

# **Worship**

## **Getting It Biblical**

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# **Worship: Getting It Biblical**

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# Introduction: Biblical Worship

If ever there was a need for the church to rethink the way it worships and meets it is now. There is so much confusion and diversity amongst Evangelical churches that outsiders could easily believe that the various expressions constitute different religions. As one fad replaces another, as one extreme becomes a norm, as yet more churches jettison the Bible in practice (it not in principle), so chaos reigns and young believers are misled.

Some denominations hold on to cherished traditions which have no Biblical precedent. Anxious to avoid Charismatic radicalism, they seek to be Biblical, yet they fail to implement apostolic commands regarding assembling together. They allow one man, called a minister, to do virtually everything in the meeting - failing to see that all believers are ministers and all are commanded to edify each other. Such churches may preach a sound Gospel and have a good theological base and yet ignore clear instructions like:

- *Desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ... I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied. (1 Cor 14:1, 5)*
- *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (1 Cor 14:26)*
- *Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. (1 Cor 14:39)*
- *I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. (1 Cor 14:15)*
- *Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Cor 14:26)*
- *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (Rm 14:19)*
- *Therefore comfort each other and edify one another. (Rm 14:19)*
- *[When] every part does its share, [it] causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:16)*
- *[Ministry is] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:12)*

Now I hold no brief for the Charismatics and vigorously criticise their excesses (as will be obvious in this booklet), yet when scripture repeatedly and clearly commands me to do something, such as not despising prophecy, I need a very solid, Biblically based, argument to overturn such an imperative. [There is such an argument to explain the cessation of tongue-speaking (see my papers on this matter) but not for the other spiritual gifts, which are nothing like the Charismatic interpretation of them.] Without such a defence (which even the simplest saint must be able to see in scripture for himself) my rational case becomes disobedience or even blasphemy. Cessationists must

ask themselves if their arguments fulfil such a requirement. I may not agree with Charismatic prophecy but I cannot throw out the principle of genuine prophecy being shared – whatever that may mean – or I disdain God's word. Whether 'prophecy' is effective, godly preaching, as the Puritans considered, or whether it is something more, I must hold that it is relevant now.

So, on the one hand we have long established churches which have no practice of mutual edification, no opportunities for members' participation, no *koinonia*, no sharing and consequently – no growth since growth occurs when all members are being trained to minister and share effectively. Worship in such churches is, often, essentially moribund. Meetings are reverent but lifeless.

On the other side of the coin we have Charismatic extremism. The number of pits that this has sunk into is too vast to consider here. The most wild, sensuous and stupid antics are now being lauded by various people as 'worship'. Frequently these are exposed on secular television for what they are – unbelievers being wiser than church members. To give but a few examples:

- Some use pagan prayer sticks in worship (painted poles, sometimes adorned with feathers), striking the ground with them to give power to prayers.
- Some use all sorts of sacramentalism in worship, to the point of creating fetishes: gemstones to aid healing meditations, wooden crosses to impart blessing, piles of washed stones to symbolise consecration, candles to aid feelings of closeness to God, flag-waving to testify to one thing or another (depending on the colours).
- Some march around the room to attack evil spirits.
- Some utilise dramas, magic acts, set pieces, concerts etc.
- Some feel that nothing effective has transpired until everyone falls over on the ground 'intoxicated'.
- Some feel that inappropriate wails show a work of God is occurring such as uncontrolled: screams, laughter, animal noises, grunting, howling etc.
- Others express their worship with uncontrollable gestures and movements: dancing, jumping, leaping, partying, sexually suggestive gyrations etc.

But the most significant factor in Charismatic worship is the element of musical entertainment. Most people now associate worship with music, or even music of a certain 'pop-rock' type. Sunday morning Charismatic worship is inconceivable without a band and a worship leader. This has become so widespread that many even consider that listening to a 'worship' CD constitutes an act of worship and some have stated that they would rather listen to a worship tape than read their Bible. This is addictive bondage.

All these approaches fail to consider a wide range of scriptures which teach us what worship is and what we are to do when we meet together. This is what this booklet aims to do, with a special focus on music.

# Biblical Facts on Church Worship

A key problem amongst Christian interpreters is to dwell on OT scriptures and import these specific concepts into NT church life, ignoring the controlling scriptures which amend them. An extreme case would be to justify the employment of OT animal sacrifices. This is obviously avoided since it would be a blasphemous affront to the cross of Christ (although Dispensationalists expect this to occur in the future in Israel!). Yet many churches use priestly regalia and robes, which are directly taken from the OT priestly garments, which have also been rescinded. This error of interpretation is frequently employed in teaching about worship. We will look at the difference between the OT and the NT later.

A study on worship in the church should focus upon the clear apostolic teaching in the NT letters, which represents the last words of Jesus to the church; words which he said he would bring by the Holy Spirit after his ascension. To understand worship, we must first get to grips with the apostolic content, and then apply these principles to the relevant OT scriptures. Hebrews, for instance, tells us that the whole Levitical worship system has been cancelled. There are no more: sacrifices (Jesus is the one and only sacrifice), priests and musical directors (we are all priests before God), external buildings (we are the temple of God), set rituals (we are free under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit), and orchestras (we are a harmonic symphony to God).

The main emphasis of Jesus and the apostles is that worship is now a spiritual matter, based upon truth. OT worship was external, tied to certain buildings, fleshly, loud and frequently smelly (incense, smoke, dead and dying animals etc.). NT worship is nothing like this at all. This means that the place of music, behaviour and practices must be re-evaluated. For instance, instrumental music is never mentioned as accompanying NT worship because the contribution of the worshipper's voice, however weak, is more important than any backing music – now matter how emotional. Today, loud music dominates most church worship.

Too much contemporary church worship is basically old covenant in structure and expression. It is loud, uses many instruments, contains much singing and repeated choruses, is controlled by the actions of a few men at the front, is non-contributory, involves lots of physical movements (including falling over and dancing) and is basically fleshly and sensual. The church must regain genuine spiritual worship.

## Key teaching passages where earthly worship is mentioned in the letters

### **Key word: Proskuneo –**

(‘worship’) obeisance, to kiss the hand, like a dog licking his master’s hand.

*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that **worship** therein. (Rev 11:1)*

*Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and **worship** him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Rev 14:7)*

*Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and **worship** before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (Rev 15:4)*

*And I fell at his feet to **worship** him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: **worship** God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev 19:10)*

*And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to **worship** before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: **worship** God. (Rev 22:8-9)*

*And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he [an unbeliever] will **worship** God and report that God is truly among you. (1 Cor 14:25)*

*By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and **worshipped**, leaning on the top of his staff. (Heb 11:21)*

### **Secondary word: Latreuo –**

(‘worship’, ‘service’) service to God, to offer sacred gifts, religious service.

*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable **service**. (Rm 12:1)*

*For we are the circumcision, who **worship** God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil 3:3)*

*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to **serve** the living God? (Heb 9:14)*

## Relevant teaching passages in the historical narratives (Gospels and Acts)

### ***Proskuneo***

*Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to **worship** Him.* (Matt 2:2)

*Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall **worship** the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'* (Matt 4:10; Lk 4:8)

*Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, **kneeling down** and asking something from Him.* (Matt 20:20)

*And they **worshipped** Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* (Lk 24:52)

*Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, **worship** the Father.* (Jn 4:21)

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true **worshippers** will **worship** the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to **worship** Him.* (Jn 4:23)

*God is Spirit, and those who **worship** Him must **worship** in spirit and truth.* (John 4:24)

### **First Conclusion**

1. *Proskuneo* appears relatively few times, mostly in Revelation.
2. *Proskuneo* is rare in the letters in connection with Christian activity and appears only once in connection with Christian worship, and then only by referring to unbelievers.
3. The activity of *proskuneo* is not described, other than being a form of obeisance. In one case it merely meant kneeling down as Jesus is asked for something.
4. Worship is mainly considered to be personal and individual. Even when mentioned in connection with the temple, that temple is the whole body of Christ, not a special building. The Biblical emphasis regarding worship is the submission of the individual in honour to God.
5. Worship is thus a presentation of one's life in submission to God. Worship is really 'worth-ship', having a reverent attitude that God is worthy of my adoration and submission. This implies that worship is not only mainly personal, but is also continual; a daily attitude of heart (Matt 6:9; Lk 11:2).
6. In comparison, in Christian meetings the word 'edification' appears many times. The key NT reason for gathering together is not to experience some kind of emotional worship, but to edify one another.

## Mutual Edification

When the apostle Paul speaks about the gathered church, he primarily refers to the importance of building one another up. Saints are committed to 'one anothering'. In fact, worship is presumed to be an ongoing personal activity, saints are those who worship God, but saints come together to share. Worship is not the prime apostolic reason for assembling, edification is. In fact, it is edification which undergirds most Biblical ministry.

### **Oikodome** (edification, upbuilding)

Apostolic authority and leadership gifting is given for the edification of saints, not for personal use, domination of others, ministerial authentication or public spectacle:

- *For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed. (2 Cor 10:8)*
- *... the power which the Lord hath given me to edification. (2 Cor 13:10)*
- *... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:12)*
- *... we do all things, beloved, for your edification. (2 Cor 12:19)*

Edification is the main reason for gathering together:

- *How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Cor 14:26)*
- The word 'edify' occurs in various forms seven times in 1 Cor 14 (seven is the number of perfection; 1 Cor 14:3,4,4,5,12,17, 26)
- *He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. (1 Cor 14:4)*
- *Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thess 5:11)*
- *... nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. (1 Tim 1:4)*

Christians should concentrate on edifying one another at all times:

- *Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification. (Rom 15:2)*
- *Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. (1 Cor 8:1)*
- *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (Rm 14:19)*
- *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (Eph 4:29)*

Edification leads to strong saints, the fear of the Lord and evangelistic success.

*Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. (Acts 9:31)*

Edification leads to realisation of unity with Christ and each other and growth in holiness

- ... in whom [Christ] the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Eph 2:21)
- ... Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:16)

It is only when believers are joined together in practical terms and sharing their gifts (*koinonia*) to build each other up that the church grows and individuals mature. In love, church members edify each other by giving what they have of Christ to support and encourage others.

### **Second conclusion**

1. Worship is mainly personal; edification is mainly corporate.
2. The goal of leaders is to edify saints and get them to minister to each other.
3. Edifying one another is the main reason for attending church meetings.
4. Believers should concentrate on edification even when they meet socially.
5. The practice of edifying saints leads to growth, true unity and success as truth takes hold of lives.
6. The life that loves is a life which edifies.

### **What are spiritual sacrifices? (1 Pt 2:5)**

It is clear, from an examination of the OT, that worship itself is tied to the idea of sacrifice. This is partly explained by being a focus upon the atonement of the Lord Jesus, but worship also cost the OT worshipper: '*nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing*', (2 Sam 24:24). He had to provide the lamb, goat, bull etc. It was his best animal, in fact the first fruits of everything belonged to the Lord and had to be given up to the Levites.

The mention of spiritual Sacrifices to the converted Jews (whom Peter and the writer to the Hebrews were addressing) would bring to mind the OT liturgical concept and would imply: involvement, a real giving up, a selfless offering and a sacrifice to God. Spiritual sacrifices are not to merely be equated with a self-satisfying emotional jamboree on a Sunday morning

which costs nothing and which gratifies the participants. What sort of costs are involved?

One result of edification is that the church is built up together and able to offer these spiritual sacrifices. Building up means that all have a part to play in the up-building. One personal cost is that people must contribute in an edifying way. They must give of themselves, share gifts.

*You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)*

The sacrifice of praise is the fruit of lips – not just singing but speaking, admonishing, saying praise, preaching, edifying etc. This is something which is not reserved for Sunday morning but is to be done at all times – ‘continually’.

*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Heb 13:15-16)*

One type of spiritual sacrifice is a very practical matter – giving of goods and money for the relief of the poor and needy. This is said to please God especially:

*But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. (Phil 4:18)*

*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Heb 13:15-16)*

The main explanation of spiritual sacrifices is summed up in Rm 12:1, it is the giving up, the offering, the sacrifice to God of our entire lives to be used for his service. This is true worship.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you all present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Rm 12:1)*

This is the crucial controlling text to explain what worship really is.

