the relationships are that your church members have with the neighbours, workmates and other friends as they invite them along to find out more. Each local church can opt to be involved with Christmas Unwrapped at whatever level it chooses. They may just decide to run their usual evangelistic carol service and call it "Christmas Unwrapped" using the logo on their notice boards to draw added attention to what they are doing but others will want to get involved more deeply by launching several of our published ideas or developing their own.

This coming Christmas our aim is simply to see thousands of evangelistic events taking place each night of December up and down Great Britain putting evangelism back into the hands of ordinary Christians and all happening under the same banner. We can reclaim Christmas as we Unwrap it together.

Steve Chalke

If you would like more information about Christmas Cracker Restaurants or how to become part of Christmas Unwrapped as a whole contact Pete Staley, Christmas Unwrapped, The Oasis Trust, Haddon Hall Baptist Church, Tower Bridge Road, London. SE1 4TR.



Living Worship (Part 2)

3 HYMNS AND SONGS

Much discussion of worship today can degenerate into a slanging match as if hymns and songs were two mutually exclusive categories of musical composition tied to two conflicting cultures. In fact, the last quarter century has seen an explosion of new materials for worship in hymnic form, outstandingly from Timothy Dudley-Smith and Graham Kendrick.

At the same time, while the repetition of simple words clearly reflects a trend in popular music, this must not be seen as exclusively the province of the new: many older hymns have a chorus which is repeated after each verse, often causing a level of repetition in excess of much "modern" worship. In short, once battle lines are drawn, foolish and unwarranted generalisations are paraded. It is far more useful to identify the distinctive and complementary contributions of such verse.

a) I Believe in Hymns

Hymns are found within the New Testament, most notably Philippians 2: 6-11 and Colossians 3:15-20. On the basis of these examples hymns may be said to be thoughtful compositions, carefully crafted, with clear doctrinal content.

Hymns represent the worship of God with mind and voice. They involve not just enjoying the chance to sing, but the restatement of the great truths of our faith. Implicit in such hymns is the recognition that thinking clearly and articulating doctrine clearly is a part of loving the Lord with our minds.

One good description of hymns is "sung doctrine". Though we cannot prove it, it seems reasonable to suggest that Phil. 2: 6-11 was probably learnt by new believers. Such hymns remind and instruct us in the faith. In fact, the teaching function of hymns should not be under-estimated: classical hymns, often repeated, sink into the subconscious and inform daily faith more immediately than many a sermon, heard once and never remembered. As one Christian hymnwriter concluded: "I don't mind who writes the theological books, so long as I can write the hymns."

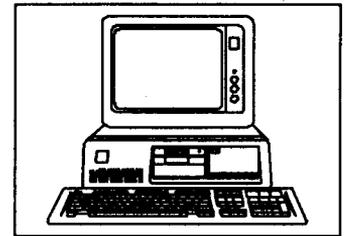
The finest hymns feel essentially timeless. The greatest date least, for example When I survey and And can it be. In fact, there may be a correlation between artistry and timelessness, since Watts and Wesley write devotional poetry, whereas most hymns are a more humble kind of verse. The greatest hymns express timeless truths and the response of faith in a way that stays up to date: they stay "news", and a vehicle for Christian experience and worship.

What's more, there is great value in "singing with the saints of old". Present day worshippers then experience the truth that we are not merely

engaging in a present day phenomenon. We cannot afford to deride or dismiss our forefathers in the faith. We are taught to recognise that there is one Lord and one gospel which have brought into being the church of Christ in every generation.

(I personally can't help but regret the continuing preoccupation of denominations with their own hymnbook, with their own brand name on the cover. Most of what Baptists sing is not distinctively Baptist; many of the hymns are not by Baptists, nor are most worshippers aware, let alone concerned by the authors' denominational context. The day is surely coming when publishers are obliged to concentrate on hymn books that strengthen the common ground between Protestant believers, regardless of denomination.

In fact, I suspect we are close to the end of the printed hymn book in worship at most local churches. In future, high quality projection, possibly even avoiding acetates by direct link to a computer with almost instantaneous song selection, will ensure that the local church has a continually updated stock of songs.



Hymnbook of the future?

This has nothing intrinsically to do with any one style of worship, it merely reflects appropriate use of modern technology.)

