
OPEN THOU OUR LIPS!

The Great Hymn Controversy

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A devastating ecclesiastical crisis has been unfolding during the last three decades in the realm of worship. One can hardly fail to notice that there has been something of a 'revolution' in church worship during this time. Central to this upheaval has been a bumper-sized bandwagon of new songs — and one is either travelling on this bandwagon or not. To be off it is to be left out in the cold. Moreover, to resist this bandwagon will inevitably bring accusations of "*not keeping up with the times*", of "*resisting the move of the Spirit*" of "*hampering the process of inevitable revival*", etc. In this article, we examine the issues involved, trace the history of hymnody, expose the movements which have led to this 'revolution' in worship, and reveal the agenda which lies behind it.

INTRODUCTION

One person loves the "old-style hymns" and has no time for what we can call the *New Style of Worship* songs, which involve rock and pop music and slushy, sentimental choruses.[1] Another believes that the rock and pop music style of songs are the greatest thing ever to hit the Church, but regards the older style of hymns as being stuffy and irrelevant to today's world. Is this just a matter of personal taste? "*One man's meat is another man's poison — beauty is in the eye of the beholder*"? Is that what we are dealing with here? Or is there another, deeper issue involved — a hidden agenda to the introduction of this music into the Church which can only be discerned when one understands what lies behind the modern revolution in churchly music? It is this that we propose to explore here.

The present writer is by no means unbiased in this debate. However, his bias has been forged out of what he considers to be objective evidence which has profoundly disturbed him. For he believes that a number of very serious questions impinge on this whole area of hymn-singing and worship.

For example, in spite of the oft-made claim that the *New Style of Worship* heals rifts and brings unity in churches, is it not true that there is very often harmful division created through its introduction, and that its advocates heartlessly dismiss its opponents as being on a lower spiritual plane and obstructive to the worship of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit?

So this issue is not merely a question of choosing

between two different kinds of hymnody, but it has also become a massive pastoral issue in churches today, interfacing with numerous other controversies.

Is it not also true that where the *New Style of Worship* songs are introduced on a small scale to placate the demands of a faction in a church, there will soon be many more demands for increasing liberalisation of worship, with numerous new and pernicious influences which bring a legion of pastoral problems in their wake?

Moreover, how did the so-called "Toronto Blessing" establish itself so easily in so many churches professing to be evangelical in the past three years? Could it be that the previous introduction of the *New Style of Worship* songs in these churches had already provided a fertile seedbed — an avant-garde — where such developments would merely seem like a natural outgrowth?

Mission Praise is the most popular of all the contemporary songbooks. Because of its inclusion of older hymns, it is often found in otherwise conservative evangelical churches. It has thereby become the ideal "Trojan Horse", softening up congregations for a range of further neo-evangelical developments.

It would be worthwhile at this point to highlight the present writer's own struggle with this subject. He came from a background steeped in rock music. From the 1960s until his conversion in the mid-1980s, he was an avid listener to Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band, the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan, Poco, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and many other musical icons of the New Age. When he first

¹ In making a division between what we call "the old style of hymns" and the "New Style of Worship", we are referring primarily to a genre or idiom rather than an age or era. It would be foolish to imagine that every hymn written before 1900 is wonderful and everything after that is dreadful. What we refer to as an "old style of hymn" could be written at any time from the first century to the present day; whereas when we refer to the *New Style of Worship* we are speaking of the pop or rock idiom which has emerged mainly from the Charismatic camp during the past three decades.

came to Christ it seemed so easy to slip into the rock and poppy, happy clappy *New Style of Worship*. At that time, this writer believed that if secular rock music could be transformed into “Christian” rock then it would somehow become sanctified. However, within a very short time, he began to be increasingly uncomfortable with the entire idiom of the *New Style of Worship*. Soon he came to comprehend the complete inadequacy and even inpropriety of rock and pop music as a suitable vehicle for profound Christian worship.

The purpose in revealing these things here is to show that this writer has himself wrestled with the issues over many years and understands the difficult position in which many find themselves as they try to discern what constitutes appropriate churchly music.

So many of the *New Style of Worship* songs trivialise the high truths of salvation. Many are in a style which is simply not suited to the holy spirituality which is due to our God. Moreover, due to their pietistic, subjectivist roots, many of today’s songs are highly self-centred in their expression, and they pursue an almost obsessive musical celebration of “*Me and My Wonderful Feelings*” rather than the Lord and His amazing works.

Moreover, many of the *New Style of Worship* songs appear to have been designed to put a congregation into a state of blissful ecstasy — especially if sung repetitively, as they most often are. This induces a pre-hypnotic ‘Alpha-wave’ brain-state condition, in which people are more easily susceptible to the expectations and the powerful suggestions of influential leaders. These are ideas which we will be developing.

In fact, many of the songs of today are pursuing an agenda which is not immediately apparent to the casual observer — that is, until you know the ‘buzz’ words and phrases. Dynamic triggers such as “*I’m building a people of power*” — a reference to the triumphalist, pseudo-miracle-working, ‘Kingdom-Now’ Dominionism which is so prevalent among the *New Style of Worship* songwriters — are like rallying-calls to those suggestible enough to receive them. Or what about the line “*My feet start dancing, my hands rise up*”? The agenda is clear enough here. When repeated often enough over a period of time, these ideas begin to exert a real sway over the singer.

None of this has happened in a vacuum but is surely part of a major downgrade or even part of a much wider apostasy of mind-blowing proportions. Yet, because of the stealth-like manner in which this is being executed, comparatively few professing Christians are aware of the seriousness of the issue.

Music is surely one of the great gifts of God in creation, which is to be practised, listened to and enjoyed. It is no coincidence that there are *seven* primary notes in the music scale — and we could make the same observation about the *seven* colours of the rainbow, which is surely another exhibition of the Divine fingerprint in the realm of nature.

In Scripture, we see in many places the divine approval of hymnody — singing praises to the glory of God. Even during the creation of the world, the angels were singing (Job 38:7). Now that is one chorus that we can hardly wait to hear! Imagine the purity of angel-song. If only worship could truly be “*on earth, as it is in heaven*”.

Our plan, in this study, is first to discover what Scripture reveals to us about how and what we should sing to

God; then to look at hymnody in the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic early Church eras; then we shall examine the leading trends which have conditioned the direction of worship in recent years; finally, we shall look at the strategies which lie behind the advent of the *New Style of Worship* songs.

I. HYMNODY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA

If we want a perfect model for the use of our voices in song to God, what better place could we begin than the Book of Psalms, which surely provides us with many pointers regarding the content and idiom fitting for believers’ hymnody?

Some have found it easy to handle the difficulty of picking one’s way around the modern hymn/chorus minefield by taking refuge in the exclusive singing of the Old Testament psalms. We respect their position and even have some small sympathy with it — believing that the psalms should be sung (and read) far more often than they are in churches. But we cannot accept that the “*new song*” revealing the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev.5:8-10; cf. 15:2-3), as jubilantly voiced by all believers in the Gospel Age, could possibly be restricted to the types, shadows and prophecies of an earlier, less glorious, covenant administration.

So what principles do the psalms bring to bear on our worship of God in song?

1. In Praise of God’s Attributes

This is a vital starting-point for all sung worship, and should be the primary aim whenever God’s people come together to sing hymns. A classic example of this occurs in Psalm 29:

“Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

The promotion of God’s attributes, such as His strength, His glory and His holiness, can only promote wholesome worship, so that reverence and awe become central.

When God’s attributes are being praised, then He is both the beginning and proper focus of our worship. Although the expression of our feelings towards God does play a part in our praise of Him, true worship does not *begin* with these. Rather, it begins with God Himself and the fact that He both desires and deserves our praise. The word “worship” comes from an old English composite word which, in modern English, is rendered “worthship”. The Lord alone is worthy of receiving our praise and honour.

2. Thanksgiving for Deliverance

The observation is often made that worship is gratitude; and this certainly plays its part in our songs toward Him. The Book of Psalms is full of such expression. We even find historical accounts of events designed to engender thanksgiving to the Lord, of which a classic example is Psalm 78:

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful

works that He has done". (vv.2-4)

This hymnodic rejoicing in a historical event is echoed in the song which was sung by Moses and the children of Israel after the jubilant Exodus:

"I will sing to the Lord because He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" (Exod.15:1)

3. Praise Him for His Judgements

Intrinsic in that Song of Moses is the idea of judgement. To sing about God's judgements is not an idea which may attract the popular mind; but we find it everywhere in Scripture, as it glorifies the Lord as the Omnipotent One — which is the heart of worship.

The other Song of Moses in Deut.32 is further example, about which God had specifically said:

"Now, therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel". (Deut.31:19)

In other words, these hymns were not merely in praise of God's attributes and judgements but there was another vital undergirding principle:

4. The Centrality of Didacticism

At the heart of the psalms of Scripture is the vital influence of didacticism, which means 'systematic instruction'. There are two ways that God teaches His people: one is what we can call "heuristic", where we learn by the experiences of life in which He has placed us and by which He trains us. The other way that God teaches us is through "didactics" — and this is also the principal way — involving instruction in the form of words, from the Bible, through teachers and preachers and other outward systematic means. One of these means is through our songs. God teaches us about Himself and His truth through the songs that we sing. Hymns therefore function as 'teachers of faith'. This is why it is vital that our songs of praise have a didactic heart to them.

The first in the Book of Psalms is a classic example, graphically teaching the difference between the godly and the ungodly. In psalm fifty-one, we are systematically taught about the vital doctrine of repentance:

"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight — that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

Incidentally, this is not some emotional mantra that says "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit in me*" over and over again, outside of any real context (as does one modern chorus). This O.T. psalm is an example of *substance* — a cry for deliverance from sin, born out of the heartfelt avowal that God is a great and mighty Judge who causes His Spirit to indwell a person.

It is doctrine, but it should also move us into a

worshipful realm where we see that what lies behind this teaching is a mighty God, worthy of our praise.

Another facet of O.T. hymnody is

5. Cries for Deliverance out of Affliction

Can you imagine today's neo-evangelical churches singing: "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word... It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes*" (Psa.119:67, 71)?!

It may not be the modern way, but it is the Bible way of singing praises to God. We should be crying out to Him for deliverance from affliction because it is a sign of our dependence on Him and thus magnifies Him in our worship.

6. Hymning Intercession

Another facet of hymnody in the psalms is that of crying out to the Lord for Him to help certain groups of people. For example:

"May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you". (Psa.20:1)

It greatly exalts God and promotes a healthy dependence on Him when we come to Him in intercession. Why should this not be in our songs as well as our prayers?

7. Proclaiming the Prophetic

Another important aspect of hymnody in the psalms is the extolling of the prophecies of the Lord. We see classic examples of this in Psalms 2, 16, 22, etc. An example of this in our hymns today would be the famous: "*Lo, He comes with clouds descending*", where we are exalting the Lord in the prophecies of His second coming.

So the principles for hymnody laid down in the psalms are such as praise of God's attributes; thanksgiving for deliverance; praising Him for His judgements; didactic instruction; cries for deliverance from affliction; making intercession and proclaiming the prophetic.

Surely, in the psalms we have many sound indicators concerning the content and idiom for the songs of the church of ALL ages.

What about in the New Testament? Are there any principles there for us to glean?

II. HYMNODY IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA

In the Apostolic church it was the preaching of Christ and the application of Scripture passages about Him which were central to worship (cf. Lk.4:16-27; Acts 13:14ff; 13:15; 13:46; 13:23; 14:1ff; Rom.1:16; 10:1-5). Acts 17:2-3 suggests that Paul preached through a theme on three consecutive sabbaths — that Christ must suffer, that He must rise again, that He is the Messiah prophesied in the O.T.

R.P. Martin says in his interesting book on worship in the early church that the reading and exposition of the Scriptures is

"an inheritance we have received, through the early church, from the worship of Judaism, and which makes the model Christian service a Word-of-God service".[2]

From the outset, church worship was a "Word-of-God service". The truths of the Bible were at the heart of

² R.P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott), 1964, p.69.

worship. And this was also true insofar as the singing of songs was concerned.

The singing of spiritual songs — whether Old Testament psalms or New Testament hymns — was a predominant feature of the apostolic church. And it is the view of many biblical scholars that there are a number of texts in the New Testament which were actually sung as hymns (e.g. Lk.1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:29-32).

It is also probable that the Old Testament Book of Psalms continued to be used in the worship of the early church and that new hymns were composed or made from the reworking of O.T. passages and the writings of the godly. As one commentator states:

“We learn from the writings of several in the first ages of Christianity (particularly from a letter of Pliny’s, and some passages in Justin Martyr and Tertullian) that the Christians were accustomed to sing hymns, either taken out of scripture, or of more private composure, in their worship of God”.^[3]

What was the tenor of the kind of hymns which were written in the New Testament era? Here we can take up two particular passages of Scripture, for they have much to teach us about the nature of hymnody. First, Eph.5:18-21:

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God”.

The contextual contrast here is that on the one hand we have the drunken stupor of the heathen, along with the attendant dulling of the mind, mayhem and frivolity which characterises their lives and especially their “worship”. And on the other hand we have the Spirit-inspired worship which finds its expression through wholesome psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. A similar contrast appears in the passage where Paul addresses the subject of spiritual gifts, where he tells the saints at Corinth:

“You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led”. (1 Cor.12:2)

To be “*carried away*” to dumb idols by a crazy heathen impulse, riding on a tide of human emotion, is in direct contrast to the Christian way, where the body, with its baser instincts, is disciplined and brought under subjection (cf. 1 Cor.9:27).