- It is an action done by grace, ‘by the mercies of God’.
- ‘Present’ is a technical term used for offering sacrifices. Paul has the image of OT worship at the back of his mind.
- ‘Bodies’ – something real, worship is not mystical and esoteric. It involves real actions and work and is not just an intellectual exercise.

- ‘*A living sacrifice*’ – i.e. in direct contrast to the slain animals used in OT offerings.
- ‘*Acceptable*’ means: ‘well-pleasing’. God enjoys real worship from his children.
- ‘*Reasonable*’ – rational (*logikos* from *logos*). Worship is to be offered by the reason, with intelligence. The mind is employed not passive. *Logikos* means: pertaining to the speech, logic or reason; reasonable, logical, or pertaining to the soul (where the mind is situated). Irrational actions, passivity, loss of control or mindless behaviour are thus not to be equated with divine worship.
- ‘*Service*’ = the temple service, divine service (*latreia*), ‘worship’. In the Greek OT (Septuagint translation or LXX as used by the apostles) the word is used in connection with the Passover service: Ex 12:25; 13:5, and the service of burnt offerings, sacrifices and peace offerings, Jos 22:27. The thought in Paul’s mind is OT divine worship which includes sacrifice.

### **Spiritual sacrifices are thus:**

1. The fruit of the lips used in God’s service in a multitude of ways, not merely singing.
2. The giving up of our bodies to God’s service / worship.
3. Edifying our brethren spiritually by encouragement in the fear of God.
4. Edifying our brethren practically with gifts to meet their needs in the love of God.

All these things comprise worship, which should be going on continually day by day. Worship is essentially obeisance to a king. Since Jesus is the King of kings, and since we are his subjects, we should be worshipping him by one means or another all the time.

### **Third conclusion**

1. Rm 12:1 is the most helpful description of what worship really is.
2. Worship is thus an inward attitude prompting the yielding of our bodies to God for use in his service daily.
3. Worship uses the mind and is never irrational or creates passivity.
4. Spiritual sacrifice does not merely mean singing praise.
5. A life given over to God in testimony is a worshipful life. This type of life will include seeking to edify one’s brethren and meet their needs.
6. The picture of this kind of life is the OT burnt offering, tied to the altar and wholly consumed for God. It is yielded submission.

## Praise in the NT

### The various words for 'praise' in the apostolic letters

- Are used of men as well as God, as when someone is praised for a good act (1 Cor 11:2, 17, 22). [*Epaineo* – approved, commended.] Men are never to be worshipped.
- Praise is an objective outward testimony. The church is chosen to demonstrate God's glory and thus is his praise (Eph 1:6, 12, 14). [*Epainos* – approbation, commendation.]
- The church is called to 'show forth' God's praise. This means: to declare, tell out, publish, proclaim (1 Pt 2:9). [*Arete* – virtue, moral goodness.] It includes many forms but does not imply inward, introspective enjoyment, rather it is outward demonstration to unbelievers.
- Thus our character and behaviour is a praise to God (Phil 1:11). [*Epainos*]
- The truth of praiseworthy, godly character is most clear in persecution (1 Pt 1:7). [*Epainos*]
- Praise can be sung, thus demonstrating, commending the works of God (Heb 2:12). [*Humneo* – to sing a hymn.] Yet very often praise is spoken or stated rather than sung (Matt 21:15-17; Lk 19:38; Rev 5:12-13, 7:12, 19:1; Ezek 3:12; 2 Chron 7:3).
- Praise is to be continual (Heb 13:15) [*Ainesis* – praise, a thank-offering.] and was performed daily by the early church (Acts 2:46-47) [*Aineo*] This echoes the OT in Psa 35:28; 71:6.
- Spoken or sung praise should include thanksgiving (Heb 13:15). [*Ainesis*]

### Praise in the transition period after the cross (end of the Gospels and Acts)

**Aineo**; to praise, extol, sing praises in honour to God.

Luke 24:53

Acts 2:47

Acts 3:8-9

### Fourth conclusion

1. Praise is primarily an outward expression of testimony to declare the goodness of someone or something.
2. In believers, praise is the objective testimony to God.
3. This can be the demonstration of godly character, the spoken declaration of God's goodness or the sung praise of his glory.
4. It will usually include thanksgiving.

## Definitions of worship

1. The outpouring of the soul at rest in the presence of God.
2. The overflow of a grateful heart, under a sense of Divine favour.
3. The occupation of the heart, not with its needs, or even its blessings, but with God himself.
4. The uprising of the heart that has known the Father as a Giver, the Son as Saviour and the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Guest.
5. Worship is 'worthship' for it consists of the ascription of worth to One who is worthy.<sup>1</sup>

## Distinctions between prayer, praise and worship

Prayer	Praise	Worship
Focus on needs	Focus on blessings	Focus on God's person
'Lord, save my soul'	'Thank you Lord for saving my soul.'	'Thank you Lord for who you are.'
Obsession	Outpouring	Obeisance
Subjective or objective invocation	Objective testimony	Subjective attitude
Something I want	Something I do	Something I am
Heart cry	Heartfelt gesture	Heart inclination

All three are involved in a time of corporate worship but true worship is different from mere prayer and praise.

## Overall Conclusion

It is impossible to establish a NT apologetic for the use of any music in church services, as it is never mentioned. In fact, the early church did not use musical instruments for, at least, 200 years<sup>2</sup> and when they did great leaders like Chrysostom condemned it as a fleshly development. Worship is primarily submitted heart service to God and is most clearly seen in the presentation of our lives to God's use (Rom 12:1). It is something we do all the time (hopefully) and does not need music. Praise is pre-eminently the testimony of our lives to God, usually including thanksgiving; it is also expressed in sacrificial giving. We are to bring the sacrifice of praise (1 Pt 2:5) which is the fruit of our lips. Heb 13:15-16 and 1 Cor 14 make clear that this is not just singing, but the varied expressions of speaking, teaching, exhorting, singing, testifying etc.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted without sources in A.P.Gibbs, *Worship*, Walterick Pub, Kansas, nd. P15ff.

<sup>2</sup> Many have cogently argued that musical instruments were not in widespread use in the church at large for 1200 years.

So, Biblically, worship is something pre-eminently done throughout our lives and is expressed by obeisance – we bow, or stoop to kiss God’s hand, we manifest submission. Praise is mainly a testimony, firstly of the whole life, secondly by the voice in church services. These church meetings are founded upon mutual edification where everyone has the opportunity to share a word to build up or express praise to testify. This praise can be sung or spoken (Eph 5:19) and people can even be taught through singing (Col 3:16). Worship, praise and edification are intermingled in church gatherings. As we praise, we edify. As we edify we encourage others to praise.

Now, since western culture has lost its communal roots it is clear that spontaneous singing is a rare thing and many would struggle to initiate it. For this reason, some instrumental music is appropriate in order to assist the human voice in singing praise. This music should be minimal as the Biblical focal point is the human voice, not the background music. Music is a servant, and a stop gap at that. It should never overrule the singing – a basic piano or guitar is all that is required and no rhythm instruments are necessary. In fact, drums and percussion are a totally pagan religious vehicle for inculcating passivity (breaking down natural, rational resistance) and softening up audiences. They do not occur in the Psalms lists of instruments for praise, in fact they are not mentioned in the Bible at all.

This is the NT emphasis. We see nothing of a gradual ascent up a ladder to a greater sense of the divine. There are no gradual stages of ‘worship’ until we get ‘lost in God’. Not only is there nothing like this in the NT church, but we see from Biblical and secular history that this type of worship is common among the occult and false, pagan religions. In fact the Bible places a great emphasis upon the mind in worship. Rm 12:1 shows that worship (‘service’ = *latreia*, worship, temple service, priestly service) is to be done ‘reasonably’, this means rationally, logically (*logikos* from *logos*). Passivity is exactly what the devil requires in order to get us to submit to his wiles. It is the objective of occult religious exercises and the basis of mysticism. When someone tells you ‘*don’t think, just drink*’ they are disobeying God and following an occult programme.

The notion of starting a service with exuberant praise, repeating choruses for emotional effect, stringing songs musically together for intensity of feeling, gradually moving through to more reflective, subjective worship songs and ending with an intense, emotional, passive mood ready to hear from a preacher or prophet is pure, mystical flesh. This is exactly what pagan religions, in all cultures, have done for centuries. The process makes people amenable and receptive to suggestion, what's more – they actually enjoy the process. The more the mind is side-tracked and the emotions take over, the more easy it is for people to be manipulated; either by men or by Satan.

Worship, praise, quiet reflection, consecration, rational teaching, exuberant singing and edification are intermingled in NT meetings, as the Spirit directs. Biblical worship is rational, even while it employs the emotions and the will. The mind is never disengaged and the basis of it is always truth (Jn 4:24). It is knowledge of God which dominates and directs our praise, not emotionalism.

The picture emerging here is that there is a wide gap between the modern concept of praise and worship and the Biblical explanation and models. We need to get believers to be true worshippers day by day and more focused to edify one another in church meetings. 'Worship' services must be freed up from a focus upon external superficialities, emotionalism, the denigration of rationality, fleshly exuberance, the dangers of passivity, the dominance of leaders and a dependence upon loud music (whether old organs or youthful rock bands). Rather, the value of individual contributions to serve the flock and the importance of personal holiness must be emphasised. It is time for a better, worshipful testimony to be seen in the character of believers and the claiming back of corporate Biblical worship in Christian meetings.

# What constrains worship activities?

## The Regulative Principle

What determines that which is acceptable in church services?

Everyone sets limits on what they consider to be acceptable in corporate worship, but few have any clear idea what constrains these limits. For most it is just a gut feeling. Protestants would not accept the additions of the Roman Catholics (e.g. auricular confession, indulgences, observance of days, vows, worship of images) and yet many Protestants have taken on board certain practices which have equally dubious pedigrees (e.g. being slain in the spirit, waving flags, marching, shouted prayers, ceremonial vestments, holy water, women priests etc.). Others would condemn all such items as unscriptural but then endorse old covenant practices like liturgical dancing, massed choirs, large orchestras or leaping. We need to be consistent here or we have no anchor to our church life.

The key matter that we have to decide is - what is our 'regulative principle'; that is, what regulates or controls acceptable worship? There are two answers to this:

1. Anything is allowed in practice except that which scripture forbids.
2. We can only practice those things which scripture encourages.

Any thinking person can immediately see that the latter is the more godly method and it is the orthodox, historical, Christian viewpoint. The former would allow any modern fashion which may have been unknown to the writers of scripture, but which may issue in great ungodliness. Excessively amplified instruments, multiple drum kits, slide shows, light shows, scratch hi-fi desks and techno / rap music are all being used in various worship services today. None of these things could have been even imagined by scripture writers. But because there is no mention of them, this does not mean that they are acceptable but that they must be judged by other principles (like decency and order). For instance, rap originated in occult Voodoo practices in South America, such an art form cannot be pressed into the service of God. We must shun worldly and evil activities (2 Cor 9:19-21; Jm 4:4). That is as unclean as the 'Children of God' cult using prostitution for evangelism.

The prime foundation for our practice of worship must be the New Testament, so the traditional, reformed, regulative principle (answer 2) must undergird our determinations here. In typical lucid brevity, Calvin summed

the matter up thus: *'whatever is not commanded, we are not free to choose'*.<sup>3</sup> So, nothing is acceptable in church worship and ministry apart from that which scripture commands or endorses. The alternative is that anything is acceptable unless scripture specifically condemns it (answer 1: *'what is not forbidden is permissible'*). The former is the traditional view of reformed churches and churches with a Calvinistic/Augustinian basis of theology (Presbyterian, original Baptists, Puritan, original Congregationalists, early Brethren; Anglicans were originally reformed in theological basis but not fully in church practice). The latter is the basis of Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Arminian churches.