What then are the limitations of hymns? Not all hymns have the same limitations, but we may note certain characteristics. First, the risk of becoming over cerebral: the use of the mind in worship can spill over into an intellectual snobbery which, at least implicitly, begins to assume that only the mind matters. Such a tendency can lead to hymns that are neither good poetry nor good communication, e.g. the hymn that begins with the true but indigestible line "Consubstantial, co-eternal..."

On the other hand, perhaps in reaction against this very trend, many of the popular evangelical hymns of the Victorian era have a cloying sentimentality, often with an overdose of "sweetness" imagery. Others, in understandable but misrepresenting zeal to spread the gospel, oversell the emotional consequences of conversion - "Now I'm happy all the day". Such hymns tend either not to be sung, or to be sung with a kind of nostalgic bravado, or they need to be rescued from their own excesses.

More generally, there is a tendency for some hymns to concentrate on speaking about God in the third person. Not that this is intrinsically

unhelpful - the New Testament speaks of addressing one another in hymns and songs. But a diet for worship made up largely of hymns about God can begin to make worship feel like a wedding without the bride. Not unrelated to this tendency is my impression that many late 19th century and early 20th century hymns, while full of confidence in Christ, speak of an almost wholly unrealised eschatology - God is sung about, but not expected to put in a personal appearance in our experience or do anything very much, between conversion and the second coming.

Two other limitations must be faced. In our popular culture of ever accelerating change, there is a real problem with dated idiom of music and words.

Music

In the pre-modern era, traditional songs were passed on from generation to generation. Last century the extended family around the piano knew a common stock of songs. No more is this true. Popular music is sectionalised according to generation, and, more importantly, is not on the whole expected to last. Songs typically express common sentiments in the idiom of the moment, and next year, or even next month, a new song will become the vehicle for such sentiment.

To put it personally, I would be embarrassed to sing in the shower the songs my father sings from the forties and fifties, and equally telling, today's teenagers consider hopelessly dated the songs from my era in the late sixties and early seventies: popular music hardly ever lasts today. That does not mean the music is inadequate, but rather it is operating within a cultural context where musical idiom is always on the move. As the Reynolds Girls sang in a 1989 single.

"Don't you know that every generation has music for its own identity?"

That accurate cultural observation must be faced as a matter of fact: if music in existing churches is unchanging, new churches will continue to spring up for new generations. What's more, this will happen with accelerating rapidity, as "cultural generations" become shorter. The music in worship revolution of the last twenty years can never afford to stop. Many of today's tunes will soon be relegated to the storeroom of the dated and unsung.

In this context, many traditional hymn tunes are increasingly culturally non-viable. Some are timeless classics, but it must be recognised that most hymn tunes do not aspire to such musical stature - the basis of timelessness - and nor do they achieve it!

Some are dated - some from the early 20th century employ the falling melodies of the music hall, (though some Christians at the time would have been horrified to discover their inter-relation with their own culture!) and to a modern ear they sound uncomfortably hackneyed and sentimental.

Some are too far removed from contemporary rhythms and melodies, and sound just plain dull to any not attuned from childhood to the conventions of Christian worship. In short, some tunes will last unfailingly, some will gradually lose touch with contemporary culture, and some have lost touch already and deserve a quiet burial.

Words

Both Calvin and the Book of Common Prayer spoke of the vital importance of worship in the common language of the people. What was true of Latin at the time of the Reformation is true of Elizabethan language today - frequently incomprehensible. Words and grammar are dynamic not fixed: words change their meaning. Thus, "before Jehovah's awful throne" speaks today of something horrible rather than something of awe; "Lord the cistern's broken" speaks of the need to call a plumber; and no-one uses "without" to mean "outside".

That's not all. We have now seen the death of thee/thou and - est/-eth language, and it won't come back. The end of the AV and the virtual end of the Book of Common Prayer mean that such archaisms, no longer in use in most school assemblies, are to be found solely in the hymns of Christian worship. They therefore feel increasingly archaic, anachronistic and incomprehensible. As a result, they convey the clear message to the outsider that the Christian church is old-fashioned and out of date, and that, if there is a God, he is trapped in yesterday.

Such remoteness increases the alien feel of religious language, unused in the rest of life, thus reinforcing the unhelpful dichotomy of the secular and the sacred: we seem to be indicating that such a God cannot be worshipped adequately in the language of the everyday - the language of "real life". No institution seriously committed to the present and the future can allow itself the indulgence of such self-defeating anachronism.