In Eph.5:18-21, the contrast is not between being drunk on wine and being “drunk” on a dram of the Holy Spirit, as many who have imbibed Pentecostalism believe today. As in 1 Cor.12:2ff, the contrast is between, on the one hand, the humanistic, uncontrolled, emotion-based, trance-inducing, sensuality of heathen religion and, on the other hand, the gentle spirituality of a worship which is Christ-centred, reverent, and which engenders a genuine attitude of awe towards God.

True worship is not about singing trite and unedifying songs, going into a trance, twitching and falling down, as happens in many churches today. It is about the conscious, mindful, intelligent use of one’s words towards God, in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another New Testament verse which conveys much about the tenor and content of our worship is:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”. (Col.3:16)

First Paul says that the doctrine of Christ and the Gospel should be firmly established in a Christian “*in all wisdom*” — not some perversion of the Gospel or misunderstanding of the faith or pet hobbyhorse, but the richness and wisdom of Christ.

He had said in the previous verse that “*the peace of God*” should rule in our hearts. But this could so easily become some kind of resort for pietism and mysticism, so he deliberately adds “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*”. This firmly moves us away from reliance on the realm of the subjective into the objective truth about Christ.

It is also plain here — “*teaching and admonishing one another*” — that our worship in song should be for our mutual benefit and edification. Plainly, therefore, Christian songs should be of some depth, able to teach believers the truths of the faith which we have in Christ Jesus. There is no place here for superficial ditties.

It is interesting that after noting how pagan music involves ribaldry and carousing, John Calvin states:

“Paul would have the songs of Christians...to be spiritual, not made up of frivolities and worthless trifles”.^[4]

Is that not also a word for our own time? How important it is to contrast “spiritual” songs with those which consist of frivolities and worthless trifles, as are so many of the modern choruses which are being written and sung today.

III. HYMNODY IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC ERA

How was the hymn to God fashioned in the Post-Apostolic era of the Early Church, once the New Testament canon had been completed? Surely this would give us a good pointer as to how we should approach this subject in all subsequent eras of the Church.

Andrew Wilson-Dickson, in his history of Christian Music says that in the early church, “*the style of singing in worship was absolutely distinct from the night-club atmosphere*”,^[5] and he quotes Arnobius, teacher of Lactantius, writing around AD.297:

“Was it for this God sent souls, that beings of a sacred and august race should here practise singing and piping; that they should swell out their cheeks in blowing the flute; that they should take the lead in singing impure songs, and raising the loud din of the castanets, by which another crowd of souls should be led in

³ Matthew Henry, Commentary, comment on James 5:13.

⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*, comment on Col.3:16.

⁵ Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *A Brief History of Christian Music* (Lion, 1997), p.40.

their wantonness to abandon themselves to clumsy motions, to dance and sing, form rings of dancers, and finally, raising their haunches and hips, float along with a tremulous motion of the loins? Was it for this He sent souls?" [6]

So already we can see that worship was wholly distinguishable from secular entertainment. And especially so with the hymns. So what was the focus and tenor of early church hymns?

In his *"Ecclesiastical History"* (AD.325), Eusebius speaks about a piece of writing in the early 3rd century (possibly by Hippolytus), which was pitted against the heresy that Christ is a mere man, saying:

"Many psalms and hymns, written by the faithful brethren from the beginning, celebrate Christ the Word of God, speaking of him as Divine".[7]

We learn two important facts here about the hymnody of the Apostolic and Early Church eras: 1) that hymns were written *"from the beginning"* by godly believers in the churches, and 2) that a central aspect of these was the proclamation of the Deity of Christ.

So we find Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia, writing in AD.112 to the Emperor Trajan about the Christians in his province:

"On the appointed day the Christians had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn to Christ, as to a god".[8]

In other words, even the pagan Pliny recognised that it was Deity which was being asserted in the hymn of worship — *"as to a god"*. That is what formed the essence of those early Christian hymns: the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus we generally find that many early Christian hymns — like many of the O.T. psalms — were written for a specific didactic or apologetic purpose. And this has been echoed throughout the history of hymnody.

Shortly after Hilary of Poitiers composed a book of hymn texts around 360 AD, Ambrose of Milan (who had been so influential on Augustine of Hippo) specifically brought in the congregational singing of psalms and hymns **as a direct counter** to the hymns of the Arians, the fourth century heretics who particularly denied the deity of Christ. This same action had earlier been taken in the Church deliberately to counteract the hymns of the Gnostics and Manichaeans, who were very keen on hymn-singing to promote their own heretical teachings and experiences.

What we see, therefore, is that the didactic and high theological nature of the congregational singing of psalms and hymns in churches is absolutely necessary to any undertaking in the creation of a hymnbook. Hymns for worship must not be chosen lightly, neither must they be created out of superficial and titillating material. As one of the greatest of English puritan thinkers, Thomas Manton, stated concerning the attitude in his time to the creation and choosing of hymns for worship:

"I confess we do not forbid other songs [as well as Scripture psalms]. If grave and pious,

after good advice they may be received into the Church".[9]

"Grave and pious". From the beginning of the New Testament era, hymns were extremely profound and very much aimed at extolling the dignity and omnipotence of God with reverence and awe. The idea that hymns would be used to generate feelings of blissfulness or specially to conjure up a worshipful atmosphere is completely foreign not only to the pages of the New Testament but also the annals of the Early Church. Indeed, throughout the entire Gospel Age, hymns have functioned in a twin capacity as 'glorifiers of God' and 'teachers of faith'. Any hymns which did not fit into this mould were rejected as unsuitable.

This needs to be appreciated today. Hymns make up 15-20% of each worship service. In many less doctrinally-sound assemblies, this figure can even be 50% and above! Because of the deep level at which music functions in the human psyche — especially in relation to the worship of God — the singing of hymns surely plays a major part in the shaping of our minds and souls. For this reason, it is important that our hymnody should promote wholesome doctrine and the right frame of mind for genuine biblical worship which is God-honouring and glorifying. It is also necessary to ensure, from a pastoral standpoint, that members of our flocks are not going to be led into error and heresy through following any false teachings of the composers of the hymns they sing — especially if they are living composers, as is the case with the Charismatic *New Style of Worship* songwriters of today.

In this connection, it is very interesting to read the Preface to John Wesley's 1780 "Collection of Hymns". There he says frankly:

"In these hymns there is no doggerel, no botches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble expletives. Here is nothing turgid or bombastic on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other. Here are no cant expressions, no words without meaning".

There was a profound attention to find a style which would be fitting for the worship of the King of the Universe. Not only that, but we find that in His 1780 "Collection of Hymns", from hymn 320-379 (i.e. 59 hymns or 11.5% out of a total of 525), were on the subjects of *"the Suffering Believer"* and the *"Believer groaning for full redemption"*. There were just 74 hymns on *"the Believer Rejoicing"*. So there were nearly as many on suffering and groaning for full redemption as there were on rejoicing. What a healthy balance! Yet how far removed from the thinking of today's *New Style of Worship* hymnbook compilers, with their predominant accent on "Celebration" and superficial triumphalism.

Regarding the content of Wesley's hymnbook, we discover that he actually arranged the order of it — rather in the manner of Pilgrim's Progress — to represent *"a spiritual biography of the sort of person whom he called in his preface 'a Real Christian'"*. [10] That was Wesley's "role model" for his hymnbook. And that must always be the case with any hymnwriter. Their music will reflect the nuts and bolts of their own spiritual

⁶ *Against the Pagans*, Book 2, sect. 42.

⁷ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, chapter XXVIII, §5.

⁸ Henry Bettenson (ed.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press), 1943, p.4.

⁹ Thomas Manton, *An Exposition upon the Epistle of James* (Banner of Truth, 1962, first published 1693), p.442.

¹⁰ Bernard Lord Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley & Watts* (Epworth Press, 1943), pp.11-12.

pilgrimage. Herein lies the key to the true nature of the *New Style of Worship* songs. As Charismatic songwriter, Dave Fellingham, writes: “*My ministry has evolved from my spiritual pilgrimage*”.[11] This is a vital statement. For when we examine the nature of the spiritual pilgrimages of the modern charismatic songwriters, we have to ask ourselves if this is an influence that we want to introduce into our churches through their ministry of song.

For in every case, the key to their pilgrimages has been a whole range of phoney Christian experiences, especially the so-called “Baptism in the Spirit”, which has played a major role in the realm of the *New Style of Worship* songs in the last couple of decades (as we shall later develop more fully).

Surely we are now moving in a very different world to that which existed in previous eras. One gets the distinct impression today that all that is necessary among the churches is to have a trendy pop-star image and be able to play three chords on the guitar to be acceptable as a composer of hymns. How has this happened? To this we will now turn.

IV. IDENTIFYING THE PRIMARY TRENDS IN HYMNODY TODAY

Having looked briefly at the leading principles behind hymnody in history — which provide us with a sound basis for the tenor and content of hymn composition today — let us now analyse the primary trends in hymnody which we believe have led directly to the current devastating liturgical downgrade.

A notable leading trend in hymnody today has been

1. *The Substitution of the Old Testament Temple Model of Worship for that of the Synagogue*

One of the main reasons that so much confusion has entered the evangelical scene today is that a great deal of what calls itself “worship” is being modelled on an Old Testament temple model, which is entirely inappropriate for a New Covenant church.[12]

It is patently obvious to serious history students that the synagogue superseded the temple as the appropriate model for imitation in Christian worship (as was graphically demonstrated by the divinely-appointed destruction of the Jewish temple in A.D.70). As one liturgical historian states:

“As to the influence of the Synagogue on the Church, there can be no doubt that the earliest Christian meetings and meeting-places were modelled on the pattern of the synagogues”.[13]

And as Ralph P. Martin states: “*The influence of the synagogue on Christian worship was more permanent and deep [than that of the Temple]*”.[14] It was the synagogues that remained after AD.70, NOT the Temple! The original purpose of the synagogue was primarily for

Scripture-reading and exposition of the passages read (Lk.4:16-22; Mt.13:54; Mk.1:21-22; Jn.6:59). There was also prayer (Mt.6:5) and, although there is no specific mention in the literature of singing in the synagogue, it is considered most likely “*that those parts of the Liturgy which were connected with Temple worship, like the recitation of psalms...were sung*”.[15]

So long as one's idea of worship is rooted in the Temple concept, one will crave “celebrations” and big displays. The charismatic style of worship naturally arises out of this false concept of the O.T. Temple.

However, the chief element in synagogue worship — its central factor — was not ceremonial or display but something which was of vital importance to the shaping of the subsequent life of the local churches upon which the synagogue was so influential.

That element was the reading and exposition of Scripture. Worship in the Early Church involved “Word-of-God” services. Ralph Martin very appropriately called the reading and exposition of Scripture “*the centre of gravity of the synagogue's service, with the blessings and prayers gathered around it*”.[16] How strange, then, to find charismatic songwriter Dave Fellingham stating: “*A major influence on the early church was the music of the Jewish temple*”.[17] But where on earth does he get this from? And he goes on to say:

“It is possible that the Levites, who were appointed to serve in the Temple twice a year for one week, brought the influence of Temple worship back with them into the local synagogue”.[18]

Again, this is pure supposition to support a tendentious concept. It is easy to say “*It is possible...*”. But to build a whole approach to hymnody and worship on such a supposition is questionable, to say the least.

Therefore, in view of the fact that “*the earliest Christian meetings... were modelled on the pattern of the synagogues*”, this surely gives us a major clue as to what should be central in our meetings today.

Although it is true to say that the Triune God is the *personal object* of all our worship, it is the reading and exposition of the written Word of God which should provide the foundation for the structure of that worship. Surely if churches had not moved away from the consolidating and unifying factor of the public reading and exposition of the *written* Word of God as the very heart and soul of its worship, how much division, heartache and mayhem might have been averted.

The starting point for the N.T. church from the beginning was not the Temple, with its ceremonial and ritual activity, but the synagogue with its publicly read and preached Word of God. This is why the Apostles went first to the synagogues. As Peter put it:

“For Moses has had throughout many

¹¹ Dave Fellingham, *To the Praise of His Glory* (Kingsway, 1995, p.27)

¹² Actually, even that is based on an imaginary O.T. temple model of worship, as all sorts of unwarranted data is brought into the picture — e.g. David's dancing before the Lord, which was not part of the highly regulated temple order. Anyone who believes that those attending the temple could just do their own thing — dance, play any old instrument to hand, clap, or call out a spontaneous “*hallelujah*” — is living in a home-made fantasy-world!

¹³ W.K. Lowther Clarke (ed.), *Liturgy and Worship* (S.P.C.K./Macmillan, 1932), ‘Synagogue Worship in the First Century’, p.75.

¹⁴ R.P. Martin, op. cit., p.66.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.66-67.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dave Fellingham, *Worship Restored* (Kingsway, 1987), p.17.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.21.

generations those who preach him in every city,
being read in the synagogues every Sabbath".
(Acts 15:17)

The Early Church found its pinnacle of worship in the simple reading and exposition of the Word in the synagogue, not in the elaborate spectacle of the Temple. For this reason, the 16th century European Reformation involved a return to that Early Church synagogue-based model away from the syncretic Temple model perpetuated in the Roman Catholic sect for the previous thousand years.

The synagogue model for worship was adopted by our Lord's Apostles from the beginning, instead of the temple, as is clearly demonstrated in the New Testament allusions to worship. Such would herald a necessary break with the Old Covenant, which had now been superseded by the New Covenant.. Therefore, it is the authoritative Apostles who have set our example, and we should follow that. We know from Scripture the nuts and bolts of New Testament worship meetings: song (Acts 16:25; Eph.5:19; Col.3:16), prayer (Acts 2:42; 4:31), the public reading of Scripture (1 Tim.4:13), the exposition of Scripture (1 Tim.4:13; 5:17), the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Cor.11:20-26). That is not an extra-biblical source. However, whereas under the Old Covenant all the minutiae of worship were plainly spelled out, such has not been the same under the New Covenant. We don't have a full account of a service of worship (apart from some details in the Corinthian church, which was plainly off-beam). However, the fact that we also have some externally documented early church accounts of worship is very helpful to us. Obviously, they don't carry the authority of Scripture, but they merely serve to buttress what we are claiming about the Apostles establishing early church worship on the basis of the synagogue rather than the temple. The study of Church history is often very enlightening as external evidence.