The Westminster Confession puts it this way: *'The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men'*. Where scripture does not clearly cover a modern issue (e.g. audio-tape ministry or the time, duration and place of meeting), we must make sensible deductions based upon general scriptural principles - decisions that are a *'good and necessary consequence ... according to the general rules of the Word and ... Christian prudence'*.<sup>4</sup>

If we do not have a sound regulative principle we will stray from God's will. The wrong regulative principle soon leads to the acceptance of errors like: the worship of Mary, the use of icons, lighting candles, burning incense on an altar or in a censer, staring at crystals, dancing, shouting, laughing, waving flags, screaming or washing stones and making a heap of them at the front.<sup>5</sup>

Having condemned some charismatic errors, there is no doubt that many true worshippers have been profoundly blessed in their walk with God by a greater openness, a more personal expression in song, a better liberty in praise and a livelier flow in the Spirit which can accompany the saner variants of a more open type of worship associated with certain modern meetings. Also there are many people who favour reformed theology but who have no Presbyterian background and have never sung metrical psalms but have only sung a few hymns and many choruses. This is especially true for folk who were converted in the last thirty years and who possibly grew up in a Baptist or independent background. The important thing is not to join the right denominational party, but to obey God's commandments on how we worship him.

## Important principles

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<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Tracts & Treatises on the Doctrine & Worship of the Church*, Eerdmans (1958), 2:118,122.

<sup>4</sup> *Westminster Confession*, XXI:i, I:vi.

<sup>5</sup> Though some of these are Roman ideas, all of them have been introduced into charismatic meetings in recent years.

We cannot presume to live as we please but must follow God's instructions in all things: *'man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD'*, (Deut 8:3). Commandments are not restricted to the OT, Christ and the apostles gave many (Jn 14:21, 15:10; 1 Thess 4:2). From the beginning, whenever God commanded man to approach him in worship, he laid down patterns, principles and commands:

- *Make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings* (Ex 25:9-9)
- *See to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.* (Ex 25:40)
- *Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, ... "All this," said David, "the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans".* (1 Chron 28:11-12, 19)

A worship system could not be established according to man's best ideas or sincere intentions. When Cain had the 'good idea' of worshipping God with the fruit of his own efforts and brought cultivated produce as a sacrifice, God did not accept it. The family of Adam knew that blood was required from an unblemished, firstborn animal; only a living offering was to be brought before the Lord. Cain's 'good idea' was wrong. Presumably God had not forbidden the fruit of the ground or Cain would not have been so disobedient, God had simply prescribed an animal sacrifice. Cain added to that instruction and was judged. His good intent was forbidden in worship.

Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron and thus able to minister as genuine priests before the Lord, yet they were not satisfied with God's instructions and had a 'good idea' of their own. They offered 'strange' or 'profane' fire from their censers (Lev 10:1-2; Num 3:4). They brought burning incense to God that had not come from the brazen altar, their offering was not based upon the cross, had not come in virtue of a sacrifice – and so they died. They were true priests coming to worship God, but they were judged because they ignored God's approved method and came with their good idea.

The flesh has lots of good ideas; 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions' (late 16<sup>th</sup> century proverb). We cannot presume to worship God with methods that he has not prescribed. We can only worship and conduct our meetings in the way that God has shown us, even so there is sufficient room for diversity, but within certain parameters.

We are called to encourage one another with readings, exhortations, admonishments, teaching, prophecies and songs. There is plenty of room for variety within those parameters. However, despite the apostles being very

familiar with some 'modern' techniques, like drama or acted out presentations, they never encourage us to utilise such things – even in places where they were commonplace (like Corinth). We cannot introduce good ideas into corporate worship which have no Biblical sanction.

This means that the idea of devoting the Christian gathering into an entertaining seeker service, a meeting which has almost none of the Biblical components, is completely unacceptable. In any case, the focus of coming together is to glorify Christ and edify one another. How can we possibly think that ignoring these and focusing upon the unsaved is honouring to God? Thankfully, after years of seeing such services in the States, the results show that, while meetings can grow in numbers, genuine converts are the exception and the true church does not grow.

So, activities in corporate worship must comply with Biblical norms; but what about modern tools? Can we use items which were unknown to the apostles?

The principles, commands and restrictions laid down in the New Testament cover all eventualities. We must never introduce something which destroys decency and good order for instance. Practices which result in chaos (e.g. everyone falling down, chairs sprawled all over the place, people screaming etc. are not decent or in good order and must be shunned. Yet some modern facilities can facilitate good order.

Multiple chairs were probably never used in early church gatherings – where people often met in courtyards, upper rooms or in catacombs. Obviously, chairs facilitate good order in modern rooms. Early Christians had no hymn books, overhead projectors or even Bibles as we have them today, yet all of these assist the process of edification. Tape ministry may help the sick who cannot attend and PA systems with hearing aid loops help the infirm to be edified.

However, some modern trends work against Biblical principles. Excessively amplified music, and especially drums, actively work against the principle of the human voice being the key instrument in praise and even lead to the concept of entertainment from the front – a concept directly opposed to edification. Light shows, multi-media events, artistic trappings (e.g. symbolic paintings and posters), flag waving and such like all divert attention from the process of edification. They are distractions from hearing God. Christian worship must be simple, based upon the Spirit and truth. Just as the Reformers and the Puritans opposed stain glass windows, decorated altars awesome naves, musical pomp and circumstance, incense burning and candles, so we should avoid anything which works against the edification of others and simple praise to God. Good ideas which distract us are to be withstood.

It may be helpful to see some comments regarding the regulative principle throughout history.

## **Historical Statements Regarding The Regulative Principle**

### **The Reformation era**

*Whatever is not commanded, we are not free to choose. ... It is not for us to invent what to us seems good, to follow what may have been devised in the brains of other men, but to confine ourselves simply to the purity of scripture.*

John Calvin; Tracts & Treatises on the Doctrine & Worship of the Church, Vol. 2, p118, p147.

*[Paul] condemns ... all self-made religion, that is, all feigned worship, which men have devised for themselves or received from others, and all precepts they of themselves dare promulgate concerning the worship of God.*

John Calvin; Institutes, IV.10.8

*God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word. ... The words of God are clear and distinct, 'Obedience is better than sacrifice' (1 Sam 15:22; Matt 15:9). Every addition to his word, especially in this matter, is a lie. Mere 'will worship' is vanity.*

John Calvin, (tract) On the Necessity of Reforming the Church (1544).

*All worshipping, honouring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment is idolatry.*

John Knox, (1550), Selected Writings, Vol. 1, p23.

*We owe such respect and reverence to the word of God as shall prevent us from adding to it anything of our own, but shall make us conform entirely to the rules it prescribes.*

Preface to the French Confession of 1559.

*God will not be honoured according to man's fantasy, but detests all good intentions which are not grounded on his word.*

Geneva Bible, (1560), note on Matt 15:9.

*[We must not] worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word.*

Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Question 96.

### **The Puritan era**

*The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.*

The Westminster Confession of Faith, I.6 (1647)

*The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.*

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 21.1

Common sense regarding matters not specifically identified in Scripture:

*There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.*

The Westminster Confession of Faith, I.6

*[Elders] ought to studiously take care, that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore, we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God.*

Belgic Confession, Article 32, (1619)

Statements like these have been affirmed by theologians and preachers throughout the centuries .

So, the sound regulative principle insists that only what is scriptural is valid in church services. But what about Old Testament practices? These are scriptural! To evaluate this question, we must also have a sound hermeneutical (rule of interpretation) basis.

# The Apostolic Interpretation Of The Old Testament

## With a focus upon the use of music in church

What is our hermeneutical basis? <sup>6</sup> This is absolutely crucial. It will answer the question: *to what degree does Old Testament practice set a precedent for today?*

That OT practices are not continued in the NT is very clear: we do not sacrifice rams, do not wage war for God, do not require a temple, have no priesthood and so on. Furthermore, the NT very clearly spells out that the old covenant was a time of shadows which was not the final reality (Heb 8:5, 10:1); the Jewish ritual, which includes the physical expressions common in modern worship, was temporary and fleshly. The old covenant has been cancelled, abolished and this includes all its liturgical (ritual) practices (Heb 7:18, 8:13). Christian worship is now a new and living way (Heb 10:20), we must not follow the carnal practices of an earlier dispensation (arrangement) which have been made obsolete by the cross. We can only endorse those practices which are exemplified or commanded in the NT.

So our way of interpreting old covenant practices in worship is by understanding the new covenant in Christ. Worship is described by him as now being based in Spirit and truth (Jn 4:24), and he is the truth - so worship is centred upon him, apprehended by faith not fleshly works. The Old Covenant external rituals of worship pointed forward to Christ's person and ministry and were fulfilled when he was incarnated. External forms which were to continue (as being fundamental to a relationship with God and not a temporary, symbolical figure - like prayer) are encouraged, demonstrated and taught in the apostolic writings and are thereby sanctioned for our use today. What is not thus endorsed must come under the interdict mentioned in the book of Hebrews: *'In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away'*, (Heb 8:13). We must not practice obsolete, fleshly forms of worship but must worship in Spirit and truth.

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<sup>6</sup> Hermeneutics is the Biblical science of identifying the correct rules to interpret the Bible.

## **A Contrast Between Old Testament First Temple Practice and New Testament Worship**

### **Rightly handling the word of truth**

It is a sound principle of interpretation that the clear must expound the obscure and that later revelation must control earlier revelation. The most important controlling scriptures are those which the Lord Jesus gave us (the Gospels) and those which he passed on through his apostles (the letters). These inspired men gave us the final words of the ascended Jesus, words sent from heaven by his Spirit who would lead the disciples into all truth. The apostolic letters are crucially important in determining the final scope of Biblical doctrine.

This means that we must be very careful in determining paradigms from Old Testament patterns and practice. It does not mean that the OT has no value, it is very important and some doctrines are wonderfully explained by old covenant rituals (such as atonement). Furthermore, the OT establishes many great principles which follow through into the NT (like covenant, God's requirement of holiness in his people); such principles are eternal. Some doctrines, however, are much more obscure before the cross (like the Trinity or the indwelling Spirit in believers).

In the case of worship, the OT defines many important principles, even from the first mention of the word with Abraham's sacrifice (Gen 22:5, see Appendix Two); but when we come to old covenant rituals for worship, it is clear that much has changed. The problem is – how much has changed?

### **Changes made in the New Covenant**

The book of Hebrews, and to a lesser degree the books of Galatians and Colossians, explain that the way a believer worships God has been dramatically changed by the cross, resurrection and ascension of Christ and by the outpoured Holy Spirit. Since OT saints did not have the Spirit indwelling and empowering them as we do (Jn 7:38-39), since the Spirit had not been poured out in a baptism upon the church, much of their practice was symbolic, typical, a foreshadowing of what was to come. Their worship was, of necessity, external and not efficacious. They testified, by their offerings, that they had faith in God's provision of deliverance, but the blood of bulls and goats did not actually change their consciences (Heb 9:9, 14, 7:19). They did not come into the full benefit of the cross since Jesus had not yet come.

The writer to the Hebrews outlines this argument at length and clearly states, several times in various ways, that the entire Levitical system of worship has been cancelled (Heb 7:18, 22, 8:7-8; 10:9, 12:24 etc.). The Levitical ritual was a shadow, not the real thing – which is Christ (Heb 8:5, 10:1; Col 2:17); the tabernacle and temple was a copy not the spiritual reality (Heb 9:23).

This means that the components of Levitical worship pointed to heavenly realities but were not the final expression of these because Christ's atonement had not yet occurred. When it comes to the obvious elements, all Christians are in basic agreement. As stated before, we no longer sacrifice bulls, goats and sheep as this would be a blasphemy against the cross of Christ. Yet with most of the other constituent parts of the temple system, many churches incorporate old covenant elements without thought or fear. For instance: Anglican churches ordain priests – directly contradicting the Biblical doctrine that there is no human mediator between God and men anymore since we are all priests in Christ (1 Tim 2:5; 1 Pt 2:5,9). These priests have vestments which mimic the garments of the High Priest, but with less colour. Many churches build premises to hold church services in which they call: 'temples', 'sanctuaries', 'the house of God' or 'the church'. Not only does this deny that the church is a group of people, that believers are God's temple, that God's sanctuary on earth is in the hearts of believers, but God actually states that he does not live in buildings made by hands anymore (Acts 7:48, 17:24). In fact, God condemns religious people who do such things as: *'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit'* (Acts 7:51).

### **What about musical instruments?**

Now many evangelicals may agree with all this (yet defending their buildings on the basis of pragmatism); they deny the value of human priests, vestments, altars, incense, bells, trumpets, religious objects and so on, but then erect a worship liturgy on the basis of an old covenant choir, worship leader and orchestra. Is this acceptable?