This issue is ever more pressing. Not only have certain forms passed from current idiom, there is also a need today to use, where appropriate, inclusive and non-sexist language. Above all, the English language is developing faster today than ever before. Shakespeare had an astonishingly rich and broad vocabulary, but so many words are now proliferating each and every year, that he would actually be semi-literate faced with everyday language today. Our language will not keep still; so nor can the language of our worship.

To sum up, there is great value in hymns. Generally retaining on Sunday mornings at least one hymn from a previous century permits us to benefit still from classic hymns and appreciate the living faith of past generations. However, old hymns simply cannot be a complete answer to our needs in song.

b) I Believe in Songs

Songs too are mentioned in the Bible. With the working definition of a simple, brief expression of praise, we may cite for example Revelation 4:8, and 5:12-13. What's more such worship is often repetitive in style. For example, in Psalm 150 we find thirteen uses of the phrases "Praise the Lord" and "Praise him" in just six verses: extravagant repetition in worship, while by no means the sum of all that is valuable is certainly no modernistic innovation unknown to the worship of ancient Israel. In the early Christian centuries, there are references to spontaneous compositions in worship, customarily giving testimony and expressing delight in God: such extemporisation would no doubt tend to use simple words and simple tunes.

The use of songs in worship speaks of worship with heart and voice. This points to not merely enjoying a chance to sing, but to singing of our personal love to God, as Abba, our dear Father.

Our culture is no different to any other in recognising the value of love songs; often such popular songs have the simplicity and repetitive qualities found also in worship songs. There is certainly real value in expressing intimate devotion to God; there is also real value in meditations on divine love, dwelling upon a single truth in his presence, allowing it time to come alive. (The "Jesus prayer", often exercised in Orthodox and Catholic circles, reflects the value of this discipline of a concentrated and narrow focus upon a single aspect of God and our relationship with him).

There is real value in simplicity and immediacy. We worship not only the God of eternity, but God with us; not only Christ crucified and coming, but Christ present as King; not only the rule of God to come, but the rule of God among us in power. In other words, our worship needs to express not only the transcendence and holiness of God, but also God's presence in our everyday. What's more, God in our contemporary everyday speaks to believer and outsider alike of the truth that worship is a living encounter and not a mere memorial or museum piece.

There is a demonstrable evangelistic impact to contemporary worship, just as there has been in previous eras: the outsider is no longer faced solely with the God of the "religious" or the God of the past, eliciting the inevitable response, "What's it to do with me?" Rather, there is often a surprise of joy. Joy characterised the first Christians, along with boldness and power according to Luke, and it also characterises many modern worship songs. I well remember tourists on the streets of York expressing real amazement when street teams from St. Michael's explained that being Christians was the reason for our joyful songs; Christianity has for many assumed a cultural dress which is boring, stuffy, dull and dated. The tragedy of Christian

worship is that we so often have taken the Lamb of God and dressed him up as mutton.

What then are the limitations of such songs? First, they can be over populist, uncritically dependent on the values of our society. For example, the rediscovery of a rich vein of experience of God can risk becoming self-obsessed instead of Christ-centred. Second, there is a modern sentimentality, either "matey" or gushy, as unappetising as its Victorian precursor. Third, many songs date very quickly. This is in the very nature of much modern music and culture. Such built-in cultural obsolescence is a plain fact of life, and quite unavoidable - of course in every century most songs do not survive the generation of their composer, but the speed of turnover is now much faster, and it simply needs to be recognised.

<u>Hymns and Songs in Diagrammatic Outline</u>	
<u>HYMNS</u>	<u>SONGS</u>
<u>common strengths</u>	
-scriptural	-scriptural
-with mind and voice	-with heart and voice
-sung doctrine	-love songs
-timelessness	-immediacy
<u>common limitations</u>	
-over-cerebral	-over-populist
-over-sentimental	-over-sentimental
-dated idiom of music/words	-date very quickly

David Watson summed up well the various elements of music in worship:... in a day when the speed of life is increasing all the time there is something to be said for what amounts to a sung meditation... it would be wrong to despise the simpler expressions of worship... It is not always necessary to write a solid 'body of divinity' into every spiritual song... [however] Usually there should be good theological content in our songs of praise, so that it is more than a mere sound to stimulate our emotions. The hymns written at the time of the Reformation or during the revival through Wesley and Whitefield became a major factor in the work of the Spirit in both personal and national life." (Watson, Church p.191-193)

Hymns and songs are like oak trees and annuals. The garden looks best when both are present in due proportion. They are complementary, and it is misguided to see them as competing. In truth, they need each other.