During the past half-century we have seen a complete undoing of the simple synagogue-based style of worship which had been reaffirmed in the Reformation, as so many churches have opted for a lavish entertainment type of approach to worship which is based more on an imaginary view of the Temple of the Old Testament rather than how it really was. The effect of all this has been disastrous, paving the way for even more foolish delusions.

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

2. The Shift from Classical Form to Romanticism

The pattern in the development of the *New Style of Worship* in the visible church has actually mirrored an important musical and artistic movement in secular history.

Prior to the early nineteenth century, music was composed within the strict confines of a recognised musical form. In the Baroque period, from the seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries, and in the Classical period, which lasted from the last half of the eighteenth century through to the beginning of the nineteenth, music was written — if one may put it this way — as a pure articulation of the music itself. Any personal statement of human passion was subsumed in the musical

form, which alone provided the vehicle for its expression.

The pattern of 'sonata-form' at the height of the Classical Period provided a tremendous constraint on personal musical expression, in much the same way as did its sister, the Sonnet, in poetry. But this meant that the music could be what it was without an outsize pair of human boots stamping all over its face and disfiguring it.

Originally, the undergirding feature of all church music had been primarily one of *cosmos* rather than *chaos*; of *consonance* rather than *dissonance*; of *concord* rather than *discord*. There was a real 'centre' to this music; a stability and harmony which was designed to be pleasing to the ear. The vocal polyphonic music of the churches based on this principle of *cosmos* eventually found its expression in instrumental polyphonic music, from string viols with lute accompaniment in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, through the baroque orchestra of the seventeenth century, to the full classical orchestra of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus the theocentric solidity and consonance of monophonic and polyphonic church music was carried over into the classical music repertoire, as its very foundation.

However, this fundamental integrity, which had prevailed in Western church and classical music for almost 1500 years, began to disintegrate gradually during the nineteenth century, when the Romantic Movement came into being. This largely followed the ideals of the European "Aufklärung" or Enlightenment, through which human autonomy would replace the idea of Divine authority. The Enlightenment was a seventeenth and eighteenth century movement involving philosophers and scientists such as René Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), Isaac Newton (1642-1727), François Voltaire (1694-1778), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), Jean Rousseau (1712-1778), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Each of these men made their own contribution to a movement which was deistic, rationalistic and ultimately antichristian in its thrust, with a belief in the innate goodness of human nature, the supremacy of science over biblical authority, the substitution of human reason for Christian faith, the questioning of tradition and authority (human and divine), and the upward stride of human progress. As one theologian puts it, the Enlightenment was

"man's emergence from the immaturity which caused him to rely on such external authorities as the Bible, the church, and the state to tell him what to think and to do... The motto of Enlightenment was *Sapere aude* — "Have courage to use your own understanding".[19]

This same philosophical process eventually followed in the world of music, so that instead of music being composed for music's sake as a pure idea, it began to be composed *as a monument to a person's ego*. Suddenly, composition was all about "*me and my high-powered feelings*".[20] The essence of the Romantic Movement was not "*How can I create a great piece of music*" but "*How can I express **my** angst, **my** ecstasy, **my** unique feelings, in a way that **I** think is right?*" The problem with this development was that however scintillating the

¹⁹ Colin Brown in Walter A. Elwell [ed.] *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Marshall Pickering, 1984), p.355.

²⁰ The fountainhead of this phenomenon can be traced to Ludwig van Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, known as the 'Pastoral'.

result may have been in terms of the composition of secular classical music, so far as the worship of God is concerned, such an approach can only prove disastrous.

So, on the one hand we can identify subordination of the individual will to an overriding form as being a leading hallmark of the Classical Movement; and on the other hand there is a breaking out of this form into rampant *self-expression* which was so typical of the Romantic Movement. And the contrast between these two movements is mirrored in the worship life of churches today. For example, in an article in *The Independent* newspaper defending the “Toronto Blessing”, charismatic church elder, Dr. Patrick Dixon, wrote the following revealing statement about the conflict which this phenomenon caused in churches:

“In our society the old school continues to promote self-discipline and a stiff upper lip, while a new generation promotes self-awareness and emotional release. The same culture clash is found in the Church and is at the root of the conflict over recent events”. [21]

Here we have a quintessential statement on the difference between Classicism and Romanticism — yet it is being applied to the difference between old-style worship and the new Charismatic/Toronto style which has been effected in part through modern Christian music.

So, on the one hand, there is self-discipline, the subordination of one’s ego to the pure idea of the worship of God — the awesome realisation that this isn’t about ME but it is all about God. It is **that** which mirrors Classicism. But on the other hand there is a new trendy, laid-back, catharsis-seeking generation which promotes “*self-awareness and emotional release*”. Suddenly, the expression of worship changes because the focus has changed. Instead of it being “me worshipping God as God”, it is “ME struggling to express myself in whatever way I feel is right” — and that is *very* different. That is NOT worship but it is a celebration of the human will. It is, as the Bible so graphically puts it, “*will worship*” (Col.2:23, AV). And it is this which mirrors the Romantic Movement.

In this respect, the new ‘Romanticism’ in the Christian worship scene is an uncannily precise mirror of what is happening in the world via the New Age Movement, which is the modern pinnacle of the Enlightenment mindset: Autonomous man worshipping God in the way that **he** thinks is right. Only it isn’t really the worship of God anymore: it is the deification of self — which is surely the devil’s perfect work.

That is what lies at the heart of so much of what claims to be Christian worship today: Me and my wonderful feelings. The new evangelical says with a proud flourish: “*No one’s going to put ME in a hymn sandwich — I need emotional release*”. And a subtle little voice pipes up from the pit: “*You will be like God...*”.

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

3. *The Eclipsing of the Sovereignty of God in Favour of Humanistic Sentiment*

A church reared on the old-style hymns will have an infinitely deeper grasp of the true power and sovereignty

of God than a fellowship which has brought the *New Style of Worship* into its services. The old hymns tasted sweetly of the sovereignty of God and were designed to kindle a high view of the Lord. Even the Arminian Charles Wesley wrote:

“Jesus, Thou sovereign Lord of all...
We cannot think a gracious thought,
We cannot feel a good desire,
Till Thou, who call’dst the world from nought,
The power into our hearts inspire...”

In contrast to this, a great many of the newer songs contain human sentiments that make a mockery of the sovereignty of God. Consider the line: “*As I let You reign supreme within my heart*”. Or how about this verse:

“I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back,
No turning back”.

That is the kind of thinking which appears repeatedly in the modern songs and represents the degeneration of God-honouring content into slushy, effeminate, easy-believest, human-centred sentiment.

Hence one finds such a huge difference between many of the old style of hymns and the majority of the modern choruses. The former tend to glorify God first and speak of what has happened in our hearts second. Whereas the latter almost always begin with ME and what Jesus has done for ME.

This also accounts for the difference between the charismatic style of worship and the genuinely evangelical. The majority of those who attend the former are first seeking an experience for themselves, and judge the effectiveness of worship on that basis — what kind of a ‘buzz’ they have received — whereas most of those who attend the latter have gone first of all to worship their Creator and Redeemer, without a thought as to what’s in it for them — whether or not they come away with a warm fuzzy feeling.

Sadly, so much of what passes for Christian ‘conversion’ today is little more than a change of lifestyle prompted by a powerful psychological experience. The widespread nature of this bogus transformation has ensured the composition and use of a mountain of music with trite, sentimental lyrics to match.

Another trend in hymnody today, related to this, has been

4. *The “Dumbing Down” of the Human Mind*

We live in the age of the soundbite in all areas. Consequently, there is a growing crisis of the human consciousness engineered in the main by the media which has rendered the unbelieving world in a state of mindless acceptance of anything (viz. Clinton gets a second term of office, and Di becomes a saint!) and produced a fog of pietism in the professing Church.

This “dumbing down” of the mind means that the best the world can produce is the Spice Girls and the Teletubbies, and the best the Church can produce is a cornucopia of soundbites and advertising jingles masquerading as “hymns” to which one can “do the actions”. Superficial songs for a superficial “faith”. [22]

²¹ *The Independent*, Sat. 18th February 1995, p.14 — article entitled “*It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar*”.

²² This subject of the “dumbing-down” of the mind is expanded further in the article on the subject on the “Articles & Analysis” Page of this website.

At a Scripture Union Beach Mission on the East Coast of the U.K. in 1997, the children attending were treated to Spice Girls music, a video of the pop group Boyzone and they sang choruses with words such as:

“God is good to me,
God is good to me,
He gives me jelly to fill my belly,
God is good to me...
He gives me lips to eat my chips,
God is good to me”, etc.

Another song which these (mainly) unbelieving children were induced to sing began with:

“Jesus, you’re terrific,
Jesus, you’re terrific,
You took me from a dustbin and now you treat me like a star”.

Is it any wonder that the “youth” in so many churches today are fair game and fodder for the “dumbed-down” rock and pop music style of worship?

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

5. *The Move from Seasonal Song to Manipulative Music*

Whereas at one time hymns would be expressing the worshipful hearts of the congregation towards a glorious and awesome God — the whole thing has been turned around so that songs are chosen in order to induce feelings in the worshippers. In other words, music is being used to alter the feelings of the person rather than the person simply expressing his or her worshipful feelings in song. In fact, there has been a movement from the centrality of the worshipping mind (cf. Mk.12:30) to the inducement of an altered state of consciousness by flagrant manipulation.

It is important to realise that the bulk of the *New Style of Worship* songs have been written by people who are ardent advocates of Charismatic teachings which previous generations of believers rejected as “fanaticism” and “enthusiasm”. These songs have been composed for the deliberate purpose of seeding their teachings in churches. In other words, **the New Style of Worship is promotional** — and what it seeks to promote is another gospel and a form of Christianity which is very far removed from the Bible, although the majority of professing Christians today are unable to recognise that.

The *New Style of Worship* songbooks have been deliberately published in order to effect a change in churches to this new form of Christianity. One only has to read the books written by the major advocates and composers of the *New Style of Worship* to be convinced of that — as we shall show in the final section.

In their misplaced attempt to be “relevant” to today’s culture, churches which buy into these new songbooks are importing heresy into the heart of the fellowship. People need to realise that this isn’t about a cosy debate concerning which songs to use in your church, on which we can agree to differ. This is warfare! This is why resistance to the *New Style of Worship* and the trivial choruses associated with it is not merely an option, but it is vital, if we are to avoid having the Church plunge even further into the theological crisis which has largely been promoted through hymnodic changes in recent decades.

As a graphic illustration of the kind of “Christianity” which lies behind the new hymnody, consider the following interview with that veteran of the *New Style of Worship*, Graham Kendrick, conducted by the supremo of the cult-like Jesus Army Fellowship, Noel Stanton:

NS: “What are the landmarks in your life?”

GK: “I remember when I was about five years old my mother reading us a bedtime story which included a simple explanation of the gospel and asking us if we wanted to invite Jesus to forgive our sins. I remember kneeling down by myself and praying. I felt an excitement deep inside me that surprised me. During teenage years I began to examine if it was first hand or second hand”.

NS: “You were a rebel?”

GK: “It was the 60s and I tended towards the cynicism of the time. Certainly I was determined to discover more”.

NS: “Did that lead to Baptism in the Spirit?”

GK: “I’ve never been a crisis person but I came out of one particularly drab Christian Union meeting at college thinking ‘*There must be more than this*’. So I set out to seek for more of God. I had met one or two people who seemed to have been profoundly affected by the Holy Spirit. I tracked down a housegroup and knocked on the door, not knowing anybody there, and asked people to pray for me afterwards. It was later that night when I was cleaning my teeth ready to go to bed that I was filled with the Holy Spirit! That was a real watershed in my Christian experience”.

NS: “When was this?”

GK: “It was about 1971, when the charismatic renewal movement was in its early days and was quite controversial. Lots of people would warn you off and say it was of the devil! Tongues were as controversial then as the current manifestations of shaking and falling are now”.[23]

This brief testimony displays all the inadequacies and dead-ends of the modern understanding of what it means to become a Christian. While we are aware that such interviews do not necessarily contain every facet of a person’s conversion, the fact remains that — having been asked to identify the landmarks in his Christian life, Mr. Kendrick places the emphasis not on the holiness of God, the demands of the Gospel or the atonement of Christ but on his own feelings and experiences. This is symptomatic of a grave crisis in the modern evangelical scene, and one which has worked its way into churches through the *New Style of Worship* songs which they sing today. We have no desire to enter into *ad hominem* contentions, but it is surely valid for us to highlight what we believe to be unhealthy and even dangerous ideas in the testimony of a keynote composer in the *New Style of Worship* scene, who plainly wields considerable influence over gullible and vulnerable young people.