Firstly, Jesus gave no command to use music in worship and attended the synagogue which had no instrumental music. Secondly, we have to see if the apostles sanction the use of music in their directions to the church – answer, no they don't. They never give instructions on the use of musical instruments in church worship. Thirdly, does any NT church model the use of music – answer, not one. There is no record of any NT church using music. Fourthly, is the word 'worship' or the word 'praise' used in direct connection with church worship on the earth today – answer, no there is no such connection.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> There is perhaps one reference in connection with heavenly worship of saints in Revelation (5:8, 14:2, 15:2), but even that, being symbolical, is most likely referring to something else, not music in earthly terms. The harps are sometimes mentioned in connection with the golden bowls - which are specifically stated to be the prayers of the saints; the bowls are a picture, they don't really have bowls in heaven. Taken together, the harps seem to be the songs of the saints poured out in worship thus making heavenly music – the vibration of heart strings. The harps are not described as making music, but only vocal expression is referred to, they have harps but they sing a song. The important feature is that redeemed saints sing to God, they have a heavenly harp, a new song. This is in contradistinction to angels who never sing praise, they only say it. This is because angels are not

Finally, the early church did not use musical instruments for over 200 years (some would say 1,200 years). It was only as pagan ideas began to seriously infiltrate the church that some assemblies began to use music to support worship; and even then it was condemned by church fathers, like Chrysostom, as being fleshly. Instrumental music was formally introduced into Roman church services by Pope Vitelian in 671 AD.

What scripture does emphasise is the importance of vocal contributions in worship. The church is called together to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pt 2:5) and these are specifically stated to be the fruit of the lips giving thanks (Heb 13:15). Worship is something done in and by saints as a result of a consecrated life yielded in service to God as a sacrifice (Rm 12:1). Praise is the outward testimony of our lives to demonstrate the goodness of God (Eph 1:6,12; Phil 1:11). Both can include sung, vocal contributions.

The new nature of believers, the expression of a new heart, is manifested in a new song unto God. This is acceptable worship since it is inspired by the Spirit and returns to God. The expression of the flesh (clever human ideas, will-worship, uncontrolled emotionalism) are not acceptable to God. The cleverness of musical skill, the emotional intensity of certain types of music, and the sheer force of loud noise works against Christian worship, as does anything which excites the soul. The flesh is not to be brought into the service of the church.

### **Music in the Old Covenant**

It is an important NT principle that God is not worshipped by the actions of men's hands (Acts 17:25). In the Old covenant some men were gifted by the Spirit to perform artistic works and craftsmanship in order to build items used in worship. This is no longer the case since worship is now done in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24). There is no need for any artistry – worship is spiritual. Artistry includes music.

Music was used in the temple services at the morning and evening offerings, but music was never used in weekly synagogue worship. This was where the main life of the worshipper was conducted, even before the exile to Babylon (Ps 74:8) and was where Levites were despatched to hold teaching services (Num 35:1-7; Jos 21). Music also had no place in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, God's original pattern for public worship.<sup>8</sup> After God allowed Israel to have a king like the nations, he allowed them to have a temple like the nations, but his original purpose was different. Tribes distant from Jerusalem only came to the temple for the three great feasts, the normal life of

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redeemed, they do not sing of redemption, they speak of it as having been experienced by others. Angels thus have no harps.

<sup>8</sup> Apart from the silver trumpets (shofar) to proclaim new year, Sabbath days etc.

the worshipper was in the local synagogue. Thus, temple worship with its music was exceptional, not the norm for most worshippers.

The old covenant, therefore, had two forms of worship as theologian RL Dabney has pointed out:

*‘God set up in the Hebrew church two distinct forms of worship:*

- *the one moral, didactic, spiritual and universal, and therefore perpetual in all places and ages – that of the synagogues;*
- *the other peculiar, local, typical, foreshadowing in outward forms the more spiritual dispensation, and therefore destined to be utterly abrogated by Christ’s coming.*

*Now we find instrumental music, like human priests and their vestments, show-bread, incense, and bloody sacrifice, absolutely limited to this local and temporary worship. But the Christian churches were modelled upon the synagogues and inherited their form of government and worship because it was permanently didactic, moral and spiritual, and included nothing typical.’<sup>9</sup>*

John L. Girardeau’s case is summed up thus:

*‘Instrumental music ... was permissible ... only when God commanded it ... in connection with the typical and temporary services of the temple. He did not command it to be used in the ordinary Sabbath worship of the synagogue, and accordingly it was not employed in that institute ... God did not command it to be introduced into the Christian church, and in conformity with his will it was not employed in the apostolic or the early church. It was not known in the church for centuries. It was ... a late importation into its services – an importation effected without divine authorisation, and therefore in the face of the divine will. If our exposition of the second commandment is valid ... we violate that commandment when we employ instrumental music in public worship, because we devise, counsel, command, use and approve a mode of “religious worship not instituted by God himself.”’<sup>10</sup>*

## **Temple music**

Even in the temple, there were restrictions on the use of musical instruments. Peter Masters explains<sup>11</sup> that the Jews commonly used nine types of musical instrument in social settings, but of these, only four were prescribed for use in worship – psaltery (a kind of lyre or harp with twelve strings), harp, cymbals and trumpet. These could only be played in services by Levites or priests, and even then only at certain times. God was clearly commanding restraint in their use. While the choir sang, these instruments were used to heighten

<sup>9</sup> R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau’s *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.

<sup>10</sup> Girardeau, p117-118.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Peter Masters, *Sword & Trowel*, 2001:2, p22-23.

emotional effect during the burnt offering to draw attention to the blood sacrifice. When the offering was destroyed the instruments stopped playing but the people continued worshipping.

For private worship outside the temple, only harps and psalteries are prescribed. Six Psalms point to other instruments but these were used for open-air civic celebrations, for instance to praise God for victory in war. Such are exceptions and included tambourines played by little girls leading the victory procession. As a theocracy, the nation state had greater latitude for civic celebrations than in temple worship.

Psalm 150 mentions two proscribed instruments (tambourines and flutes) apparently sanctioned for use in worship; but this cannot contradict earlier scripture (re-affirmed by Ezra and Nehemiah). Verse one explains that the setting is under the firmament –i.e. in the open air; the sanctuary in view is not the temple but the firmament, the atmosphere. This is a civic meeting for a thanksgiving service for the nation – as such there is more latitude for music. Appealing to Ps 150 as a basis for the use of orchestras and bands today not only destroys proper Biblical rules of interpreting the OT, but also contradicts the rules for worship established by David for use in the old covenant.

### **Music as a type or symbol**

Music bears the same relation to praise as incense does to prayer, the one accompanied the other in temple services (1 Chron 23:5 with 13). Incense pictured the rising up of prayers to God (Ps 141:2; Lk 1:10; Rev 5:8, 8:3,4), while music spoke of the sounding forth of God's testimony. Saints under the old covenant needed the encouragement of the figures (symbols) as they did not have the fulness of the Spirit or the full benefits of the cross. We no longer need these external figures as we have the Spirit indwelling us. Instrumental music and incense were superseded by the sacrifice of Christ.

### **Lifeless instruments**

A noteworthy feature of apostolic thought is that musical instruments have no life of their own (1 Cor 14:7) and thus have no place in being offered to God in worship. Worship is done in Spirit and truth, in life; it's something from the heart, the offering of spiritual sacrifice. The use of instruments is spiritually dead. At the very best it is spiritually neutral. Appropriate music may help the mind consider the impact of the words, but we do not worship through the music; we worship by the Spirit not by music. If we have the Spirit, we need no music.

Music is also associated with merry-making, partying, revlry, carousing (Isa 24:8), it always was and still is today. It is not appropriate to bring the components of human partying into the worship of God's people. The things

which stimulate the flesh to party, should not be attempted to inspire the heart to spiritual worship. The music of partying is also connected to harlotry (Isa 23:16) and is thus entirely inappropriate to church life.

A further note should be mentioned in connection with the modern practice of using pre-recorded music as a backing sound for corporate praise. Very often this is done in house-groups where there is no musician, but some churches use this method, at least on occasion.

If the use of multiple musical instruments is to be avoided because these have no life of their own to offer in praise, and are also never encouraged in scripture, going one step back and using a past recording of instruments is even less helpful. They are dead works, done previously, probably by unbelievers. [Even 'Christian' praise recordings are frequently performed by secular session musicians.]

Modern Christians must start to realise that worship does not primarily consist in singing songs. Worship is also not enhanced by singing songs to impressive, emotional, instrumental performances – indeed stirring music may detract from true worship. The notion of playing one track of a compact disc for singing along to, stopping the 'worship' to take the CD out and put another one in as quick as possible (or praying over the changeover) is as far removed from being submissive to the Spirit, and sharing as he prompts individuals, as can possibly be. It is far more closely related to a karaoke night in a pub than a Biblical worship service.

The whole point of worship is to listen to God and be moved by him, responding from our hearts in a way that is real and immediate. To erect scaffolding of technology in worship, consisting of 'dead' music, only distances us from relating to God. Any emotional feelings generated by the power of recorded performances, especially previous worship events, are merely soulish and of no spiritual value.

### **The power of music in mysticism**

Intense music has always been a feature of pagan idolatrous worship (Dan 3:15) and is singled out as being an aspect of Babylon fit for judgment (Rev 18:22). We should understand that music has not merely been a feature of demonic religious faith, but has always been an integral and vital element in generating a false sense of spirituality. Remember that scripture implies strongly that Satan was skilled in music (Ezek 28:13).

False religions seek to appease an angry God, or commune with God to secure blessing for a material reason – like improving the fertility of crops (e.g. Baalism). Since sinners have no mechanism to commune with God (they are dead in sins – Eph 2:1), the basis of occultism since time immemorial has

been to either excite the flesh or quiet the flesh in an appearance of spirituality. Methods are found to stimulate the flesh to ecstasy: loud, frenzied, rhythmic music; wild dancing; whirling; jumping; screaming; stimulating drugs etc.; or to impose a numbing of the senses inducing passivity: quiet reflective music, meditation, staring at mandalas, standing or sitting for long periods, folding back the eyelids, reciting mantras or repeating choruses, using relaxing drugs etc. Often both features are used, i.e. following a frenzied dance by passivity.

It is at this point that the ‘worshipper’ achieves a felt communion with the spirit world because he has lost all sense of self; he has entered an altered state of consciousness, ‘lost in God’. It is in this vulnerable state of having no self-control that demonic forces can invade a willing compliant seeker and impose their will. To help the deception they will often impart some kind of ‘religious’ experience: a vision, a revelation, a feeling of ecstasy, a satisfied settled state, an apparent miracle etc. The experience is often passed on from an adept (master) to a novice (disciple) by the laying on of hands.<sup>12</sup>

This process of engendering of passivity is the basis of occultism and is thus the foundation of all mystical religions, whether they are modern New Age ideas or ancient Gnosticism and Hinduism. Music is almost always a vital component part in this process, both in stimulating frenzy and inculcating passivity because music is a very powerful tool to touch the heart of man directly.

Now it can be observed that the process described above has become very popular in evangelical Charismatic type meetings over the last twenty years. There is now very little discernible difference between occult rituals, mystical rites or oriental religious services and modern Charismaticism. This can be clearly seen when one compares a video of a Toronto / Pensacola type meeting with a Wicca Green Man ceremony or a Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh Sanyassin retreat.

### **Biblical worship and music**

On the other hand, churches which have upheld a Biblical view of worship have always reduced the possibility of passivity or frenzy by sober use of music or using no music at all. It is clear that losing self-control is unbiblical, as the Spirit always increases self-control in his ministry – it is one of his

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<sup>12</sup> Though common in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles since the Latter Rain heresy of the late 1940’s, the impartation of gifts or power by the laying on of hands was rare in the Christian church and isolated to fringe groups for hundreds of years. In occultic religions, however, it was common and came to wider Western attention from the 1960’s onwards, especially through the ‘ministry’ of Hindu extremists Guru Maharaj Ji and Shri Bhagwan Rajneesh, who were well able to impart powerful mystical experiences to converts by the laying on of hands. The results were clearly demonic as seen in the loss of will-power, glazed expressions, submission to the will of their masters etc. The methods of hypnotist entertainers are very similar.

fruits. It is also wrong to allow meetings to fall into chaos since the apostolic command is to always do things decently and in order. This means that the sensibilities of the local culture must be borne in mind. We do not provoke our neighbours to consider us mad and lawless, but manifest a testimony of grace, peace and good order.