Graham Kendrick, in his preface to Ten Worshipping Churches suggested signs of a growing acceptance of the approach outlined above. "For every church, the process of change was accompanied to some degree by the sound of the creaking of old wineskins. Most report with sadness the departure of a few people who could not reconcile themselves to the changes, though by far the strongest impression is of the vast majority learning to worship alongside one another, in

full acceptance of each other's differences. A fellow worship leader of mine commented recently how that whilst preferences can exist side by side very happily, prejudices cannot. It always warms my heart when I meet older Christians, who though they themselves find it difficult or impossible to participate in some of the newer expressions of worship, nevertheless encourage, fully support and pray for those who are pioneering the changes, recognising that God is at work."

(Kendrick, TWC p.18-19)

Hymns and songs are often set against each other as emblems of two cultures in conflict. We may offer a proposition which seeks to get beyond such aridity:

The forms of worship are culturally relative and belong to the well-being, not to the essence of the Church.

Our music in worship needs to help us worship God with both mind and heart.

4) THE IMPERATIVE OF THE SPIRIT

The Old Testament provides a compendium for the possible activities of worship which reveals a breadth and an openness to the performing arts sadly lacking from much which goes by the name of Christian worship. For example, we find there set responses, processions, silent reflection, festal shouts, dance, a wide range of musical instruments, prophecy, prostration, the raising of hands. Anyone serious about biblical worship discovers here a richness immensely suggestive.

What is fresh in the New Testament is not a wider range of activities in worship, but rather a new understanding of the presence of the Spirit. No longer does he come at special occasions to special individuals for a special moment of inspiration. Rather, Jesus the baptizer pours out his Spirit upon all believers. Thus what is new is not the activities, but the event of Christian worship.

From Acts 2 onwards, the worship of the Christian church takes place, or at least is intended to take place, within the age of the Spirit. The kingdom of God has come in power, not the power of the second coming, but the power of the Spirit sent by Christ from the Father. In the Spirit's power, released through the crucifixion of Christ, we encounter the presence of the future, the foretaste of the coming consummation. Being filled with the Spirit is the birthright of every believer and comes as a command for every believer, not as an unrepeatable event, like conversion, but as a continuing obligation and opportunity, in which the capacity for fullness is designed to increase as our conformity to Christ and awareness of our own sin and weakness grow.

Hahn expresses well the New Testament's conviction of the centrality of the Spirit to the event of Christian worship: "Worship can be properly ordered only when the freedom necessary for the operation of the Spirit remains. All legalism is

contrary to the nature of the worship performed by the community assembled in the name of Jesus. But this means at the same time that worship must as much as possible be kept free of rigid institutional order." (Hahn p.107)

It is not difficult to see why the Spirit is often blamed for division among Christians. For many churches the first stirrings of the Spirit's sovereign liberty seems to rock the fragile raft of unity: he demands freedom to do the unexpected; he delights in a huge variety of gifts; he always confronts our institutionalising tendencies. And yet this same Spirit is the one who longs to create a dynamic and supernatural unity among us which is truly glorifying to Christ. "...how, given the tremendous variety of charisms which fills the Church, can there be unity; and how, given the freedom of the Spirit, can there be order? The fundamental answer is that the Spirit creates unity and order... (1 Cor. 12:4,7)" (Kung p.189).

The continuous reformation and contemporization of worship will always have at least the following characteristics:-

-From worship as a prelude ("sermon-centricity", originally in reaction against pre-Reformation Rome) to worship as an encounter with the living God.

-From worship as the province of an expert (professionalism as one Protestant form of priesthood) to worship as an expression of corporate giftedness (1 Cor. 14:26, Eph. 5:19).

-From worship which is essentially predictable to worship which is available (this is harder to prepare, since it involves a much more creative interaction of the designed and the spontaneous).

-From worship largely fixed in external form, to worship which is provisional, informed by order and convention but never confusing such order with the actual event of encounter with the living God. Orderliness is offered in reverence and yet yields to the sovereign freedom of the coming of God to take the initiative amongst his people.