Firstly, while there is a verbal mention of sin and forgiveness in this interview with Kendrick, there is not the slightest indication of true repentance and an understanding of what sin is all about. Surely this is the most important aspect of a conversion experience, as shown in those examples in the Early Church, when folk were “cut

²³ *Jesus Life Magazine*, from the Jesus Army Fellowship website at <http://www.jesus.org.uk/kendrick.html>. This interview was also reproduced on “The Graham Kendrick Website” under the link “*Graham’s Christianity*”.

to the heart" (e.g. Acts 2:37). While we do not at all deny that small children can be regenerated and converted — recognising that their understanding of the Gospel will not be identical to that of a university professor — there must surely be a real awareness first of the *need* for forgiveness and a subsequent *desire* for repentance, otherwise conversion becomes a mere mental assent.[24]

Secondly, a child who is genuinely regenerated will surely not subsequently become an adolescent rebel, with a tendency to partake in "*the cynicism of the time*", as Kendrick puts it. It seems to be taken for granted in so many evangelical churches today that even youngsters who profess Christianity will still go on to be teenage rebels who need to express themselves in rock music, foppish clothes, and the raucous multi-media experiences of the world. But such out-and-out rebellion belongs to the fallen nature and should not be a feature in a believer's life of any age.

Thirdly, in this testimony, there is that typical feature of neo-evangelicalism: the desire for increasingly exciting experiences. Regardless of what Mr. Kendrick says here, he was indeed a "*crisis person*" who was seeking a "*crisis experience*". Is there not a link here back to that early prayer of his which engendered "*an excitement deep inside me*" but which apparently failed to kindle godly sorrow and contrition? The Christian Union meeting, he believed, was not good enough for him. But instead of seeking out some orthodox Christians who promote sound doctrine to point him in the right direction, like so many immature, misguided seekers he goes in search of sensational "pyrotechnics".[25] The housegroup scene has always been a pastoral minefield, and if you go down that pathway you are far more likely to wind up in a cult rather than a sound assembly!

Fourthly, the account of being "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" is decidedly suspect. Christians are certainly instructed to "*go on being filled with the Spirit*" (Eph.5:18) throughout their Christian lives; but it is so typical of the sensation-seeking, crisis-loving evangelicals of today to highlight one incident as their supposed "baptism in the Spirit".[26] And is it not strange that what Kendrick describes as "*a real watershed*" in his Christian experience should occur entirely as an incidental experience while he happened to be "*brushing his teeth*"? Frankly, we find it hard to credit the fact that in a serious interview, designed to display the testimony of a the work of God in his life and his faith in the Son of

God, we should read such a flippant narrative. This is entirely in keeping with the superficial nature of the *New Style of Worship* as a whole; and the question must be asked here: Is it right for churches to worship God from a hymnbook of which almost 10% of the songs were written by a man whose testimony would not even obtain membership for him in our churches?[27]

Surely there is a clear connection between the truncated "Christianity" of this "conversion" experience, and that which the *New Style of Worship* is promoting in churches today. This is a plain example of "easy believism", with a subsequent psycho-religious catharsis masquerading as an "infilling of the Spirit". Such phenomena form the undergirding theology which governs the style and content of the *New Style of Worship* songs, which are deliberately manipulative of a bogus spiritual experience. A person who has had a superficial "conversion" experience will always spend his or her time seeking a more profound "second blessing". Consequently, in place of the simple desire for reverential praise of the Triune God, we find that the search for an ever-greater "high" also becomes the goal of worship. Hence, these songs are often used to bring a person into what is known as an "altered state of consciousness".

In fact, the modern idea of going to church to worship on a Sunday is that one must enter an altered state of consciousness (or ASC) in order for worship to have occurred at all! In his pro-"Toronto Blessing" book, "*Signs of Revival*", charismatic church elder Dr. Patrick Dixon claims that ASCs "*seem to be a normal, common part of Christian prayer and worship*",[28] and that unbelievers will be more open to a personal relationship with God if they can be put into an ASC.[29] Dr. Dixon, who also describes the modern charismatic "tongues" experience as "*emptying the mind of logical, language-related thought, and helping to induce a trance-like state*",[30] is a leading medical writer in the Christian scene, and a vigorous advocate of the use of ASCs in Christian life and worship. In an article in a major U.K. newspaper, he wrote:

"The human brain has three states: waking, sleeping and somewhere in between. It is in this third state that we usually have our most profound spiritual experiences, when awareness fades of the immediate and we become sensitised to another dimension".[31]

²⁴ It should be pointed out here that there are two equal and opposite errors into which we can fall on the experience of conversion. One is what is known as 'Sandemanianism' — named after Robert Sandeman, 1718-1771, the Scottish minister who first publicly propounded this doctrine — which involves the idea that a person merely needs to give verbal assent to the propositions contained in the Gospel in order to be saved, without any evidence of a heart change or regeneration. The other is what we can call 'Preparationism' — whereby a person is persuaded of the need to enter into a massively over-prolonged (or even indefinite) period of intense preparation for conversion, during which he must go through the most oppressive heart-searching rigours, without which he cannot be saved. We must always be sure that our evangelism does not encourage either "easy-believism" or its opposite: bondage-making preparationism". They lie at contrary ends of the spectrum, but both are deadly, conversion-stifling errors.

²⁵ From the present writer's experience of this kind of complaint, that "*particularly drab Christian Union meeting at college*" could easily have been made up of godly youngsters singing hymns in the old-style and bowing quietly in prayer before the Lord (without the almost mandatory trance-induced arm-waving and gibberish kind of "tongues-speaking" one finds among most university and college Christian Unions today). This is considered dull and boring in the kind of circles where CCM is extolled, and especially among carnal youngsters who have been processed on the easy-believisit conveyor belt of evangelism.

²⁶ For a full discussion of this spurious twentieth century experience, see issue no.4 of the *Diakrisis* journal.

²⁷ *Mission Praise* contains 8.5% of Graham Kendrick songs. *Songs of Fellowship* contains 10%.

²⁸ Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival* (Kingsway, 1994), p.275.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.266.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.275.

³¹ *The Independent*, Saturday 18th February 1995, p.14 — an article entitled "*It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar*".

Elsewhere, Dr. Dixon states that although altered states of consciousness do not actually bring us into God's presence, they can "*make us aware of a presence to be brought into*".[32] The advocacy of the use of altered states of consciousness for Christian life and worship is a serious departure from the orthodox historic Christian faith, and has far more in common with the occult and the New Age.

Entering an altered state of consciousness induces an "Alpha-wave brain state", and the production of euphoria-inducing endorphins in the body. Normally, during the focused consciousness of wakeful existence, the brain-wave pattern registered on an electroencephalograph is described as 'Beta', which is between thirteen and twenty-six cycles per second. However, another brain-state has been identified in which there is a more diffuse awareness, registering between eight and thirteen cycles per second. This is what the yogi and the mystic seek to attain through meditation. This Alpha-wave brain-state is, in fact, a pre-hypnotic state in which a person is extremely open to suggestion — human or otherwise; and it has nothing to do with "*coming into the presence of God*". One New Age meditation manual describes this altered state of consciousness as "*floating, pleasant blankness, or shifting consciousness, peaceful meditation*".[33]

In keeping with the mantra-chanting mysticism of both East and West, Dr. Dixon says that "*Repetitive praying or liturgy can also settle brain activity, bringing tranquility or spiritual openness*".[34] All this has nothing whatsoever to do with true spirituality. Such a state can easily be induced with a biofeedback machine, cannabis or occult meditation. It is the "Alpha-wave" feeling of well-being induced by these rhythmic breathing and mantric exercises which the person experiences, and then imagines to be the "presence of the Lord", which, if such was really the case, would be more awesome than can be imagined!

We are drawing attention to these views about ASCs because they have largely conditioned the direction of Charismatic worship in many evangelical churches today. And the use of the *New Style of Worship* songs has played a major part in this. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Graham Kendrick speaks with approval of the benefits of the increasingly-popular use of repetitive Taizé chants in worship.[35] In a CNN news item entitled "*New Religion Uses Chants and Meditation for Worship*", it was reported:

"A hunger for spirituality is leading people to a new type of worship that focuses on chanting and meditation... '*There seems to be a hunger for this kind of spirituality*,' says Sister Suzanne Toolan, who offers Taizé services at the Mercy Center, a Catholic church in the San Francisco Bay area where hundreds come to participate in Taizé services each month... 'You repeat it over and over again and it becomes more and more relaxing', says Toolan. 'And you go from whatever your state of

consciousness is to a much more relaxed state of consciousness.".[36]

So the Taizé New Age chants which so appeal to monks in France and trendy Catholics in San Francisco are also approved by the man who is the most popular *New Style of Worship* songwriter in the U.K. today. This should not surprise us, given that so much of this style of worship is highly manipulative of the human mind, which its exponents are using to induce altered states of consciousness in Christian congregations.

Surely, if you have an entire congregation indulging in the current fashion for waving their arms about above their heads with their eyes closed, plainly in some kind of trance, it is most unlikely that any real worship is taking place. Although many may regard such congregational arm-waving as a secondary issue, the fact is that to lead an assembly into trance represents an assault on the centrality of God in worship.

To encourage a congregation to get lost in a mystical fog and then pretend it is an act of worship before God is, at the very least, what Scripture refers to in the Greek as *ethelothreskeia*, rightly translated as "will-worship" in the A.V. (Col.2:23) and defined in one Greek lexicon as "*worship which one prescribes and devises for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of faith which ought to be directed to Christ*".

The irony is that if one's relationship with God was truly God-centred rather than *self-oriented*, one would not have to resort to any humanistic techniques of ASC-inducement via repetitive or soporific songs in order to approach the Throne of Grace. The reason that the modern Charismatic needs to enter an ASC is because of a failure to rest on the simple promises of the Bible to those who wish to approach the Lord in prayer or worship (Rom.5:1-2; 8:15; Heb.4:16; 10:19; Eph.2:18). Christian prayer is primarily discursive, a conversation between a creature and his Creator (cf. Acts 16:25). It is not bodily relaxedness which determines the quality of the believer's prayer-life but, rather, total dependence on God and an awareness of His cosmic transcendent power. The substitution of the seductive inducement of Alpha-waves for the saving power of the true Alpha (and Omega) is an entirely self-centred and Spirit-less exercise.

Such is the movement which has taken place in recent years, using the *New Style of Worship* for manipulative ends.

Another leading trend in the realm of hymnody today has been

6. The Move from Biblical Separation to Woolly Ecumenism

Another major aim of the rock and pop music style of worship has been to bring together the denominations — no matter how apostate those denominations are. In the front of the "Mission Praise" songbook, the statements are made: "*This book is a declaration of Christian unity*" and "*This book has been compiled for a purpose: to unite Christians of all denominations*".

Well it has certainly furthered the uniting of the

³² Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival* (Kingsway, 1994), p.277.

³³ Ray Van Over, *Total Meditation: Mind Control Techniques for a Small Planet in Space* (Collier Macmillan, 1978), p.107.

³⁴ *The Independent*, Saturday 18th February 1995, p.14.

³⁵ *Jesus Life Magazine* interview with Graham Kendrick, taken from the Jesus Army Fellowship website which can be found at <http://www.jesus.org.uk/kendrick.html>

³⁶ CNN correspondent Susan Reed, writing in a CNN Web News posting on May 20, 1996. Dr. George Carey is also into Taizé.

denominations, but has it really brought unity among true Christians, many of whom find the introduction of these songs an affront to the faith?

There is no doubt that the *New Style of Worship* has unashamedly played a major part in the promotion of the highly compromised modern ecumenical movement. But how can such music be the product of the working of the Holy Spirit, as the composers of this music would claim, when it is leading local churches into the clutches of a body which will surely lead to the apostate global church prophesied in Scripture?

Another leading trend in the realm of hymnody today has been

7. *The Move from Participative Congregational Worship to Spectator Entertainment Performance*

Increasingly today congregations are seen not so much as participating worshippers but as audiences who need to be entertained with dramatic presentations, musical revues and other varieties of lavish spectacle.

In many churches, this idea of 'performance' is enhanced by the fact that the congregation/audience is encouraged to applaud — something which one cannot imagine happening in the Early Church era under apostolic authority. We seem to have forgotten that extreme simplicity in worship was the order of the day in the Early Church. The gaudy spectacles we see today, with their vast choirs and orchestras, complex musical arrangements, multi-media happenings, multiple participation, and varying degrees of hype are very far removed from what was practised in the first couple of centuries of the New Testament Church, and are at odds with the spirit of worship portrayed in the New Testament.

Early church worship (initially modelled on synagogue worship) consisted of the singing of a psalm or hymn, prayer, readings from Scripture, the Lord's Supper and some Bible exposition or exhortation from one whose role it was to "*labour in the word and doctrine*".

If today's new evangelicals were suddenly to find themselves transported back to, say, AD.150, they would be bored beyond measure, believing that they had come to a dead church because their only yardstick for the worship of God is their own exciting and stimulating sensual experience!

The only justifiable place for a musical instrument in worship is merely to assist in holding the tune and therefore to operate in the background as a subtle handmaiden to the voices raised in worship.

However, on entering many neo-evangelical churches today one would suppose that the musical instruments are more important than the voices. Worship in such churches has become utterly overblown, with the necessity for professional "worship-leaders", complex orchestral arrangements and endless days of rehearsals!

Another recent trend in the worship scene — closely related to the previous trend has been

8. *The Movement away from the Presentation of the Self as a Living Sacrifice before God to the Exhibitionist Parading of one's 'Gifts' in the Church*

Where did the notion ever originate that everyone has the right to exercise their personal abilities in the corporate worship of God? By all means, personal gifts and abilities from the Holy Spirit should be used and developed in churches, but that does not mean that everyone has to have a go at showing off their musical and

instrumental talents every Sunday.

This rush to display one's gifts has especially developed in the establishment churches. We bring ourselves as a living sacrifice, not as a ribbon-wrapped gift parcel to God. We must decrease; He must increase! Is that not the essence of biblical worship? But much of what takes place in worship services today is little more than exhibitionism hiding behind the excuse that "*God wants me to use my gifts*".