Now many good men have felt that no music at all is allowed since there is no mention of it in the NT. This is still the position of the traditional, strict Presbyterian churches, some strict Baptists and older Brethren groups. The Reformers, for instance, did not condone the use of music, condemning organs and instrumental music as: *'the ensigns of Baal'* (Luther), *'ludicrous things, by which the word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned'* (Calvin), *'artificial musical performances which are addressed to the ear alone'* (Beza). The basis of their sung worship was Biblical Psalms sung *a cappella*, although Luther wrote his own hymns as well. Many other good men introduced hymns and only gradually did the use of some musical support become popular.

Often local rural churches had no means of accompanying the songs anyway. Not until the development of the piano could congregational singing be adequately accompanied by a cheap popular instrument, and this was not invented until 1710. Before this, only large, rich, institutional churches could afford to build pipe organs, although some institutional churches probably had foot-pedal wind organs. Smaller 'portative' organs were known as far back as the Middle Ages, although music for them has not been discovered dating before the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Although guitars, lutes, harps, kitharas and similar stringed instruments seem to be a simple natural choice for small group accompaniment, I am not aware of their widespread use in churches until modern times.

### **The human voice**

Singing is music which is produced from the spirit/soul without any mechanical aid. The voice expresses what is in the heart through the use of words that reveal mental ideas. Singing adds artistry to the expression of those ideas and thus is the purest form of artistry and self-expression. Singing is communication of thoughts mixed with emotional colour from the heart.

Like rational speech, singing is of divine origin whereas instrumental music stems from an invention of fallen man. All three members of the Godhead sing. The Father sings over his people (Zeph 3:17); the Son sang with his disciples (Matt 26:30) and also sings with his people (Heb 2:12); the Holy Spirit sings within the hearts of the elect (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).

The most important practical component in corporate worship is the human voice. It is the focus of apostolic direction: *'each one has a psalm, a hymn a*

*spiritual song*, the voice is the essential means of contribution towards edification in the gathered church. Since the key reason for gathering is edification (1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11; Rm 14:19), obviously the voice has a prime role within the assembly, for it is by the voice that others are edified: *'he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church ... I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching'* (1 Cor 14:3-4,6). Part of praise is the fruit of lips giving thanks. The voice is vital since it is the means of sharing what the Spirit gives us in spirit and truth. This means that the voice is the pre-eminent means of physical expression and nothing must detract from it.<sup>13</sup> This is why Paul condemns too much or unwise tongue speaking, as nothing is being communicated to others. This is also why music is not mentioned – music is a distraction from the human voice in singing. Nothing is purer than an unaccompanied song.

### **Should we never use any form of music then?**

While the arguments against instrumental music are reasonably strong, there is still a measure of uncertainty. The introductions of some Psalms contain instructions regarding accompaniment by certain stringed instruments. If Psalm singing is to be encouraged what about these inspired musical directions? Also some Psalms actually endorse certain instruments in their text. Are these commands merely dispensational and not for all time? Then again the root of the word 'psalm' means 'to pluck a string', pointing clearly to musical accompaniment.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, music had always been an integral part of family life from patriarchal times onwards (Gen 31:27; Job 30:31); consequently, it was natural for Israelites to celebrate victories with musical praise to God (Exod 15:20), although musical accompaniment here is admittedly negligible.

The people addressed by Paul in Corinth, like all ancient nations and some modern ethnic peoples, were used to communal singing. It was part and parcel of their culture. They would have been able to simply sing praises and

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<sup>13</sup> Since the voice is the expression of the Spirit through our new nature, it follows that the artistic written words of others are rarely suitable for sharing as edification (poems, plays, stories, books etc.). They have arisen from someone's thoughtful creative imagination (soul) rather than being inspired by the Spirit's direction to give an encouraging word based upon life or the scriptures.

<sup>14</sup> Eph 5:19 uses the Greek verb *ψαλλω* (*psallo*, Strong's number 5567), translated as 'making melody' here but elsewhere as 'to sing' (three times) or to 'sing psalms' (once). The word is probably strengthened from *ψαω* which means: 'to rub or touch the surface'. The word means: 1) to pluck, to pull; 2) to cause strings to vibrate by touching, to twang, to strike a chord, to play a stringed instrument; 3) to sing to the music of the harp; 4) in the NT to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song. Debate has raged for centuries as to whether Paul uses this word to imply that instruments are intended. There is no doubt that the primary meaning of the word is 'to pluck a string', but the main use in the NT is clearly 'to sing'.

join in with no difficulty; just as the tribes of Israel went up to Jerusalem singing as they went without music (you can't even play a small harp as you wind your way up hill and down dale with a pack on your back). Western cultures have lost this ability with their over-dependence upon technology and passive enjoyment of entertainment. Before television, even in the 1950's, most UK families would have owned pianos and would have been familiar with community sing-alongs. Sadly, this has been lost.

This means that in order to have any sensible singing at all, modern churches must have some sort of simple, basic musical accompaniment to assist and support corporate singing. Hopefully, as a congregation learns to develop in the use of song, they could gradually be weaned off any musical support and learn the benefit and beauty of the human voice alone.

Speaking as a musician, I believe that all that is required is a guitar or a piano or perhaps both as they complement one another. Guitars are best fitted for choruses, psalms set to modern music and short songs (odes). Indeed, the church father Basil the Great preferred the use of the psalter (lyre, precursor of guitar) above all other instruments for accompanying Psalm singing. Pianos are much more suited for accompanying hymns and more complex songs. Unless there is great need at a larger gathering, there isn't really any necessity for amplification, certainly not for a decent piano. But all necessary amplification must be kept to a minimum. The music must never drown the voice. People must be edified by hearing the vocal contributions of their neighbours. We must also learn how to teach one another in song, challenge one another in song, exhort one another in song (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). We have little idea just what this means because we have become inactive audiences being entertained rather than active participants in edifying worship.

Above all we must vigorously avoid the Charismatic notion that worship is the mystical ascent up a ladder of musical entertainment. The idea that worship begins with loud, vibrant, exuberant songs repeated and strung together without pause, intense musical activity to overwhelm the senses, followed by reflective, quiet superficial songs leading to an increasing sense of passivity and suggestibility – is unbiblical and pagan.

### **Prophetic music?**

The Charismatic Movement imported many errors into church worship, but one of the more zany was the idea that music itself, played by a 'Spirit-filled' musician, could be a prophetic act and could impart revelation or minister in some way. Perhaps Peter Lyne, with Dave and Dale Garrett, was the first to suggest such ideas in the mid 1980's. This was part and parcel of the focus upon instrumental music away from the word of God.

The idea arises from a misunderstanding of 1 Chron 25:1-3:

*Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the skilled men performing their service was: Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied according to the order of the king. Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp to give thanks and to praise the LORD.*

The first thing we have to notice is that these singing Levites prophesied with instruments not prophesied on instruments. The act of playing a harp or cymbal was not prophetic. These men were to proclaim the glory of the Lord in singing and such an act was considered a prophetic work, an act of declaration, a proclamation or preaching of God's glory in song. 1 Chron 15:17-19 explains that they ministered as singers first and musicians second 'the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were to sound the cymbals of bronze'.

These men are designated as singers (2 Chron 5:12) musicians (1 Chron 16:5) and prophets (2 Chron 29:30; 35:15). Their function in the temple was to sing the praises of God and give thanks. This was a prophetic task which they undertook whilst playing instruments:

*and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud (2 Chron 5:12-13)*

Their prophetic function was to do with what they said, not what they played. There is no injunction for us to endeavour to raise emotional fervour in people by using music and then consider this a prophetic activity. In fact, this is exactly what occult religions do.

## **Conclusion**

Worship is obeisance to the king, the yielded obedience, the sacrificial presentation of one's life to God's service, an inner consecration and submission. It is something done throughout one's days and has nothing primarily to do with music or even singing at all. Jacob worshipped leaning on his staff (or the bed-head, the original Hebrew OT word means either) at

home (Heb 11:21). We can (and should) worship as part of our normal family life.

Worship is actually stated to be logical, the very opposite of modern passivity and being 'lost in God'. The 'reasonable service' of Rm 12:1 means 'rational worship'. It is intelligent service to God by the sacrifice of our lives. Praise is the outward testimony of our lives in honour of God, spiritual sacrifices, (Eph 1:12; Phil 1:11) and this can be by doing good works (Heb 13:16; Phil 4:18), speaking praise or by singing (Heb 13:15).

We can see that there are major differences between the worship system of the temple and the New Testament gathered church. It is wrong to try to take parts of the old covenant system which are attractive (e.g. worship leaders, orchestras, choirs) and impose them on saints today, especially if they detract from encouraging mutual edification. If someone helps the church to sing effectively as a facilitator at the front, his role must be understated, supportive and modest. His role is to encourage others to edify and for all to sing with thanksgiving. Church worship must be kept simple and vocal.

## Postscript: The Tabernacle of David

Modern Charismatics have sought to make much of an OT phrase in order to justify the establishment of orchestras, bands, ‘prophetic’ activity in songs and instruments, authoritarian full-time worship leaders, emotionalism, dancing, the domination of worship by music, proliferation of musical solos and so on. They have been encouraged in this by a book called *The Tabernacle of David*, which emerged from prevalent ideas in the heretical Latter Rain movement in Canadian and American churches in the 1940’s. This movement fed the development of the strident Restoration churches in the UK during the 1980’s – albeit undercover. As the Restoration churches grew, the Pentecostal movement and many ‘Renewal’ institutional churches copied their worship style because it attracted new members (usually from other churches, rarely new converts).

Influential worship leaders, like David Fellingham, and Pentecostal writers, like Kevin Conner, lifted the Latter Rain ideas and taught them as revealed truth in churches and worship seminars.<sup>15</sup> The basic notion is that David established a complex musical life in the Temple worship. This much is true. Later in Israel’s declension, Amos prophesies that the tabernacle of David would be restored, which they interpret as happening within the Charismatic / Pentecostal Movements today.

*On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old. (Amos 9:11).*

Actually, Isaiah had made a similar prophecy which Charismatics usually ignore because it mentions a throne being set up in this tabernacle:

*In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness. (Isa 16:5).*

The reason is apparent, both Amos and Isaiah are talking about the dynasty of David, the covenant promise made to the ruling heir of David – the Lord Jesus Christ. The tabernacle of David is his house, his dynasty; ‘tent’ or ‘booth’ being used instead of ‘house’ since the dynasty had fallen on hard times; the lineage was debased. The corruption of Israel’s kings would lead to judgment, but a remnant of the nation would survive and would eventually be ruled once more by a king after David’s heart and of his family. The covenant promise would not be broken; God will have a new king, more magnificent than David, who will rule over a great house. With this, the prophets encouraged the suffering faithful Israelites. The tabernacle of David has

<sup>15</sup> See David Fellingham, *Worship Restored*, Kingsway, Eastbourne (1987) p43ff, where the subject is treated with no mention of its original source in Latter Rain apostasy. Kevin J Conner, *The Tabernacle of David*, Bible Temple-Conner Pub. Oregon (1976).

nothing to do with worship. In Acts 15:16 James refers to the words of Amos and applies them to the church, the gathered family of the great king, 'a people for his name' (Acts 15:14).

The temple services which David established were never attributed to him and were never called a tabernacle. When the Ark was returned to Jerusalem after being captured by the Philistines, it was temporarily set up in a tabernacle which David had erected (2 Sam 6:17; 1 Chron 16:1). But even this is never called 'the tabernacle of David'. This temporary situation remained for thirty years until David died when the temple could be built by a man of peace.

A flimsy case is also made that - since the tabernacle of Moses was left at Gibeon, and the Ark in the temporary structure in Jerusalem, these represented the contrast of law (blood offerings at Gibeon) and new covenant grace (singing of priests in Jerusalem). The tabernacle of David thus pictures *'freedom of approach to God without the ritual of blood sacrifice ...the spiritual life of the nation became focused upon David's Tabernacle. Instead of the sacrificial ritual of the Tabernacle of Moses, there was free access into the Holy of Holies, the ark being on view for all to see. This was a tabernacle of grace prefiguring the new covenant... The main characteristic of this tabernacle was that it was surrounded by joyful worship with a great release of prophesying with musical instruments.'*<sup>16</sup>

Does anyone really think that for one minute God transferred the attention of his people from the cross (the blood sacrifice) to self-serving subjective joy? To draw out a supposed new covenant principle from a temporary structure, which scripture says very little about, is extremely bad Biblical interpretation. The scriptural types relative to worship are the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon. These alone have apostolic sanction; these alone followed a divine pattern of instruction in the OT.