Hans Kung issued a clarion call to any church which seeks to live in openness to the Spirit of God: "...the Church which is under the Spirit cannot simply rest content with the status quo, but must constantly allow itself to be renewed in that Spirit which renews the face of the earth and also the face of the Church, the Spirit of him of whom it is written: 'Behold I make all things new' (Rev. 21:5)." (Kung, p.201)

The renewal of worship, in other words, will continue, not merely as a necessary restoration that can be completed, but rather as a continuum. God will not leave his church as what Donovan, the Catholic missiologist, calls a "beleaguered, outpost colony in an alien world". On the contrary, with reference not only to our culture's momentum but also to the ever contemporary Spirit of God, constant change is here to stay.

Indeed the words of advice once given to Donovan speak to the need for the church in Britain to continue to respond critically and creatively to the spirit of the age with the inspiration of the Spirit of God - "...do not try to call them back where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as that place might seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before." (Donovan p vii).

We may sum up this fourth and final vital proposition for the understanding and implementation of living worship as follows, first reiterating our previous propositions:

- 1) Living Worship must relate to its present cultural context.
- 2) Living worship needs to be continuously "made new".
- 3) The forms of worship are culturally relative and belong to the well being, not to the essence of the Church.
Our music in worship needs to help us worship God with both mind and heart.
- 4) The Holy Spirit is always contemporary, and so as a matter of inevitability he is creating churches of today and tomorrow in the Living Christ. The only question: how will our present churches become relevant to God's people of the future?

Rob Warner

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Deeper Life

Alan Isaacson, Hodders, 256pp £2.99

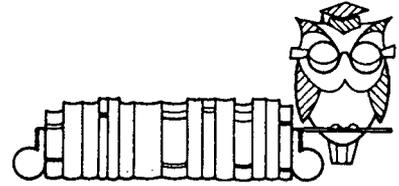
W.F. Kumuyi began a Bible Study group in his home in Lagos in 1973. By 1988 it had grown to a congregation of more than 50,000. The Deeper Life Church now has more than one thousand churches around Africa and beyond. Their zeal to spread the gospel is enviable - Kumuyi has told his pastors to spend half their time on evangelism and only half their time on their members - "There will always be problems in the church: don't let them take up all your time."

Alan Isaacson has worked in Nigeria and now works for the CMS in England. His carefully researched account of the history and teachings Deeper Life is thorough and honest. He is not afraid to acknowledge differences of culture which can make a Westerner feel remote from some aspects of this church. But he is also not afraid to state what Western churches need urgently to learn from the rapidly growing churches of the rest of the world.

What are the secrets of Deeper Life? Isaacson highlights the following: a church to participate in; applied biblical preaching; meeting needs through miracles (well known for their ministries of wholeness and healing); a serious commitment to discipleship both in personal lifestyle and caring for one another; practising the power of prayer; a love for and submission to the Bible; congregations that are self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.

Kumuyi does not claim to have all the answers. But I cannot help but feel he has more of the answers than we do! If you are prepared to learn from African Christians, read this book. Rob Warner

BOOK REVIEWS



Hosea: by David Allan Hubbard, Tyndale OT Commentary, IVP, £6.25, 234pp.

I have only ever heard a sermon series on Hosea once. We hear and study other minor prophets (Jonah, Malachi, Amos, Haggai) but not this one (among others). The Tyndale series is to be congratulated on its recent additions in the area of the minor prophets. The working pastor is unlikely to turn to Andersen & Freedman (Anchor Bible) for textual groundwork, but will find all that needs to be known, in short compass, in order to make a decent stab at the message of Hosea.

Hubbard tackles the problem of Hosea's marriage in chapters 1-3 under four guidelines: (1) the account is literal not allegorical, (2) the autobiographical ch. 3 is a sequel to the biographical ch. 1, (3) Gomer became a prostitute after her marriage to Hosea, (4) ch. 2 is an essential comment on and expansion of the two calls to prophetic action in 1:2 & 3:1.

The pathos of Hosea is well brought out in this commentary. Of interest is the particular discussion of ch. 11 which notes Andersen & Freedman's proposals for translation of this well known text. I recommend the series for personal study (e.g. Wenham on Numbers and Alexander on Jonah) as well as for sermon/bible study preparation.