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

9. *The Move from Reverence and Awe to "Leisurewear Levity"*

This trend, which goes alongside the *New Style of Worship*, is reflected in the sea of track suits, trainers, jeans (often the torn 'designer' style) and other leisure wear seen in so many churches on the Lord's Day.

A formality born out of deference to the Lord and His presence is not the same as "stuffiness". We have to set the right tone for worship, so that when unbelievers enter they can see that we mark our worship-time as different to our leisure-time. Healthy deferential formality makes a massive difference to the sense of dignity which we establish. It is certainly wrong to give the cold shoulder to unbelievers who come to our churches dressed inappropriately. But that is a different matter to the universal push among professing Christians towards a contrived informality or, as I heard one Anglican bishop describe it (with approval), "*leisure-wear Christianity*".

If you were invited to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, what would you wear? Old jeans with "designer" slits in the knee? Surely you would mark the occasion as different to all other occasions and dress in the best clothes you had. Now if you would do that when you were meeting the Queen of England, why would you deliberately dress down for the King of Kings? "*Ah*", you may say, "*the Queen looks on the outside but God looks on the heart*". God certainly looks on the heart, but is it not true that what we wear on the outside makes a big statement about what is happening on the inside? With our clothes we literally wear our hearts on our sleeves. If we put on our scruffiest clothes to come to worship, or dress as if we were going to play soccer with the lads on the local recreation ground, doesn't that say something about our attitude? Whereas if we mark our worship-times out as being different to anything we do anywhere else, a powerful impression is made both on ourselves and on those around us. This is not empty formality but part of the due reverence which we should give to the King of Kings.

This is very closely related to the hymns we sing. The Romanticism which leads to the centrality of *self* in many of the modern worship songs and music is linked with an insistence on informal clothes which says: "*I just want to express **myself** in my clothes*". It is far easier to be reverent and awestruck in an atmosphere which is more formal and less individualised and clothes-personality-based.

Another recent trend in the worship scene — again closely linked to the previous trend — has been

10. *The Movement from the Worship of the Trinitarian Godhead to a "Buddy-Buddy" Relationship with "Jesus"*

Hand-in-hand with the *New Style of Worship* is a casual approach to Deity, so that one only hears reference to

“Jesus” rather than “The Lord Jesus Christ” or “Our Lord”. The main reason for this is that it is considerably easy to sing rock and pop idiom songs to a “chum” rather than the “Lord” of creation.

So one even finds that some modern-style songbooks, such as “Songs of Fellowship”, list just “Jesus” in their subject index instead of “God the Son” which one finds in more solid hymnbooks.

This all part of the pattern of chummy informality which pervades charismatic worship and which has, in great measure, been influenced by the rock and pop kind of worship songs.

The final leading trend in hymnody today — but by no means the least — has been

11. The Move from a Timeless Musical Idiom to the Transient and Tendentious Idioms of Rock and Pop

By “timeless musical idiom”, we refer to hymn music which never really ages, involving chorales and harmonius tunes of noble grandeur, fitting for the worship of a glorious God. There are numerous examples of this in the works of composers whose music has been used for hymn tunes, such as Sibelius, Mendelsohn, Schubert, Haydn, Beethoven, etc.

Yet, we are increasingly told today that we should be incorporating rock and pop music-based songs if we are to attract unbelievers into our churches — especially if we desire to attract the egocentric “youth” of today.

However this call fails to discern a number of important facts about these musical idioms.

i. Rock Music is the Music of Rebellion

Rock music has, from its inception been the musical expression of rebellion against elders, against law and order, against good manners, against sexual morality, against God’s appointed gender roles. It is the music of the sex, drugs and rock n’ roll era.

On this basis alone, how can a godly book of hymns possibly contain any songs which are based on this idiom? How can Christian congregations permit books which contain the *New Style of Worship* songs to grace the pews of their churches?

We know of a pastor who, when he went to his first pastorate, was immediately set upon by a delegation of young people who demanded to hold a so-called “youth service”, with their own rock band and a “preacher” drawn from one of the band. Not wanting to be perceived as heartlessly dismissive, the rookie pastor consented to hold a meeting with these youngsters for a dialogue. The spokesman of the group accused the pastor of being out of touch with things today and said a most revealing thing:

“At one time we’d do what our elders told us; but it’s not like that any more. Nowadays we’re taught to think for ourselves at school and to work things out for ourselves. We don’t just follow our elders anymore”.

There was a real spirit of contempt for eldership in these youngsters. Is that the kind of spirit we want to encourage in our churches? Rock music is the natural musical expression of rebellion.

There is a considerable degree of contempt shown by the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* towards

anyone who dares to say that their music is not reverent enough for Christian worship. For example, here is a song by the Christian rock musician, Don Francisco, entitled *Freedom to Move*, which is a vehement invective against those critical of this music:

“I believe a believer has the freedom to move!
Now tell me, mister, what you tryin’ to do?
Those things you’re sayin, man they just ain’t true;
You wave the Bible and you scream and you shout;
But you don’t have a clue what you’re talkin’ about.
You been goin’ through the churches like a Nazi for
Truth
Sayin’ Christian rock music is destroyin’ the youth;
Slanderin’ your brothers that you don’t even know,
Ruinin’ reputations every place that you go.
You call it devil music, say it’s right from the pit,
Scarin’ parents everywhere right out of their wits.
They’re goin’ to your meetings, buyin’ books and
buyin’ tapes,
But all you’re sellin’s legalism, guilt and sour grapes.
I know you wouldn’t use it for your Sunday mornin’
service,
But that ain’t no excuse to get so spiritually nervous.
I know you don’t like it, but now listen my friend,
Just ‘cause you don’t like it doesn’t mean it’s a sin!
I know it isn’t heavy ministry, the lyrics are light,
But it’s got a funky rhythm and the band is really
tight.
There’s a lot more to life than being down in the
groove,
But I believe a believer has the freedom to move.
Won’t you get off your soapbox and take off your
shoes,
You know it ain’t the rhythm, it’s the words that you
use.
It’s not the drums or the electric guitar,
It’s all in the motives — it’s in who you really are.
So crank me up some country or some rhythm and
blues,
I really don’t care what kind of flavour you choose.
Let the lyrics stay clean, let the people all groove,
And say “Thank you Jesus, for the freedom to
move!”.[37]

Surely there is no need for a comment here, as the music speaks for itself. Quite simply, rock music is the music of rebellion.

Dr. David Noebel said, in his book entitled “*The Beatles: A Study in Drugs, Sex and Revolution*”:

“The hard fact is that in this present revolutionary era, heavy beat music has become the catalyst for the young radicals in their announced plans not only to destroy Western culture but to dethrone God”.[38]

Is that the kind of spirit we want to encourage in our churches? Rock music — heavy beat music — is the natural musical expression of rebellion.

ii. Rock and Pop music is the Music of the Flesh

In his ‘dialogue’ with the young people, the pastor referred to in the previous section noticed that they were very insistent about having drums at the service. It was absolutely paramount that there should be drums. When

³⁷ From the album *Come Away* (1992) by Don Francisco.

³⁸ David Noebel, *The Beatles: A Study in Drugs, Sex and Revolution*, 1971, p.8.

asked why they were so necessary, the spokesman of the group said that he found it impossible to worship without a beat. But that is not Christian worship; that is pagan 'worship'. As one discerning writer has said:

"The Temple of the Church consists not of inert building-blocks but of living stones, each of which is a miniature temple in its own right. The worship appropriate to this is spiritual (1 Pet.2:5) and reasonable (Rom.12:1). **It is devotion characterised by sobriety, watchfulness and self-control.** Such worship stands in contrast to pagan frenzies, 1 Cor.12:2: "*You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led*". [By some crazy impulse, as it were]. Drivenness is a feature which ancient orgiastic paganism, modern voodoo-like cults with their possessed dancing, Wesleyan revivalism, snake-cultism, Pentecostalism, and rock music have in common. By pounding beat and rhythmic movements fleshly sense benumbs and overwhelms mind and spirit. New Testament worship, by contrast, keeps the body and the senses in check... A celebration, therefore, that relies on a 'critical mass' of the cumulative animal-heat of large crowds, has nothing to do with N.T. Christianity. 'Excitement', in the sense of the sports arena, has no place in the church, and its pursuit cheapens and degrades her worship.".[39]

As a further example of the "fleshly" basis of modern worship, we discover that a new song printed in the music column of the neo- evangelical newspaper "Evangelicals Now" has the musical direction "*Slightly Funky*" at its head.[40] The word "funky" is derived from "funk", which means to twitch or jerk. It is commonly used to refer to an animal kicking a leg out. "Funky music" is music which has a kind of jerk in it, making it most suitable for sensual discotheque dancing. It also has clear sexual undertones. How could a purportedly evangelical newspaper promote a "funky" song, even if it does have the qualifying adjective "*slightly*"? How on earth could a song such as this properly be used in the Christian worship of a righteous and holy God?

A report in the Washington Post on April 27th 1997 about a service of worship at the Brownsville Assembly of God Church in Pensacola stated:

"Thump... thump... thump... thump. It begins with a drummer laying down a slow beat that goes on for several minutes. A steady inescapable portentous heartbeat. The guitarist and the organist join in along with a choir of several dozen singers clad in purple robes with gold sashes. From the first note the people are up and out of the pews on their feet clapping in time or dancing with eyes closed and hands raised. In front of the first row, teenagers pogo up and down, a sort of Pentecostal mosh pit. If it weren't for the cross and the stained-glass behind the altar, you might think you were at a rock-n-roll show. The first song ends to wild cheers. A second begins, then a third and a

fourth... It's a half-hour into the service and not a word has been preached".

Rock and pop is certainly the music of the flesh.

iii. Rock and Pop Music Rely on Manipulative Effects

Anyone in the rock and pop music business will tell you that there is a set of formulae to successful songwriting which guarantees a hit every time. One of these formulae is known in the trade as "The Hook". This involves ensuring that a certain line or phrase with a 'catchy' tune is repeated regularly in the song, so as to get Joe Public humming it after very little exposure. It is, in effect, a kind of 'mantra'. The Beatles pop group — who were well taught in these arts by their music arranger, George Martin — knew just how to use "The Hook" in virtually every song they wrote. How about "*She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah*" or "*All you need is love*" or "*We all live in a yellow submarine, yellow submarine, yellow submarine...*" or "*Hare Krishna...*" or "*Sgt. Pepper's lonely... Sgt. Pepper's Lonely... Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*".

"The Hook" is more than a chorus; it is a song line with a dangling bait. We can see the same technique used in many of the *New Style of Worship* songs — whether it is the endless repetition of the same verse, or a certain phrase that cloy in the brain. How about "*Shine Jesus shine*" (whatever that may mean!)? The typical placing of these swelling lines in the songs is like a trigger for the hands to go in the air!

One of the grossest examples of this pop technique is the song "*I get so excited, Lord (I'm forgiven)*". Having the musical direction "*with pace and swing*", the lyrics say:

I get so excited, Lord, ev'ry time I realize
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.
Jesus Lord, You've done it all,
You've paid the price,
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.
Hallelujah, Lord,
My heart just fills with praise,
My feet start dancing, my hands rise up,
And my lips they bless Your name.
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven,
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

Considering this song is meant to be dealing with such a high truth of salvation, it is astonishingly banal — not to mention entirely self-centred. But above all, it is a classic in the new breed of manipulative songs. It utilises "the Hook", it dulls the mind with its repetition, it reinforces certain pre-hypnotic subcultural religious rituals (feet dancing, hands in the air), and it contains about as much substance as a withered pea! The sad fact is that it has so many bedfellows.

iv. Rock and Pop Music are Birthed in Egocentricity

The essence of rock and pop music is "the cult of the personality". You have only to watch a guitarist gyrating as he plays to see that the instrument is an erotic extension of his body. This is the music of "Generation X", the "ME" generation. Surely this is yet another reason why we cannot accept the use of rock and pop music as a suitable idiom for Christian worship.

To illustrate this, you should have seen the old

³⁹ Kurt Marquart, "*Church Growth*" as *Mission Paradigm* (Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Houston, 1994), pp.99-100.

⁴⁰ *Evangelicals Now*, March 1998.

"Graham Kendrick Website" which was situated on <http://www.dur.ac.uk/~dds8gccu/kendrick/index.html> before it was withdrawn. This website represented an outstanding example of the egocentric and superficial nature of the rock and pop scene both in the world and in the church. As Mr. Kendrick is the best known advocate and composer of the *New Style of Worship* songs, it is surely of some relevance to know something about him. If you were to hold your mouse-pointer over the page title on the "home page" of this website you would see the words "The Funky Logo is here". The background to the "home page" consists of 300+ identical tiled head and shoulders portraits of the songwriter. One of the pages consists of a number of pictures of the man, one of which has the caption "Nice hair and beard!". Another page on the site is entitled "The Graham Badge", by which "you can show the world you're a fan of Graham". The badge is a downloadable graphic which consists of a picture of Kendrick surrounded by the words "I Love Graham". This can be printed out and coloured in. Underneath the badge we are told to wear it "at all times".



THE GRAHAM BADGE

Show your support for Graham with this fantastic, easy to make badge. To make your badge, simply print this page and cut it out. If it's a black and white printout then colour it in. Wear your badge at all times!

This website, which received nearly 4,500 visitors in two years, provides us with a remarkable example of the vanity and "cult of the personality" which forms the influence behind the *New Style of Worship*. One can hardly imagine such a gross section of cyberspace being given over to the adulation of Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts or Augustus Toplady! Indeed, if such men had become aware of this kind of material in their name in a "fanzine" in their own time they would surely have put a stop to it instantly. (In fact, there is little difference between this and the new Graham Kendrick website, where the cult of the personality is again rife).