Further, this exposition is flawed on several counts. The ark was never on public view; if any man saw it he suffered immediate death, even for the High Priest outside one day a year (Lev 16:2). The ark was completely obscured by its travelling coverings, principally the veil curtain (Num 4:5-6; 1 Chron 17:1). The Holy of Holies was never entered freely, either in the tabernacle of Moses or the temple. There was no access into the sanctuary until Calvary when the curtain was torn down. In any case, the tabernacle at Jerusalem was a temporary tent for the ark, it had no Holy of Holies for there was no Holy Place containing: the table, incense altar or lamp-stands. These were at Gibeon.

Besides, there was music at both tabernacles, the worship of Israel being split:

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<sup>16</sup> Fellingham, op. Cit. p45. For similar ideas see Conner, p230ff.

- at Jerusalem: Asaph and his brothers officiated as singers; Obed-Edom and Chosah served as door-keepers; Benaiah and Jehaziel blew the trumpets.
- At Gibeon: Heman and Jeduthun sang and presided over the sacred music, the sons of Jeduthun were door-keepers; Zadok and priests offered the sacrifices.

Immediately after explaining this in 1 Chronicles 16:37-42, God introduces the new concept of a temple building in chapter 17, emphasising the temporary and exceptional nature of this split worship and leading our thoughts to the future temple. To draw any paradigms from this is extreme folly. Israel's worship was still centred on blood sacrifice, celebrated daily with singing.

Scripture says very little about this time when the worship was split and pushes our attention on to the temple built by Solomon. There is no encouragement to dwell on this, no comment on it in the apostolic letters and insufficient information to claim anything more solid than speculation. Despite this, Charismatics base most of their apologetics for prophetic exuberant worship on this idea.

So when Kevin Conner lists 16 contrasts between the two tabernacles, claims that understanding these are the key to understanding the book of Hebrews and claims for David's tabernacle all kinds of new covenant realities, he is completely confused. Not only does he suppose many things which are never stated in scripture<sup>17</sup> but he fails to understand that the Divine programme is focused upon the temple superseding the Mosaic Tabernacle, and the Messiah abrogating both in the establishment of a spiritual kingdom.

Thus it can be seen that there are no grounds whatsoever for suggesting that there is a latter day application of the exuberance found in OT temple emotionalism founded upon a concept of 'the Tabernacle of David'.

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<sup>17</sup> Conner wildly claims, for instance, that David's tabernacle had no veil, had a Melchizedek priesthood, had access for Gentiles, and was built on 'Davidic' law not Mosaic. He also claims that Hebrews is '*summarised as being a contrast and comparison of the two tabernacles*' (p230) failing to see that Hebrews is about the superseding of the new covenant in Christ over the old Mosaic covenant. The 'tabernacle of David' is never mentioned.

## Contrasts Between OT and NT Worship

Old Testament	New Testament
Worshipper couldn't approach God	Worshipper exhorted to approach God
External, formal, highly organised	Spiritual, informal, organic
Sacrifice of animals	Sacrifice of praise
Blood of offering is external and material	Christ's blood is in the heavenlies but the value of it is applied to the worshipper
Involves objective, physical death (of many animals) performed continually	Based on one death (Christ on the cross)
Worshipper does not die	Worshipper has died with Christ
Conscience not cleansed	Cleansed conscience required before one can worship
Mediating priests	No mediator except Christ
Priestly garments	No priestly garments
Temple made of stone	No temple made with hands
Bronze altar for offerings	No altar (the cross was the only altar)
Golden altar for incense	Incense is the prayer of saints
Choirs prominent	No mention of choirs
Musical directors	No worship leader of any kind
Orchestra	No musical instruments
Fixed times and seasons	No feast days
Sabbath	Sunday (the day of Christ's resurrection)
Celebrations	No celebrations
Large gatherings	No large gatherings
Non contributory – men watch a spectacle	Meetings are totally contributory. All things must be done for edification (1 Cor 14:26)
Prominence of leaders at the front	No one at the front
Emphasis upon leadership authority	Emphasis upon each being a servant of the other, mutual edification
Share in sacrificed animal	Share in Lord's Supper
Covenant for Jews and proselytes only	Gospel open to all who would come
Complex rituals and ceremonies	Very simple
Certain towns and places for worship	Houses for corporate worship
Affects the senses: sights, smells, sounds	Affects the spirit – done in spirit and truth
Tithes go to Levites and priests	Gifts given as each has purposed under God

# Emotional Responses and Physical Postures in Worship

The last thing God wants is cold, lifeless, formal worship in church services. Believers are meeting together with God, at his command, to hear from him and give glory to him; stultified institutionalism is not Biblical. However, having said that, to what degree can we express our gratitude in praise? Are the Charismatics and Pentecostalists right to endorse: clapping, dancing, shouting, prostration, jumping, raised hands, and so on? We must fairly examine this question. I do not intend to concentrate discussion on things considered as excessive by a broad spectrum of Christians viz.: falling over, roaring, crowing, barking, pogoing etc., but only what could be considered as more moderate and day to day bodily expressions.

## Features of physical worship seen in Old Testament ritual

- *Standing* (1 Kg 8:14-15; 22:19; 1 Sam 19:20)
- *Kneeling* (Ps 95:6)
- *Bowing* (Ps 95:6, Ex 12:27)
- *Raising hands* (Ps 63:4, 134:2)
- *Prostration* (Rev 1:17, 2 Chron 20:18)
- *Singing* (Ps 149:1, Eph 5:19)
- *Praying* (1 Cor 14:14)
- *Speaking* (Eph 5:19; 1 Cor 14)
- *Clapping* (Ps 47:1, 2 Kg 11:12)
- *Dancing* (Ps 149:3, 150:4 – but the word ‘dance’ here may mean a ‘twisting pipe’.)
- *Leaping* (2 Sam 6:16)
- *Crying* (2 Kg 20:5)

## Does the New Testament encourage these emotional or physical activities in worship?

### Standing

*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*  
(Rev 7:9-10)

## **Kneeling**

*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
(Eph 3:14); Only mention.

## **Bowing**

One abstruse mention only in NT church life: again Eph 3:14, but this is bowing of the knees. However, bowing of the head is directly implied in the meaning of the word worship (*proskuneo*).

## **Raising hands**

*I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* (1 Tim 2:8) Only mention.

## **Prostration**

- Repeated references to saints in heaven falling down in worship but always in exceptional circumstances (2 Chron 20:18; Rev 19:4, 11:16, 7:11, 5:8, 14, 1:17).
- Sinners fall (forwards in obeisance) when confronted by God (Acts 9:18, 22:7).
- Repeated instances of people falling at the feet of Jesus (Jn 11:32, Lk 17:16).
- No mention of this in church meetings apart from 1 Cor 14:25 which is a hypothetical situation about a sinner being confronted with his sins before God.

## **Singing**

- Sung praise in everyday language ('with understanding', 1 Cor 14:15).
- Singing in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:15). If this meant ecstatic singing (as many claim) then it must conform to the teaching about tongues. It is more likely improvised sung praise to God (1 Cor 14:2). [See Appendices]
- Singing of Psalms (Jm 5:13).
- Singing of hymns and songs directed to the Lord:  
*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.* (Eph 5:18-19)
- Songs can be used as vehicles for teaching and admonishing and should be sung with grace:  
*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)

## **Praying**

- Prayer in everyday language (1 Cor 14:14-15).

- Prayer in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:15). This is clearly praying in tongues as the immediate context makes clear. This is prayer to God (1 Cor 14:2) not declaratory prayer to demons or anyone else. This also must conform to the general teaching about tongues.

## **Speaking**

Most references about speaking in the NT are in the negative, i.e. warnings not to speak evil. The few texts about speaking in church clearly point to the teaching of the word, e.g.:

*Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord.*  
(Acts 14:3)

The gift of teaching is mentioned on several occasions and is also connected with mutual edification in the body. All occasions of speaking in church should be in grace - speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15)

## **Clapping**

No mention in NT.

## **Dancing**

There is no NT mention connected with church life, but there are two mentions of it in an evil connection (Salome) and one mention in a parable. Dancing to develop an altered state of consciousness is a common feature of occult religions.

## **Jumping and Leaping**

Jumping (e.g. modern pogoing) is never mentioned in connection with worship in scripture (it is virtually never mentioned at all) and leaping is only mentioned in description of David's personal worship on one unusual occasion (2 Sam 6:16). Leaping is referred to in Lk 6:23 as connected with personal joy in the face of persecution. In 1 Kg 18:26 leaping is associated with occult religion and in Acts 19:16 it is connected with demonic activity. So there is no NT precedent to leap in church and every reason to consider it as linked with demonic religion, indeed it is a feature of many cults.

## **Tears**

Tears are often seen as a sign of genuine intense emotion, especially in men who normally repress tears. Scripture shows that God takes notice of them:

*Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you."' (2 Kg 20:5)*

*For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping. The LORD has heard my supplication; The LORD will receive my prayer. (Ps 6:8-9)*

*Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book? (Ps 56:8)*

Many godly OT saints put their case to God with tears (e.g. David, Job) and this was credited to them as establishing a true heart condition.

Jesus also accepted the tears of worshippers:

*She has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.* (Lk 7:36).

He also cried himself when on earth:

*Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death.* (Heb 5:7)

He also proclaimed a blessing on those who weep:

*Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.* (Lk 6:21)

Apostolic ministry can involve tears (Acts 20:19,31; 2 Cor 2:4)

But God also shows us that tears can be faked or issue from an unrighteous heart and are thus unacceptable to him:

*You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.* (Mal 2:13)

Esau sought repentance with tears and was still rejected (Heb 12:17).

Weeping is most in order when the purposes of God are being reproached:

*Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"* (Joel 2:17)

With so many references to crying in scripture (there are many more), despite no direct mention of weeping in worship, it is clear that tears are part of godly living and are most in order at appropriate times in worship if deep emotions are being felt. However, leaders must be on guard against manipulative people (especially preachers) who have learned to use tears in a fleshly way to achieve their ends.

## **Applause**

There is no mention, in either testament, of the modern Charismatic practice of applause, either as a 'clap offering' to God or as a spontaneous reaction to something appreciated. It first emerged in the church in the 4<sup>th</sup> century Antioch church, but even then was widely deprecated. Applause emerged along with other pagan developments after the church was legalised by the emperor Constantine.

## **Worship involving the soul and the human spirit**

I have no desire here to enter into the argument about the separation of the soul and spirit in the nature of man (I have done that elsewhere). Whether we believe that man is tripartite (body/soul/spirit) or only bipartite (soul/spirit) matters little in this connection. All agree that man has the capacities of

emotions, mind, and volition (will) as well as an organ of spirit to commune with God. This being the case, and since God seeks the worship of the whole man, we must give attention to all man's capacities. Every department of man's nature must be active for balanced worship. Regarding what is considered to be pertaining to the soul, we see the need for the following activities:

<i>Emotion</i>	Rejoicing in, delighting in, exulting and desiring God.
<i>Mind</i>	Considering, understanding, knowing God's attributes. Focus upon truth. Choosing what is appropriate. Reasonable worship (Rm 12:1) Avoiding passivity and balancing emotional qualities.
<i>Will</i>	Choosing to praise and worship. Personal discipline. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Refusing to yield up the will to passivity. Self control at all times.

Regarding worship in the spirit, we have an inkling that what is produced in the spirit is deeper than what is produced by the soul. In Luke 1:46-47 Mary describes her worshipful attitude when she met with Elizabeth after she heard the angelic news.

*And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour".*

The original Greek confirms that her spirit had rejoiced before her soul started magnifying God. Something started in the depths of her being, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit in her human spirit, this was then worked out objectively. We need to make no great emphasis upon this, except to note what is already obvious – that which is spiritual is deeper than that which is soulish. What we express by our emotions, volition and mind must arise from a deeper work. This is why true Christian worship is different to that of false religions; it arises from Spirit and truth and is not mere emotionalism, worked up will-power or staid intellectualism.