Terry Griffith

What About Other Faiths? by Marlin Goldsmith, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.99, 183pp

This is an excellent general, popular introduction to the whole multi-faith issue. The theological context as illustrated by Hick, Knitter, Kung and Liberation Theology (with its tendency to place justice/orthopraxies as a way to God whatever one's view of truth) is sketched helpfully. Also the modern context of Westernism as influenced by eastern religious thought is emphasised. The questions that people ask about religion have changed over the last 20 years as people have come into

everyday contact with people of other faiths.

Goldsmith's position is well-informed (by experience as a missionary as well as the length of the bibliography), sympathetic to the positive values that other faiths portray, and robustly evangelical. "Modern critics wrestle with the question of universalism, debating whether God will save all people irrespective of their religion. But this was not a primary issue in New Testament times. The Early Church was much more concerned with universality, not universalism." (p.86). The book focuses on issues such as whether there is revelation or salvation outside of Jesus. It looks at the demonic element in other faiths. It analyses what 'dialogue' means for the Christian. It also hammers modern 'Christian' universalism for its tendency to be a twentieth century equivalent of nineteenth century cultural imperialism.

For a deeper analysis of the content of others faiths vis a vis Christianity, the reader will need to turn to Stephen Neill's 'Crises Of Belief'.

Terry Griffith

The Authority of Scripture by Andrew Rigden Green (A Spurgeon's Booklet published by Kingsway, 1990; pp64; £1.99)

The authority of scripture is one of the most pressing issues facing evangelicals today. While we pay lip service to the notion, our lives, both individually and corporately, betray an ambivalent attitude to scripture.

Of course, we are not like the liberal or neo-orthodox, whose positions are briefly and ably summarised in this booklet, who undervalue scripture and hence undermine its integrity. We uphold scripture to be the infallible, even inerrant Word of God. But as John Goldingay so pointedly stressed to evangelical anglicans at NEAC 3, we might believe that but we don't always live it. And often those liberals, whose view of scripture we attack, are better at living out scripture's teaching than we are.

Andrew Rigden Green concludes this most helpful booklet with a few paragraphs on this issue stres-

sing "The debate about the authority of scripture is ultimately a debate about practice. It concerns our intention to submit to a will other than our own".

There is not a lot new in this booklet. It is a restatement of the orthodox evangelical position on the bible. It is restated very well and repays careful reading. As those who weekly proclaim the Word of God we do well to remind ourselves frequently about what scripture is and how we should approach it. Rigden Green is to be congratulated for including a section on interpretation which takes seriously critical scholarship but stresses use of such scholarship within the framework of a classic evangelical view of scripture.

The booklet is welcome addition to this useful series.

Simon Jones

The Hot Line by Peter H. Lawrence (Kingsway 1990; pp288; £3.99).

This is yet another book to add to the burgeoning pile of testimony/bible teaching on healing. Peter Lawrence is an anglican whose pilgrimage into the experience of hearing God speak and seeing God act in his church is told with considerable wit and style. Of its type, it is probably the best in print.

Lawrence's main concern is to explain his understanding of "words of knowledge" especially in the context of a church's ministry to the sick. He establishes his case that God still speaks today in a most helpful chapter mixing exposition of scripture with practical experience. Then after two chapters of testimony about how the church exercises its healing ministry there follows one chapter each on recognising, receiving, testing and giving words from God. All these chapters contain much that is helpful, stimulating and inspiring.

My main concern about the book is that it pursues the link between healing and receiving words of knowledge about a specific situation without really establishing any biblical warrant for such a practice. When Paul speaks of words of knowledge it is never in the context of teaching

on healing. Lawrence establishes beyond doubt the fact that God still speaks today but offers no biblical evidence that God gives 'words' about those for whom we are seeking healing. The danger it seems to me is that we end up only praying for the sick about whom we've received 'a word' - not only are we elected for salvation, it seems, but

also for healing. This appears to limit God's healing activity to our ability to hear and also can lead to chronic pastoral problems if a 'word' given to a sick person is not followed by healing of that person. It also gives rise to the very real danger that we do not listen for God speaking about anything else - social issues, specific evangelistic strategy, for instance.

I had hoped that Lawrence's book would tackle this issue head-on. Unfortunately it does not. It is, however, worth reading for its many insights and its call to faith in the God who still speaks. *Simon Jones*

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