Clearly, the *New Style of Worship* plays host to an egocentric mindset through its unhealthy emphasis on "image" and the cult of the personality. These are the natural outgrowths of the rock and pop vanity idiom in which this music is set.

V. THE STRATEGIES BEHIND THE NEW STYLE OF WORSHIP

This whole subject of songs and worship is a massive pastoral time-bomb, and it will become increasingly so during the next couple of years.

What the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* songs fail to discern is that there is a hidden agenda behind the advent of these songs in the Christian scene. For the music of the *New Style of Worship* is a door by which one enters a heterodox worldview concerning the Church, demons, the kingdom of God, spiritual gifts, the sovereignty of God, prayer, the Holy Spirit, and many other aspects of Christian truth and the Christian life. The strategy behind the *New Style of Worship* — and especially its songs — is virtually identical with the strategy of the Charismatic Movement. It works by the process of infiltration, with the music of the New Worship acting as a forerunner — 'a softener-up'.

Is it not true that where the "New Style Worship Songs" are introduced on a small scale to placate the demands of a faction in a church, there will soon be many more demands for increasing liberalisation of worship, coupled with numerous other new and pernicious influences which bring a legion of pastoral problems in their wake?

Once you include songs in your hymnbook which have been written by proselytising members of the Charismatic Movement, you are in effect endorsing the movement as a whole. For their songs have been written from a particular perspective — not only in terms of the lyrics but also the mood which is induced.

It is important to realise that the bulk of the *New Style of Worship* songs have been written by people who are ardent advocates of Charismatic teachings which previous generations of believers rejected as "fanaticism" and "enthusiasm". These songs have been composed for the deliberate purpose of seeding their teachings in churches. In other words, **the New Style of Worship Songs are promotional**. What they seek to promote is another a form of Christianity which is very far removed from the Bible, although the majority of professing Christians today seem unable to recognise that.

The *New Style of Worship* songbooks have been deliberately published in order to effect a change in churches to this new form of "Christianity". One only has to read the books written by the major advocates and composers to be convinced of that, as we will come to see. I am convinced that we are dealing here not with the mere fact of modernisation or over-contextualisation, but with a very deceptive satanic strategy — so clever that it could even deceive the elect (if that was possible).

That is the only conclusion to which I can come, a) because of the extraordinary subtlety involved, and b) because of what is subsequently achieved in churches once the *New Style of Worship* songs take a hold of their congregations: the disturbance, the division, the conniving, the politicking, the poor treatment of those who resist change, the dumbing down of the congregation, the bad theology, the undermining of biblical authority structures, the demotion of the place of Bible exposition, and ultimately the devastation of the credibility of the evangelical church.

Frankly, most of the unbelievers I speak to think that happy-clappy churches are just plain silly! The charismatic movement — far from being a global force for

change, as it sees itself — has made the church look shallow and ridiculous. Is that not the fulfilment of Satan's dreams as he goes all out to *"make war with the remnant of the seed of the woman, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"*.

But how does this actually operate, and in what ways are the composers and advocates of the *New Style of Worship* songs acting as dupes for this satanic strategy? We don't believe for one moment that the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* or the composers of the songs which go with it have the remotest understanding of the extent to which they have become the tools of the powers of darkness. But such tools we believe they are. And if we examine the strategies, we will surely come to see why.

The first central strategy behind the *New Style of Worship* is

1. To Render a Congregation Incapable of Discernment

Hand-in-hand with the *New Style of Worship* songs goes an entirely undiscerning attitude towards bad theology of many kinds. In fact, a sort of atrophy sets in with any congregation which sings these ditties which appears to render its victims incapable of any sort of discerning critique! To raise a question in even the mildest manner is liable to bring down derision and persecution on the questioner.

This is not to say that churches which engage in the *New Style of Worship* have a poor confession of faith. On the contrary, often they will have a mainly acceptable confession on the main aspects. But the big problem with such churches is not with what they confess but with **what they fail to condemn**. Thus, as is the case with the Charismatic Movement, the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* will admit anyone as "Christian" provided they subscribe to their agenda of songs — whether a liberal, a Roman Catholic, or whatever. And the main reason for this is in order not to disturb ecclesiastical "unity". For example, the leading Charismatic songwriter, Dave Fellingham, says: *"Worship is also giving us a much greater sense of unity — when we're all praising God together, we tend to forget our theological differences"*.^[41] While such an approach may give a warm sense of togetherness to a gathering of people, it is not going to protect the flock from wolves.

It is a firm principle that whenever the *New Style of Worship* comes into a congregation it renders them increasingly unable to discern truth from falsehood.

Another central strategy behind the "New Style of Worship" is

2. The Progressive "Charismaticisation" of Worship and the Church

The *New Style of Worship* songs are rooted in a movement which believes in and advocates the idea that there is presently a restoration of the Apostolic Age of miracle-working at the hands of modern-day apostles. This "Restorationism" is the key guiding force behind most of the *New Style of Worship* songs. For example, the popular song by Graham Kendrick which says *"Restore O Lord the honour of your name, in works of sovereign power come shake the earth again"*, may seem

wholesome until you realise that the kind of works of power advocated by the songwriter are the pseudo-miracles of the signs and wonders restoration movement to which he subscribes.

The progressive "charismaticisation" of evangelical churches is a major strategy of the Charismatic Movement. You can see this clearly in the 1992 book *"The Fourth Wave — Charismatics & Evangelicals: Are we Ready to Come Together"*, by David Pawson, with a very fulsome foreword by Clive Calver of the Evangelical Alliance. The dust jacket states: *"The time is ripe for the two fastest growing streams of Christendom to be fully integrated"*. The only way these two streams can be integrated is by making the Evangelicals into Charismatics. This is not unity or integration; it is a rampant takeover — and one of the main ways in which this takeover is being effected is through the songs of the *New Style of Worship*. One of their main advocates, Philip Lawson-Johnson, in the book *"In Spirit and in Truth"*, openly states:

"These songs have become a fitting accompaniment to the growing involvement and use of spiritual gifts such as tongues, prophecy and healing within church services throughout the country... As we teach and encourage people to worship I long to see the unity of the body of Christ grow and the faith of many increase as they see the glory and majesty of God manifested in signs, wonders, healings, deliverance, the conversion of thousands and the restoration of His Kingdom in this land".^[42] [emphasis added]

We'll have more to say about the relationship between the *New Style of Worship* songs and the progressive "charismaticisation" of churches through the Baptism in the Spirit, "tongues" and altered states of consciousness in later sections. However, in that final phrase from the quotation of Lawson-Johnson, *"the restoration of His Kingdom in this land"*, we see here that linked in with this strategy of the progressive "charismaticisation" of churches through the *New Style of Worship* songs is yet another central strategy; and that is:

3. The Distortion of the Place of the Church in the World

We are dealing here with a false concept of the way that the Kingdom of God is established. The concept of "the kingdom" in the minds of these songwriters is very different to that of the Scriptures. One of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters, Dave Fellingham, says:

"God is restoring worship in his church, and the restoration of worship is always linked to something else — a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. One of the significant things about the end time move of the Spirit in revival is this: God will have a people of praise throughout the nations".^[43] [emphasis added]

Fellingham then cites the two popular *New Style of Worship* songs written in the late 1970s: *"For I'm building a people of Power"* and *"All over the world the Spirit is moving... as the waters cover the sea"*. He claims that

⁴¹ David Fellingham, *To the Praise of His Glory* (Kingsway, 1995), p.41.

⁴² *In Spirit & in Truth*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp.162-175.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.41-43.

these songs are 'prophetic' evidence of the revival to come which would "*usher in the return of Jesus*". Now a major component in that supposed revival is seen by all these *New Style of Worship* songwriters as having been fulfilled in the so-called "Toronto Blessing".

How do you imagine that the "Toronto Blessing" managed to establish itself so easily in so many churches professing to be evangelical in the four years from 1993 – 1997? Surely, the previous introduction of *New Style of Worship* songs in these churches had already provided a fertile seedbed — an avant-garde — where such developments would merely seem like a natural outgrowth?[44]

The problem is that the view of the Kingdom embraced by the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not a Biblical view. They believe in an "end time move of the Spirit" in global revival which will usher in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe that God's glory cannot be honoured unless there is a "Christianisation" of the world through a global revival which is preceded by a restoration of the Apostolic Signs and Wonders ministry, victory visibly stamped upon the world before the Lord Jesus returns.

However, the biblical view of the place of the Church in the world is plainly given in Rev.12 — under constant persecution in this wilderness of a world, but under continual protection by the Lord away from the presence of the serpent. That is the condition of the church until the end of this present evil Age. It is only on the Day of Judgement that the blood of the martyrs will be avenged. In the Book of Revelation it is the Babylonian world-system (including the false church) which is "*arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls*" (Rev.17:4), whereas the true church is "*clothed in sackcloth*", as exemplified by the "*two witnesses*" who symbolise the Gospel witness of the church during this present evil age (Rev.11:3).

There will certainly continue to be remarkable successes of Gospel right to the very end, but the Scriptures know nothing of a pre-Second Coming Christianisation of the world, as the *New Style of Worship* songwriters believe. Contrary to the belief of many Christians, the Bible does not present any evidence that the return of the Lord will be preceded by a Golden Age of global revival or a largely 'Christianised' world — a fantasy which has sometimes been called the "latter-day glory of the saints". It is most important that we understand this from a biblical perspective rather than from the systems and traditions of men, because the entire concept of a future *earthly* Golden Age is fundamental to Jewish and Gnostic belief-systems rather than to the Word of God. As the end of this Age draws to a close, believers will again have to muster that strength in the Lord in the face of the widespread persecution which will inevitably develop. That is the biblical reality, in contrast with the fantasy being peddled through the superficial, triumphalist *New Style of Worship* songs.[45]

These songwriters see a vital link between their songs and the bringing in of this "revival" and the establishment

of their phony "kingdom of God on earth". Jack Hayford (famous for his song "*Majesty*") also subscribes to this link between the *New Style of Worship* songs and the bringing in of this "Kingdom". He says in his book "*Worship His Majesty*" that "*from the church emerging glorious on the world scene will come the new reformation in worship*".[46] Jack Hayford's perennially popular song "*Majesty*", refers to this concept with the term "*kingdom authority*". This is all part of the Dominionist, Kingdom-now idea of modern Restorationism — that they are bringing in the Kingdom right here on earth with power and authority — a sort of hyper-Post-Millennialism. By singing these popular songs, we are actually giving credence to a totally false concept of the Kingdom of God, which gradually works its way into the hearts and minds of congregations.

Another *New Style of Worship* songwriter, Dave Fellingham, also advocates this false kingdom on earth idea. In the 1989 book "*In Spirit and in Truth*", he says:

"The phenomenon of the modern worship song is an integral part of what God is doing worldwide... The ministry of leading in praise and worship and of music is a vital one in helping to see the purpose of God fulfilled and the kingdom coming on earth".[47] [emphasis added]

When he says "*what God is doing worldwide*", he is referring to the phenomenal growth of the charismatic movement which is seen as being evidence of this impending phony 'revival'. And he elaborates even more on this theme in his book "*Worship Restored*", in a section on worship and the kingdom, where he advocates the use of singing in tongues as a form of spiritual warfare, thus chasing away the demons and "bringing in the kingdom".[48]

Another of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters, Noel Richards, writes: "*A church that is responding to the current prophetic emphasis will be introducing new songs. Those that are not, only sing the 'good old hymns'*".[49] This "*current prophetic emphasis*" to which Noel Richards refers is the restorationist/dominionist Kingdom idea. This is the hidden agenda in all the songs of the *New Style of Worship* which people are so keen to incorporate into their churches today.

Another central strategy behind the *New Style of Worship* is

4. To Make the Holy Spirit as the Focus of the Church in Place of the Lord Jesus Christ

And here we see an uncanny mirror of the Alpha Course, which makes the "Holy Spirit Weekend" the centre of its supposedly evangelistic outreach. The same churches which adopt the Alpha Course will also embrace the *New Style of Worship* songs.

There is a total obsession with the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles which comes out in its songs. However, the Lord Jesus Christ said about the

⁴⁴ And could the reason be that the mouths of so many Evangelical leaders were silent about these developments because they also are mistakenly longing for a global revival?

⁴⁵ For fuller details about the myth of an "endtime revival", see the separate paper on this on the "Articles & Analysis" Page of the website.

⁴⁶ Jack Hayford, *Worship His Majesty* (Word Books, 1987), see pp.20-25

⁴⁷ *In Spirit & in Truth* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp.53 & 56.

⁴⁸ Dave Fellingham, *Worship Restored*, op. cit., pp.118-123.

⁴⁹ Noel Richards, *The Worshipping Church* (Pioneer/Word, 1993), pp.30-31

Spirit: "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (Jn.16:14). Our focus in worship should primarily be on the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only Mediator through whom we come to the Father. Certainly, the Holy Spirit is present, applying the Word, enabling us to pray and worship. But He is a background figure, very self-effacing, and not at all the focus which is made in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.

Frankly, it is our contention that the "spirit" constantly peddled in these meetings and through these songs is more of a pantheistic spirit — a force-field which can become at one moment a laughing gas, the next moment a 100,000 volt electrical charge. This is **not** the Holy Spirit of the Scriptures.

And that brings us to another central strategy behind the *New Style of Worship*:

5. To Generate Emotional Catharsis Under the Pretence that it Represents Genuine Spiritual Experience

If you remember, we quoted earlier Patrick Dixon, when he contrasted those who are bringing in the *New Style of Worship* and the Toronto phenomena with those who resist such things. He said:

"In our society the old school continues to promote self-discipline and a stiff upper lip, while a new generation promotes self-awareness and emotional release. The same culture clash is found in the Church and is at the root of the conflict over recent events".[50]

In fact, all the songwriters of the *New Style of Worship* are part of this hip "new generation" in the church which "promotes self-awareness and emotional release". And the promotion of self and emotional release is precisely what lies at the heart of the *New Style of Worship*. The mistaken belief is that genuine worship cannot take place until there has been an emotional release in a person.