Spiritual worship is not affected by feelings, either negative or positive, but it does inspire genuine emotions towards God. Old Testament saints sometimes worshipped God after losing a loved one or suffering great tragedy. There was every reason, humanly speaking, not to worship and there was no human joy – yet these saints truly worshipped despite the circumstances and personal pain. This is because spiritual worship is founded upon faith; faith that God exists, cares for us and is worth worshipping whatever befalls us.

In worship like this there is intimate contact with God – heart to heart – and it is an activity of the new nature. Natural man cannot operate on this level. The prime motivation for spiritual worship is our pre-occupation with Jesus. However we feel, whatever the circumstances, he is always worth worshipping

for he gave his life to save us from our sins. Mary's anointing of Jesus (Jn 12) stands for all time as an example for us in worship. Total pre-occupation with the worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever the cost, however embarrassing and whatever criticism we may face as a result.

## **Conclusion**

The NT gives no encouragement at all to any forms of physical expression in worship other than: kneeling, bowing, prostration, singing, speaking (in prayer or edification) and raised hands. Acceptance of anything else has to be on the basis of what forms the regulative principle of the church's approval and what hermeneutic governs the adoption of OT practices. Both the human spirit and the soul must be fully engaged for there to be genuine worship. The Holy Spirit communing with our spirit is the foundation of worship in Spirit and truth.

# Key New Testament Principles Governing Corporate Worship

## **Things must be done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40)**

This is the main practical principle which governs NT worship. Sober rules of propriety fitting to our culture must determine what is acceptable. Under no circumstance should worship cause an offence to decency. This, for instance, will mean that shouting in prayer is indecent. There is no apostolic precedent for this, it is not gracious and can even cause people to fear. There is nothing godly about shouting, but cults and foreign religions frequently use the voice to work up a fever pitch. Prayer can become emotional and pseudo-spiritual by gradually being forced upward in volume by stages. This is a work of the flesh and should be avoided. Vain repetition is forbidden (Matt 6:5) and such repetition frequently is allied to loud prayers.

The simultaneous corporate shouting of prayer by the whole congregation was prevalent in charismatic circles after being popularised in Korea. It was historically experienced in Pentecostal circles and one group (called the 'Shouters') was opposed by many (including Watchman Nee) in China. This fails the test of scripture that prayer should be intelligible (1 Cor 14) or an interpreted tongue. Corporate prayer is pointless if people cannot hear what is being said for shouting. But in addition, this is clearly not decent and in order.

Other current activities which can be opposed on this basis would be: being 'slain in the spirit', marching around the room, screaming, jumping about, wailing, running in circles around the room etc.

On the other hand, some spontaneous movements are within the bounds of common decency and should be allowed. A worshipper overcome with the presence of God may sway in rhythm. A sinner could beat his breast like the publican under conviction of sin. The lame man in the temple leaped and ran after being cured. Wailing might take place at a funeral. A person full of joy may raise their hands in praise to God or shout hallelujah. One or two individuals thus focused upon God constitute no threat to decency if acting modestly.

This is different from corporate action by the whole congregation. Multiple slayings in the spirit are a case in point. Also using dance or drama as a performance or ritual goes beyond the bounds of scripture and good order. The two OT verses which talk of David's dancing are not normative under the hermeneutical principle above. However, this was not even normal in OT

ritual but was an exceptional occasion, the ceremonial laws did not prescribe this activity.

Drama is entertainment and is not designed to impart knowledge, no matter how much Christian apologists for it say that it is. At best, a drama can only impart a very generalised, simple message which can be completely misconstrued. Such 'preaching' is wholly unsuitable for the Gospel. The apostles were completely familiar with the popular Greek dramas of the Hellenistic world but never used such techniques or mentioned them, even when ministering in Greece. Preaching is always about the communication of a series of ideas in a way which people can readily understand - words.

The word '*decently*' means: seemly, decently, properly, respectably or with propriety. This clearly means that local social norms must be considered. When some cults declare that they are more spiritual because they are more unusual and weird, more separate from society around them, they are proclaiming that they are, thereby, unbiblical. Christians are not nutters. They behave reasonably as individuals and respectably when together.

'*In order*' means: 'well regulated conduct', 'good order'; i.e. that meetings should proceed in 'an orderly manner' and further emphasises the sense of decency. The word also carries the sense of 'arrangement' or a logical sequence in a temple meeting [it can even refer to the order, division or ranks of priests in the temple]. This implies that meetings should be led and conducted in a manner which avoids chaos or disruption. Meetings should have a sense of unity, purpose and being led in a certain direction. An uncontrolled free for all has no place in God's church.

So, in conclusion, rather than strange behaviour being seen as an indication of spiritual activity, as often claimed, weird unsettling behaviour is in opposition to the word of God. Christian worship must be conducted decently and orderly.

## **Worship must be done in Spirit and in truth**

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (Jn 4:24)*

*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil 3:3)*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)*

*And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (1 Cor 14:32)*

Surprisingly, the word *worship* is little used in direct connection to prescriptions about how we actually perform it in church services; so these verses are incredibly important in understanding how we worship. What these texts show us is that:

- a) True worship is only done in Christ (who is the truth).
- b) True worship is only performed spiritually.
- c) False worship is fleshly (sensuous, soulish, merely emotional, sinful, merely physical, selfish, proud).
- d) Worship is performed under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, e.g. self control is paramount as a fruit of the Spirit. God never encourages passivity.

Since worship is a spiritual activity and is under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, true worship will manifest the fruit of his work. True worship will be loving, joyful, peaceful, kind, gentle etc. True worship will never be pushy or arrogant. Worship leaders (so called) who dominate people from the platform are thus seen to be false. The spirit of God will not go against his word or his character.

The fruit of self-control is especially important, true worship will be meek, restrained; a person does not let himself go. This means two things: firstly the whole idea of letting go, becoming passive, giving up thinking, loosening discernment etc. is contrary to the Spirit of God. This passivity is a key feature of occult religion because emptying of the mind and the will, added to a heightening of emotion, is the first requirement for demonic and sensual control of a person. The wild antics of pagan religions, fertility rites, hypnotic trances, whirling frenzies and so on (all of which are becoming fashionable in the West) first need a person to be reduced to a passive volitional state - intelligent rational thinking and determination have ceased. This emptying can accompany frenzied physical activity (as in pagan dances like voodoo) or can be induced by motionless meditation (as in Eastern religious disciplines). Biblical worship never involves an abandonment of the will or intelligent thought. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, he encourages discipline where a person has little by natural inclination. The reverse is the Satanic case.

Secondly, in Christian worship a person seeking to praise God will not abandon his ability to control his behaviour so that it becomes indecent. If activity has become such, the flesh has taken over. This is frequently the case with immature believers who work up a passion and think that they are honouring God. Pentecostal religion has known much of this 'working up' to gain an altered state of consciousness which feels 'spiritual' but is really just the flesh on a different level.

In the past folk would repeat a hymn 30 or 40 times to wear down self control, or encourage running around the room, screaming and so forth (e.g.

the Shakers and some Pentecostals). The height of knowing the power of God was felt to be when people fell over under the ‘power of the Spirit’. The fact that these people had lost all self control, had acted indecently (especially so in the early years of this century when to show an ankle was a social disaster) and often involved women’s dresses being so displaced that blankets had to be thrown over them, shows that this was not of the Spirit of God.

Godly worship does not lead to abandonment of decency, order, self control or even common discretion. One can be caught up in heavenly worship in one’s heart and even perhaps groaning in words that cannot be uttered, but still able to avoid bumping into the lady standing next to you and being considerate to the old gentleman in front. It is a fleshly outrage when people fall over damaging themselves, and others that they fall on, or dance a jig which leads them to bump into chairs and knock hymn books from people’s hands. It is not godly praise and is not spiritual.

### **A focus upon Christ**

*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Cor 2:2)*

*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God ... consider Him. (Heb 12:2-3)*

All worship of Christ will be centred upon him and will serve to glorify God. Fleshly manifestations, while saying things about God and Christ, will only focus attention upon the individual expressing them. They puff up the worshipper rather than glorifying the Lord. Any contribution which detracts from the glory of Christ is to be rejected.

We should be cautious about songs which continually mention: *I, me, myself, mine, us, we, ourselves, ours*. The object of our worship is Christ who glorifies the Father. The effects of salvation should cause us to consider what we have gained by grace, but should also lead us immediately to thank God. It is right to be pleased that, ‘*My chains fell off, my heart was free*’; but this line quite rightly leads to, ‘*I rose went forth and followed thee*’ and the whole hymn celebrates the cross. Over sentimentalism in songs is also a snare and can lead to wishy-washy, touchy-feely emotions which have more to do with a TV soap than coming into the presence of the eternal, holy God who is a consuming fire. There is nothing wrong with an occasional song which concentrates on our love of Christ in emotional terms, but a repetition of several of these can lead us into a superficial reverie far removed from godly fear. The Psalms and not the Song of Solomon are our model in worship songs.

The cross of Christ should never be missing in our worship times, but should rather form the foundation of all our praise and adoration. The objective proclamation of Christ's atonement should come first and only then followed by a subjective experience of the love and forgiveness gained by this sacrifice. In some circles the cross is hardly ever mentioned while the benefits accruing to the worshipper are celebrated constantly.

### **A focus upon edifying others**

*Let all things be done for **edification**.* (1 Cor 14:26)

*We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your **edification**.* (2 Cor 12:19)

*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary **edification**, that it may impart grace to the hearers.* (Eph 4:29)

*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may **edify** another.* (Rm 14:9)

*Therefore comfort each other and **edify** one another, just as you also are doing.* (1 Thess 5:11)

Seven times 1 Cor 14 directs us to concentrating upon edifying others when we gather together (14:3,4,5,12,17,26, in NKJV). Even authority in the church is not for control but for edification (2 Cor 10:8, 12:19, 13:10; Eph 4:11-12). The main purpose of meeting is to mutually edify one another and do each other good. Sharing which damages or discourages the flock must be rejected. Contributions which put attention on to some individual are fleshly and in error.

### **A focus upon grace**

*Of His fullness we have all received, and **grace for grace**.* (Jn 1:14)

*Having then gifts differing according to the **grace** that is given to us, let us use them.* (Rm 12:6)

**Grace ... may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.** (2 Cor 4:15)

*[We pray] that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you ... according to the **grace** of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Thess 1:12)

The overwhelming cause of worship is to thank and honour God for his provision of salvation in Christ. As this is all of grace, godly contributions will centre upon God's kindness towards an unworthy people. Also, we are specifically told that, because of God's grace, we know that everyone has a gift to offer (Eph 4:7; 1 Pt 4:10). Contributions which elevate man or suggest that

God's gifts are automatic are false. An example would be the teaching which states that healing is in the atonement for everyone as a right and it is man's responsibility to gain healing (or money, possessions etc.) by faith. This puts the onus upon man and makes God some kind of heavenly vending machine.

There should always be an edge of thankfulness to God in our worship. We are thankful because he has chosen us, despite our sin and our constant failings. In our old nature we are nothing but rebellious dust. Out of that God has put us into his family, remitted our sins and enabled us to share in the inheritance of his Son.

### **A focus upon graciousness**

*We conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the **grace** of God. (2 Cor 1:12)*

*Let us have **grace**, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Heb 12:28)*

*Singing with **grace** in your hearts to the Lord. (Col 3:16)*

Many times scripture uses the words 'grace' or 'gracious' in connection with our participation in worship. This has the sense here of 'humility', we have nothing to offer but that which God has given to us; thus we must approach God with humility, reverence and even fear. This means that any contributions which are: brash, impudent, audacious, arrogant, haughty, conceited, vain, overbearing or proud are to be rejected.

# Practical Orderliness In Worship

We have seen that worship must be orderly and well structured, but we have also stressed that rigorous and formal control by men is against the spirit of NT meetings, which are open and full of liberty. Does scripture help us to balance these two aspects?

Some parts of the worship meeting are not open to participation but are controlled by the elders or their delegates, such as leading in the Lord's Supper, preaching or the close of the meeting. Other aspects contain opportunities for members to edify the brethren, albeit under good leadership. This part of the service known today as the 'worship' time (although the whole meeting is to be a time of worship) is where *koinonia* or participation occurs. The Bible gives us helpful clues in structuring this time decently and in order.