Consequently, in the *New Style of Worship* scene, an integral part of that worship is getting into these emotional experiences. In the easy-believest atmosphere of today, because there is usually no real heart change when the alleged conversion takes place, this has to be followed up with all kinds of emotional experiences to convince you that you really do have the Spirit. A person who has received the Spirit at conversion (which is the normal Christian experience) does not need to be running around seeking a "second blessing". They are already blessed!

This is the context of the "Baptism in the Spirit" which so many claim to receive as a post-conversion experience.[51] And the music of the *New Style of Worship* is very much a part of that, paving the way for the promotion of an altered state of consciousness in a worship service.

As we stated previously, the modern idea of going to church to worship on a Sunday is that one must enter an altered state of consciousness (or ASC) in order for worship to have occurred at all. What is happening is that an emotional catharsis is being generated under the pretence that it represents genuine spiritual experience.

This is what the much-vaunted "Baptism in the Spirit" is all about, and its children, "the anointings", which we find enshrined in the "Toronto Blessing" and the "Slain in the Spirit" experience.

Although many may not realise it, this "Baptism in the Spirit" is intimately connected with the *New Style of Worship* songs. In the Jan/Feb 1985 edition of "Restoration" magazine, there was a revealing editorial which stated:

"Lots of Christians, even skinny ones, wear a tight-laced corset on their hearts, and it needs removing if they are ever to open up in whole-hearted worship and praise to the Lord. There is only one thing that will achieve it — **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**. That the **rediscovery of the charismatic dimension** to Christianity has been paralleled by a **surge of living worship** in our day is no coincidence. **The two belong together**".[52] [emphasis added]

In the same magazine, there is the testimony of a man who recounted what it was like to put his hands in the air for the first time in worship. He says:

"There was a certain release, rather like my first time riding a motorbike... I returned home feeling rather pleased with myself, thinking I had won a great victory... **Around this time, I experienced the Baptism with the Holy Spirit**".[53] [emphasis added]

Again, we see that there is an intimate connection with the *New Style of Worship* and Charismatic experience in a congregation. Now perhaps we can see why the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* are so zealous to get their songs and music into congregations.

Another of the "New Style Worship" songwriters, Phil Rogers, in his book "How to be a Worshipper", has a section on 'Leading a Church into the Freedom of Worship'. In this he writes:

"A minister can lead his church into worship by firstly teaching on the baptism of the Spirit and inviting members to come for the laying on of hands, letting everyone see exactly what happens... As members of the church begin to get baptised in the Spirit and to catch the vision, worship will introduce itself. They will begin to do what they have been taught".[54]

Here we discover a major part of the hidden agenda behind the introduction of the *New Style of Worship* songs into churches today. These songs are the forerunners, the avant garde, cutting a swathe into churches which would be resistant to things charismatic, preparing the ground for what is to come.

All the *New Style of Worship* songwriters have been initiated into the bogus Pentecostal post-conversion experience known as being "Baptised with the Spirit". And when a person gets this experience, they are suddenly seized with the desire to get everyone else initiated into it too.

Surely there is a clear connection between the phoney

⁵⁰ *The Independent*, Sat. 18th February 1995, p.14 — article entitled "It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar".

⁵¹ For fuller details about this bogus "Baptism in the Spirit", please go to the article on the subject on the "Articles & Analysis" Page on this website.

⁵² *Restoration* magazine, Jan/Feb 1985, p.18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁵⁴ Phil Rogers, *How to be a Worshipper*, Coastlands, 1984, p.48.

spiritual experiences of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters, and that which their songs are promoting in churches today. Such phenomena form the undergirding theology which governs the style and content of the *New Style of Worship* songs, which are deliberately manipulative of a bogus spiritual experience. Readers will recall our earlier statement that Dave Fellingham wrote: “*My ministry has evolved from my spiritual pilgrimage*”. That “spiritual pilgrimage” is enshrined in these songs.

The “Baptism in the Spirit” experience is crucial in all this. Absolutely crucial. For the worship of these people centres on entering an altered state of consciousness. How phenomenally naive it is of the preface-writer, editorial advisors and publishers of the new U.K. songbook, “Praise”, to say that they have included many of the *New Style of Worship* songs without any reference to the composer’s churchmanship or theology! But the writers of these songs are all actively engaged in promoting a heterodox movement with an unbiblical agenda.

Some may complain that there are already hymns in the old hymn books which are by people with doctrinal problems, yet we still use these (e.g. Wesley’s Perfectionism, Pusey’s Anglo-Catholicism, Newman’s Roman Catholicism, etc.). So why should we discriminate against the songs of the *New Style of Worship*? However, singing a hymn by Wesley or Pusey or Newman (or having their hymns in our hymnbooks) is not going to make us into Perfectionists or Anglo-Catholics or Roman Catholics. And the reason for this is that their hymns do not come with a pile of baggage attached — their hymns were not written with any other agenda in mind than the pure worship of God. Whereas the modern songs by the popular *New Style of Worship* songwriters all come with a whole pile of baggage which acts like a lure into a burgeoning world of pseudo-Christianity. For these new songs are not the product of unconnected individuals spontaneously inspired to write hymns for worship; **they are the product of a movement in history which has a powerful agenda for change** — and their songs are the main agent in that agenda.

Allied with this institutionalised altered state of consciousness experience known as the “Baptism in the Spirit” is the advocacy of tongues-speaking and especially singing in tongues by all the songwriters of the *New Style of Worship* scene. One of these songwriters, Noel Richards, writes: “*Why not start off a period of worship by singing for several minutes in tongues instead of our native language?*”.[55] Incidentally, just to show the extreme spiritual naivete and myicism of this author, we read in a section entitled “Carrying the Presence of God” in this book:

“I sang in a number of wine bars back in early 1982. One owner eventually offered me the prime evening slot because, as he put it, ‘There is a different atmosphere in the place when you are around’. I was not singing about Jesus. I was singing classic pop songs. However, we can take the presence of God with us into every situation”.[56]

Just singing pop songs in a wine bar carries the “Anointing” if you are a Charismatic songwriter! Amazing!

Jack Hayford, writer of the popular song “*Majesty*”, has written a whole book of 284 pages devoted to the advocacy of the modern-day gibberish style of tongues (including its use in worship), entitled “*The Beauty of Spiritual Language*”, Nelson/Word, 1993. Along with Noel Richards and Jack Hayford, the other *New Style of Worship* songwriters who have written books on worship that also advocate singing in tongues are Chris Bowater, Dave Fellingham and Phil Rogers.

It is interesting to note that according to Dave Fellingham, support for this practice of a collective altered state of consciousness through singing in the gibberish style of tongues is found in a sermon of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on 1 Corinthians 14:15, where he apparently claimed the verse was about “*spiritual ecstatic singing*”.[57]

The Bible shows that the original spiritual gift was the supernatural ability to speak in an identifiable ethnic language. Alongside its highly regulated use in public worship at the time (when it had to be interpreted or not practised at all), it was given as a sign to unbelieving Jews that judgement was coming upon them for their rejection of the Messiah, as indeed it did in AD.70.[58] But the teaching of the Charismatic Movement and the *New Style of Worship* songwriters on tongues-speaking is entirely false and designed to lead a person into an altered state of consciousness.

For example, the charismatic church elder, Dr. Patrick Dixon, actually describes the modern charismatic “tongues” experience as “*emptying the mind of logical, language-related thought, and helping to induce a trance-like state*”.[59] This is standard teaching in these circles, where it is believed that spiritual worship — especially tongues-speaking — involves a complete bypassing of the mind, driving a gulf between mind and spirit. That is a very dangerous view indeed. Yet it lies behind so many of the *New Style of Worship* songs.

When you sing, “*Be still for the presence of the Lord is moving in this place*”, or “*Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me*”, you are singing lines which are descriptive of and designed to inculcate in a person a Charismatic-style altered state of consciousness. That is how they are used in charismatic fellowships, as a trigger for a bogus spiritual experience. Another example is “*I receive You, O Spirit of Love*” by John Lai in Songs of Fellowship, no.403:

“(1) I receive You, O Spirit of love,
how I need your healing from above,
I receive you,
I receive You,
I receive your healing from above.
I can feel Your power on me now.
I can feel Your power on me now.

(2) I can feel you, touching me right now,
Come reveal Your power on me now,

⁵⁵ Noel Richards, *The Worshipping Church*, Pioneer/Word U.K., 1993, p.33.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.22-23.

⁵⁷ Westminster Record, Vol.43, No.2.

⁵⁸ See our full article on the subject of “Tongues” on the Articles & Analysis Page on this website.

⁵⁹ Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival*, op.cit., p.275.

I can feel You,
I can feel You,
I can feel Your power on me now.
I can feel Your power on me now."

And that's it. But sung a few times, it has a mighty effect on a congregation. Yet this has nothing whatsoever to do with the worship of God. It is about ME and my wonderful feelings. It is not about me presenting myself before God as a living sacrifice. It is about what I can get out of God. How often does one hear these manipulative songs sung to the accompaniment of the administration of the "Toronto Blessing" or the similarly induced experience of what is erroneously known today as "the Anointing" — when someone has hands laid on them for the express purpose of getting them to fall down in a trance. The *New Style of Worship* songwriter, Chris Bowater, writes: "*Be sensitive in administering the anointing*".[60] But such sensitivity is hardly the issue when that "anointing" involves what amounts to an initiation into a cult! In any case, one never sees the remotest sensitivity whatsoever in the administering of this "Christianised" occult altered state of consciousness experience known as the "Anointing". Folks just queue up like cattle to the slaughter and go down like ninepins!

Any occultist will corroborate the fact that the essence of their craft is to find entrance into an altered state of consciousness. All this violation of worship through the manipulation of altered states of consciousness brings the evangelical scene into close fellowship with the occult. This is why we must say that the Charismatic Movement is an unwitting part of the occult, and the *New Style of Worship* songs are avidly promoting the occult wing of the professing church today. Even occultists themselves see the Charismatic Movement as very much a part of the New Age. We have read numerous accounts by leading occultists in which they identify the Charismatic Movement as being the collective exercise of psychic power. And psychic power is what lies at the heart of the Pentecostal/Charismatic experience. Take away the altered states of consciousness and there is no Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement. That is what they deal in exclusively in the Christian scene. It is no coincidence that occultists and New Agers themselves see these movements in the Christian scene as very much a part of the New Age. One example is Peter Spink, who is the Canon of Coventry Cathedral in the U.K. Canon Spink — in common with a number of his Church of England ministerial counterparts — is a New Ager as well as an Anglican clergyman. And he speaks about this connection between the Charismatic Movement and the New Age in his book, which is brazenly entitled "*Beyond Belief — How to Develop Mystical Consciousness and Discover the God Within*". He says:

"Since the 1960s a great deal of supernatural or charismatic energy has been released into Western society. Many factors have contributed to this development. The old secular and religious stereotypes have been challenged. Shocks have been administered to ancient institutions... Within the Christian Church a movement which came to be known as the Charismatic Revival came to birth in the

transition period of the 1960s. This movement has acted as a catalyst for a great manifestation of energy in churches which for centuries had been locked in stereotyped forms. Over a wide spectrum religious conventions have been shocked into oblivion. The [Charismatic] movement has been characterised by a great proliferation of psychic gifts. Hitherto subservient and conventional congregations have experienced great explosions of energy. Understood to be 'gifts of the Spirit', powers of healing, speaking in tongues, clairvoyance and clairsaudience have characterised the movement... The break with centuries of conventionalism has undoubtedly achieved a great deal. The weakness of the movement lies in the fact that frequently it has failed to perceive itself to be in a stage of transition and as a result has turned introspectively in upon itself... Various New Age groups have effected similar results from the use of shock techniques. The Findhorn Community...has pioneered the way in this field, organising a great variety of courses bringing thousands of young people into experiential situations designed to release creativity".[61]

My dear readers, the Charismatic Movement and the Findhorn Community (one of the original New Age communities, which was greatly influenced by Alice Bailey disciple, David Spangler) are just two different aspects of the New Age Movement. The Charismatic Movement is simply a "Christianised" version of the New Age Movement, whether it likes it or not. As soon as you deliberately seek out and open yourself up to an altered state of consciousness you lay yourself wide open to interference from the powers of darkness.

Think about that statement by Canon Spink above which says: "*The weakness of the [Charismatic] movement lies in the fact that frequently it has failed to perceive itself to be in a stage of transition*". What he means by this is that this movement is one transitional aspect of the initiation of this world into the New Age which the world is allegedly in the process of entering. Although the movement fails to perceive itself like that.

Another way in which the Charismatic Movement can be claimed by occultists to be "in a stage of transition" is because the kind of psychic experiences common in this movement also happen in Tibetan Buddhism or Hinduism. However, in those religious movements, they are seen not as ends in themselves to be sought after (as they are in the Charismatic Movement) but merely as a stage on a spiritual journey. A "second blessing" style experience, the ability to speak gibberish, prophetic pronouncements, ecstatic feelings, sexual orgasms, falling down, trances, uncontrollable laughter and crying, psychic experiences of clairvoyance and clairsaudience are all part and parcel of Eastern mystical practice. The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement is therefore regarded by the Eastern yogis of Hinduism and Buddhism as an immature variation of its own practices.

All this has a great bearing on the experiences being generated in Charismatic-Pentecostal circles today. For the ecstasy and altered states of consciousness being

⁶⁰ Chris Bowater, *Creative Worship: A guide to Spirit-Filled Worship* (Marshall-Pickering, 1986), p.48.

⁶¹ Peter Spink, *Beyond Belief: How to Develop Mystical Consciousness and Discover the God Within*, Piatkus, 1996, pp.67-68.

induced in these circles is nothing less than an initiation into the New Age. The intense religious experience which is being induced in Charismatic-Pentecostal circles — under the guise of “worship”, “praise”, and “the Anointing” — is no different to that being induced in countless world religion circles and New Age Communities. Only the terminology is different. As far as the Yogic practitioner, Tantric Buddhist, Neo-Gnostic, Navajo ‘Hand-Trembler’ or Arctic Shaman are concerned, the modern charismatic practices (which are very different to the original New Testament practices laid out in Scripture) are immediately identifiable with their own. Such experiences are not only common in these cultures but are counted as something to be eagerly sought after. In the pathway of the Indian mystic on his way to enlightenment, for instance, such psychic powers are known as ‘Siddhis’. He seeks to achieve a state which is known in Sanskrit as ‘Nirvana’, the literal meaning of which is “a blowing-out-of-the-mind” — hence the psychedelic drug-user’s phrase which refers to a ‘mind-blowing’ experience. This blowing out of the mind is precisely what the Charismatic phenomenon is all about. These also are the facts which account for the huge success of the Charismatic Movement in the so-called Third World countries, where magic, witchcraft, occultism and superstition hold sway.

The energy being manipulated in Pentecostal/Charismatic circles today — which causes the unusual manifestations — is what is known in Eastern mysticism as Kundalini energy, or Serpent-Power. These people are playing with fire — occult fire. But they have no conception of the dance in which they are involved, and the outcome which is in store for them.[62]

However, in spite of the dangers of this experience, it is passed around like popcorn in Charismatic worship sessions. This is why we say that a central strategy behind the *New Style of Worship* is to generate emotional catharsis under the pretence that it represents genuine spiritual experience.

All this is not coincidental. We are on the threshold of a global deception of unparalleled proportions. And in the preparation for this, it will be seen that the peculiar antics of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements will have as much a part to play as theosophy, Hinduism, Buddhism, LSD, Cannabis, Hypnosis, Shamanism, New Ageism, and the worldwide experience of UFOs and ETs. These are not popular or comfortable truths. But, having first realised all this when the present writer became a Christian in 1985, he has seen nothing since to persuade him otherwise. On the contrary. What he has witnessed during the past fourteen years (and especially the last five years) has only served to support this belief. If only it was otherwise! We would dearly love to see peace in all the churches. But the devastation of truth which we are witnessing today will surely increase as the age winds down to its close — until the time that the breath of Christ’s mouth and the brightness of His coming cleans it all away (2 Thess.2:8).

CONCLUSION

In speaking of these strategies as being of satanic origin, we are not at all suggesting that the human

perpetrators are knowingly acting on the devil’s behalf. Neither are we saying that God is not at work in His own way in the midst of those situations. But if people are saved and fed in any sense, it is not *because* of the situations but *in spite of them!*

We fully realise the enormous difficulty involved in ridding a church of these songs. One would have as much difficulty in removing these songs from the worship experience of a church as one has in wrestling a beloved toy away from a child.

We do not seek to censure churches which sing these songs out of ignorance or because they have not discerned the agenda which lies behind them. This is being written as an encouragement to think through the issues involved, and embark on a process of change. Neither is this a nit-picking exercise about the mood of a few songs or the errors of a few lines here or there. Rather, we are writing these words because we see the vast implications of this entire genre of worship.

Some people may object that this article has ignored the fact that there will be differences in styles of worship from one culture to another, and that the present thesis is written solely from the standpoint of the Western Classical tradition. Obviously, the present writer is an English-speaking worshipper specifically addressing the church situation regarding English-speaking worship and songs, because that is his milieu. Of course there will be ethnic differences in worship music depending on which part of the world one is in. But that should not present a problem. For example, Oriental music is based on a pentatonic scale, which usually has no harmony at all, and this writer would initially find it strange to engage in regular worship which utilises that style. But we would certainly not disapprove of worship music which is based on a pentatonic scale. And neither would the Lord! The pentatonic scale of Oriental music is not inferior to the diatonic scale of Western music. If one is travelling across the world and worshipping with local Christians, one should adapt to the local custom of Christians — provided it is God-honouring. The apologia in the present paper is not about local ethnic differences. In fact, whether music is Oriental or Occidental is entirely incidental to the entire thesis of this paper!

However, that having been said, whatever one’s ethnic origins, music designed for the worship of God should not merely import the local customary pagan styles of worship. If the customary ethnic style of pagan worship is to leap around a pole until one drops, does that mean we have to tolerate it in Christian worship because that is the local ethnic custom? Surely not. One can hear African Christian music which contains soaring and very beautiful polyphonic harmony; but it isn’t the music of jungle paganism. Is it not the case that music suitable for the worship of a holy God should actually **transcend** ethnicity in some glorious way?

The Scripture says that at the Last Supper, just after Jesus had described the New Covenant in His blood, “*when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*” (Matt.26:30). Whatever “ethnic style” was involved when that psalm was sung, we find it hard to believe that if we had been present at that Last Supper we would have felt a feeling of repugnance and that the

⁶² To gain a sense of the uncanny parallelism between the psychic powers developed within the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement and those ‘Siddhis’ produced through the practices of Eastern mysticism, compare Ajit Mookerjee, *Kundalini: The Arousal of the Inner Energy*, (Thames & Hudson, 1978)

name of God was being blasphemed, as this writer does at so many of the “New Style of Worship” services today. This treatise is **not** about “ethnic” styles of singing or music. It is about “school of thought” styles. It is not about **ethnic** differences in worship. It is about profound **theological** differences in worship. If worship leads people into a close relationship with the one True God and His Son Jesus Christ, and if it leads to a balanced and Christocentric worldview, and if it has a great teaching function, and if it encourages worshippers to be discerning and to reject false teachers, and if it proves to the unbelieving world that Christians aren't a bunch of empty-headed, mindless, superficial cretins, then it doesn't matter one iota which ethnic style is involved.

Surely, the same essential questions can be asked whatever ethnic situation one finds oneself in: Is the music raucous and plainly designed to titillate the flesh? Is the music designed to lead one into a trance and numb the mind? Does the music turn one's mind to things Divine or does it accentuate **me** and **my feelings**? Have the songs been written by people who have a heterodox theological agenda? These questions are universal in scope and can be applied regardless of the ethnic situation one is in.

Another important point to make here in this closing section is that this paper does not represent a blanket indictment of all the lyrics of the *New Style of Worship*. As a matter of fact, we enjoy and approve of a number of the newer songs, as and when they fulfil the criteria we have laid out above. Of course, some may object here that many of the songs of the *New Style of Worship* are merely portions of Scripture and therefore cannot be faulted. However, the fact that a lyric consists of Scripture does not automatically mean that the song as a whole is acceptable. A major deception has been that many of the songs to which we have been objecting do contain Scripture, which then seems to put them beyond judgement. However, they must be judged by the criteria already mentioned above. Both the content and the style have to be God-honouring and edifying.

We have a worship revolution in the churches today which amounts to a serious crisis and has caused much confusion. Indeed, it has become a major pastoral issue and should be approached as such. Therefore, Pastors who are choosing suitable worship materials — in order to avoid corruption and compromise — should ask themselves what the likely future effect will be on the church. In their misplaced attempt to be “relevant” to today's culture, churches which buy into these new songbooks are ultimately importing false teaching into the heart of the fellowship, whether they realise it now or not. People need to realise that this isn't about a cosy debate concerning which songs to use in your church, on which we can agree to differ. As the fullness of time will prove, this is warfare!

The heterodox have always been expert at confusing believers through the use of counterfeit terminology which looks orthodox. But, like the liberals of old, their religious words and phrases are interpreted differently by true evangelicals.

✓ The triumphalist “Kingdom” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as the true “Kingdom of God”, which has so far come in grace

but not in all the fullness of glory.

- ✓ The false “anointing” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as the genuine “anointing” which we receive from the Holy One when we first believe.
- ✓ The knockout “blessing” which the *New Style of Worship* songwriters are offering is not the same as the uplifting blessing from our God which we receive to sustain us — especially in times of suffering and conflict.
- ✓ The chummy “Jesus” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as our “Lord of Glory”.
- ✓ The wacky, anarchic, attention-grabbing, stupor-inducing “spirit” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as our self-effacing, Christ-glorifying “Holy Spirit”.
- ✓ The altered state of consciousness-inducing “praise and celebration” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as the worship which we are to bring with all our heart, soul, *mind* and strength.

None of this has happened in a vacuum but is surely part of a major downgrade or even part of a much wider apostasy of mind-blowing proportions. Yet, because of the stealth-like manner in which this is being executed, comparatively few professing Christians are aware of the seriousness of the issue. This is why we believe that offering some kind of resistance to the *New Style Worship* songs is not merely an option, but it is vital, if we are to avoid having the Church plunge even further into a theological and pastoral crisis which will soon have passed the point of no return.

The former General Secretary of the British Evangelical Council, Alan Gibson, in 1995 identified in an article entitled “The Next Five Years” some key areas where downgrade will accelerate in the coming years. These were the inerrancy and authority of Scripture; the doctrine of Hell; the future of the unsaved; the effect of the charismatic movement; ecumenism and world faiths; and worship styles. How prophetic this has proven! He then continued, in similar prophetic vein:

“The understandable concern to be contemporary has degenerated into the tyranny of novelty. Christians return from national events with songs and ideas which they cannot wait to share with their home church. What amounts to an almost total breakdown in respect for ministerial leadership has created space for these innovations to take root and local church unity is everywhere under strain”.

And the “*total breakdown in respect for ministerial leadership*” referred to by Alan Gibson is an important aspect of all this. For the eclipse of true leadership goes hand-in-hand with the *New Style of Worship*. As one of their songwriters, Noel Richards, frankly admitted in his book, “The Worshipping Church”: “*It is the absence of leadership that creates room for the Holy Spirit to move*”.[63] Now there is a loaded statement if ever there was one; and it sums up one of the reasons for the great proliferation of the *New Style of Worship*: the failure of leaders to lead. The capitulation of leaders to the democratic whims of the people — with their ears and hearts always itching for things which they think are best

⁶³ Noel Richards, *The Worshipping Church* (Pioneer/Word U.K., 1993), p.46.

for themselves but which are usually worst for their souls — has led to almost total anarchy in the life of the church. **Our God is a God of structure.** In fact, the exact opposite of the above statement of Noel Richards is true: It is the presence of genuine spiritual leadership which encourages the work of the Holy Spirit in a church. It is the *absence* of such leadership in churches which has created room for another “spirit” altogether to move so powerfully today.

The kind of songs a church sings is ultimately going to determine its theology, the Christian walk of its members, its attitude to authority and leadership, its approach to preaching, and the collective use of its mind. Once the *New Style of Worship* songs are introduced into a church, things can only go downhill. A church which hugs these songs to its heart will never have much in the way of spiritual depth. The two just do not hang together. When one hears a *real* hymn sung next to one of the *New Style of Worship* songs, it is so obvious that we are moving in entirely different worlds — one dedicated to the worship of God; the other devoted to the satisfaction of self.

Introducing the *New Style of Worship* into churches en masse has been one of the most highly successful satanic ploys in church history. Of this we are now convinced. A church which has adjusted to a diet of these songs will be totally unprepared for real preaching. Any truly expository preacher who tries to open up the Word of God in a church which has embraced the *New Style of Worship* will be completely incomprehensible. Singing these songs puts a kind of veil over people's minds — a hypnotic wet blanket to dampen down spiritual alertness and a spirit of genuine enquiry. The present writer has witnessed this repeatedly.

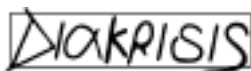
Having said all the above, we fully realise the enormous difficulty involved in gently clearing a church of these songs once they have got a grip on the

congregation. One would have as much difficulty in removing these songs from the worship experience of a church as one has in wrestling a beloved toy away from a stubborn child. This writer is very aware of the almost insurmountable task of removing the *New Style of Worship* songs from churches where they have already taken hold. Any pastor who seeks to educate his congregation on this issue will either lose 90% of his congregation or 100% of his salary!

We have a worship revolution in the churches today which amounts to a serious crisis and has caused considerable confusion. Indeed, it has become a major pastoral issue and should be approached as such. Therefore, pastors and teachers who are choosing suitable worship materials — in order to avoid corruption and compromise — should ask themselves what the likely future effect will be on the church. Churches which wish to keep themselves separate from the mass of corrupt worship songbooks should, where it is at all possible, create their own worship books of hymns both old and new, but without those which have been written by men and women with a promotional agenda. This is a work for strong leaders who are willing to risk wrath being heaped upon their heads. We need solid songs by spiritual giants who have had a full-orbed Christian experience rather than superficial ditties by religious pigmies who have undergone a handful of bizarre manifestations.

In the final analysis, when considering the hymns of the church, we must always remember that neither the singer nor the writer can create words and music in his own strength. It must be the Lord Himself who frames our worship. Anything else is idolatry and vanity. In fact, the singer should be saying to the Lord: “*Open **Thou** my lips*” — with the emphasis always on the word “*Thou*”.

May the Lord give us strength for the battle ahead, and enable us to be both compassionate as well as uncompromising. Ω



was established in 1990 to acquaint believers with the importance of Christian apologetics, to provide commentary on topical, doctrinal and pastoral issues, and to hold out a hand of rescue to those who suffer psychological and spiritual manipulation in the religious scene.

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