## Worship leaders

The church meeting is under the direction (*proistemi* – rule, direction, taking the lead, 1 Tim 5:17) of the eldership, but certain aspects can be delegated to other gifted people at their direction. It makes sense for a brother who deals with administrative matters to read any necessary notices for instance. This is part of *koinonia*, each one sharing in his gift. A brother who is developing a teaching ministry should be occasionally encouraged to preach for the elders and thus help him grow. How else can emerging brethren gain experience? The same principle applies to leading the Lord's people in worship, giving thanks and edification. Worship leaders are necessary for the meeting to be run in an orderly fashion.

Having said that, the more mature the congregation, the less need there is to actually direct people. It is everyone's task to ascertain the leading of the Holy Spirit and share only that which is according to God's will, '*each one has...*' (1 Cor 14:26). *Koinonia* is never a free for all.

The question then arises, can women lead worship? To this the universal answer of the church in history is no. Only aberrant groups like the Montanists had women leading worship. The reason for this is the same reason why women cannot teach in church. Worship leading involves directing the flock, and such direction is only a male function. Even if one considers such worship leading as mere 'steering' rather than 'governing', steering<sup>18</sup> is also a male function of leadership.

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<sup>18</sup> *Kubernesis*, basic root meaning relates to a helmsman steering a ship. Translated in the KJV as government. It appears in 1 Cor 12:28. Only male elders steer the direction of the church.

Paul's direction is clear, women cannot exercise directive or authoritative leadership over men, especially in teaching, *'I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man'* (1 Tim 2:12). Worship leading frequently involves some form of teaching and thus is prohibited for women. Even if a woman avoided any teaching, leading of necessity means overruling on occasion and this is a means of direct authority over someone. For these reasons women cannot lead worship.

## **Order**

Many Psalms, such as Psalm 95 imply a certain order in worship, although we cannot apply any order inflexibly as scripture is not dogmatic or imperative. The following aspects can be observed:

- Coming to God together (Ps 95:2).
- Thanksgiving (Ps 95:2).
- Celebrating God's works (Ps 95:4-5).
- Praise (Ps 100:4).
- Speaking to God in prayer (Ps 95:1-2). Calling upon God (Ps 105:1).
- Testimony to God's glory (Ps 105:1).
- Singing unto God (Ps 105:2).
- Remembering his works i.e. in scripture reading (Ps 105:5).
- The sacrifice of thanksgiving (Ps 116:17) and praise (Jer 33:11).
- Worship involving bowing and kneeling (Ps 95:6).
- Listening to God (Ps 95:7).
- Exalting God together (Ps 34:3).

Making Psalm 95 rigidly divide up into a section on praise followed by a section on worship is not sanctioned by the text. Some Charismatics seek to make a sharp distinction between praise and worship in order to defend a loud, vigorous singing to start the meeting, followed later by reflective passivity. While there are nuances between praise and worship (as we have demonstrated), there is no example in the Psalms of starting a meeting with external, exuberant praise followed by internal, reverential, subjective worship leading to passivity. Worship and praise are often concurrent. Some Psalms emphasise praise (as an objective testimony), others emphasise worship (as personal reverence).

To this we can add New Testament directives such as:

- Glorifying God and celebrating his attributes (Rev 4:8).
- Glorifying God and celebrating his works (Rev 4:11).
- Singing a new song – glorifying Christ's worthiness, his work on the cross and redemption of his people (Rev 5:9-10).
- Celebration of God's eternal plan (Rev 5:9 – the scroll with 7 seals).
- Praising Christ in his ascension glory (Rev 5:12, 13).
- Submission to Christ in worship (Rev 5:14).
- Speaking to one another in hymns, etc. (Eph 5:19).

- Singing with the mind (1 Cor 14:15) and with the Spirit (1 Cor 14:15).
- Sharing of tongues with interpretation; prophecy (1 Cor 14:27-29).
- Lessons, revelations, encouragements and general teaching (1 Cor 14:26).
- Giving of thanks (1 Cor 14:16).
- Public reading of scripture (1 Tim 4:13).
- Exhortations (1 Tim 4:13)
- Prayer (1 Cor 14:14; Acts 2:42).
- Mutual encouragement and edification (1 Cor 14:5, 31; Rm 14:19, 15:2; 1 Thess 5:11)
- Impartation of doctrinal truth (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim 4:13).
- Breaking bread (Acts 2:42; I Cor 11:2ff).
- Koinonia (fellowship, Acts 2:42).
- Spiritual sacrifices involving: thanksgiving by speaking, singing, teaching (Heb 13:15-16), yielded service and worship (Rm 12:1).

To gather these directions up into a basic structure, the historic church would see something like the following basic order:

1. Call to worship God (Ps 95:1; 100:2,4; 105:1-2). Objective focus upon God's name and attributes. Prayer for God's help to worship in Spirit and truth.
2. Public reading of scripture (1 Tim 4:13). Could be combined with 1. Focus on God's word for a foundation.
3. Thanksgiving, praise and worship which includes opportunities for edification (Ps 100:4; 1 Cor 14; Phil 3:3). Objective praise, testimony, subjective adoration. Emphasis upon submission to God and thanksgiving for salvation.
4. Breaking of bread (Acts 20:7).
5. Doctrinal teaching (perhaps expanded at a later meeting, 1 Tim 4:13).
6. Consecration – a response from hearing God (Rm 12:1). This could include repentance, confession of sin, desire for holiness, dedication, expressions of commitment.
7. Doxology, benediction or close (Jude 1:25; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17).

The greatest emphasis in the New Testament is placed upon sections 3 and 4, where large portions of whole chapters (concerning the proper ordering of meetings) are given to instructions on these matters. Conversely, the modern church gives much emphasis to sermons (only one method of doctrinal teaching) which the NT says very little about in the context of church gatherings. Notice that intercession is not listed here. The focus is upon who God is, what he has done and how we have been changed. Intercession focuses upon needs and people and, as such, should be dealt with in the prayer meeting (as in Acts 4:24-31; 12:5,12).

*Call upon God, adore, confess ...  
You are the Lord's, give thanks and bless. (Isaac Watts)*

## Practical guidelines

### Share what is seemly

Since corporate worship must be orderly and led well, it follows that there should be care taken in what transpires. We should sing songs or pray in an appropriate way. It is, therefore, inappropriate to begin interceding for some situation in the middle of a time of focusing upon the attributes of God, for instance.

Songs should be selected on the basis that they follow or support what is being taught or considered. Exuberant praise songs would be ill-suited to follow a quiet, reflective prayer of worship. Indeed, often the best response to a time of deep worship of God is total silence. It is after such a silence that a simple song of love to God, often dismissed as sentimental by some, can be entirely suitable and encouraging. Songs do not always have to be deep theological treatises in verse, a simple heart response is often the child-like offering which the Father longs to hear.

### Personal hindrances and their solutions

Lack of assurance.	<i>But</i>	God asks us to draw near (Heb 10:19,22).
Failure to judge ourselves, acts of sin.	<i>But</i>	The blood of Jesus deals with sin, confess it (Jn 1:7).
Worldliness.	<i>But</i>	We are dead to the world (Gal 6:14).
Not filled with the Spirit.	<i>But</i>	Be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18).
Out of fellowship.	<i>But</i>	Get right with others (Matt 5:23ff).
Tiredness.	<i>But</i>	Prepare and rest.

### Conclusion

Since worship must be orderly, the Biblical components of worshipping together must be selected with care and led in a reasonable fashion. What is vital is that the practice of foreign religions, occult practitioners and Charismatic extremists must be avoided. We must especially steer clear from generating passivity in a congregation through softening up the 'audience' via a mixture of frenetic activity and songs, suggestible direction from an authority figure at the front followed by slow 'hypnotic' trance inducing material afterwards. The result is neither decent or orderly.

# What Do We Sing?

That believers should sing songs of some description is without doubt, songs have always featured in Christian testimony. Jesus sang a hymn with the disciples at the Passover (Matt 26:30; Mk 14:26), Paul and Silas sang hymns in their captivity (Acts 16:25), while many scriptures command us to sing different sorts of compositions inside and outside church meetings (Jam 5:13; Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16-17). But there is a twofold problem: traditional Presbyterians and many historic churches insist that only the Psalms can be sung, while other orthodox commentators assert that only traditional hymns can be additionally used.

## Psalms only?

The arguments for this can be complex, but basically can be summarised as:

- Only the Psalms were appointed to be used by the church (2 Chron 29:30; 1 Chron 26:9; Ps 95:2; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).
- *'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs'* are titles used of different Psalms in the Hebrew and LXX (Greek) Bibles and are not different types of contemporary songs. [To Jews the Psalms were known as 'Sepher Tehillim' (Book of Praises). 'Psalm' – Ps 3:1, 4:1 etc. 'Song' – Ps 18:1, 30:1 etc. Hymn – the name given to a number of psalms taken together for a religious exercise, like the Great Hallel]. Hebrew words for psalms include: 'Mizmor' (religious song), 'Shir' (song), 'Maschil' (skilful Mizmor), 'Michtam' (not known), 'Shiggayon' (not known), 'Tephillah' (prayer), 'Tehillah' (praise). LXX Greek terms are: 'Psalms' (song of praise), 'Hymnos' (hymn or song of praise), 'Ode' (song). 'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' is thus a Greek way of saying 'the book of Psalms used for singing'.
- The hymn of Matt 26:30 is the 'Great Hallel' (Ps 113-118 and 136).
- The use of the adjective 'spiritual' means that divinely inspired Psalms are intended not an uninspired song.
- Finally, the Psalms speak of Christ prophetically, in some Christ is even the speaker, as such they are eminently suitable to be sung by believers to glorify Christ in worship.

While all this is true, other songs are also used in OT worship and some saints worshipped with impromptu songs which were not recorded in the Psalms. Examples are: the Song of Moses (Ex 15:1ff; Deut 31:22:19ff) which will also be sung in heaven (Rev 15:3), the song of Deborah and Barak (Jud 5) and Hannah's prayer of worship (1 Sam 2). Hezekiah's songs were also used in temple worship (Isa 38:10-20).

The argument relies heavily upon Paul's somewhat unusual use of this triple title for the book of Psalms. Elsewhere, when he quotes from a Psalm, he simply calls it, 'Psalm.' (Acts 13:33) as does Jesus (Lk 20:42) and Luke (Acts 1:20). Paul was writing to Gentiles who had little knowledge of Jewish background.<sup>19</sup> Why would he use a complicated Hebrew form for the book writing to Gentiles and a simple one to Jews (Acts 13:26)? Luke, writing to Gentiles, only uses 'Psalm' and remember he was Paul's close companion and co-worker. Furthermore, 'hymn' only appears in the LXX, not in the Hebrew OT, and then mostly in the apocrypha where 'ode' is also frequently used. It seems much more likely that Paul simply means what he says, Christians should sing from the book of Psalms, but also sing spiritual songs ('odes' or an expression of deep feelings in song) and hymns (songs of praise to God).

The Psalms were written in Hebrew and in a Jewish style of verse foreign to us; in fact we do not know how they were sung. Therefore, Bible translations are not sufficient to enable westerners to sing them, so further work is required forcing various men to produce books of metrical Psalms for western churches. So, the Psalms sung by Presbyterians are not literal translations because such are not singable. Here our friends' cherished case about literal translation falls apart, one rule for reading the Bible, another for singing songs to worship.

Many Christian works and activities, done in the power of God, are called spiritual. Indeed, our whole lives are to be a sacrifice of our own strength and will so that we serve God in his strength and the result is spiritual service (Rm 12:1).<sup>20</sup> The adjective does not always refer to inspired writings. Apostolic, human ministry was spiritual (1 Cor 9:11); gifts used in the church were spiritual (1 Cor 12:1, 14:1); godly disciples are spiritual (Gal 6:1). So something produced by the Spirit of God in man, as a manifestation of the life of Christ, is 'spiritual'. If a godly person writes a song to God's glory, it seems eminently reasonable to call this a spiritual song, just as a godly leader's sermon is a spiritual service, often called 'prophesying' by the reformers. This also explains how Paul could call uninspired writings 'spiritual' songs. Is not this the most normal way of reading Paul's words in these texts? They are references to contemporary worship songs.

An important point is that worship songs are recorded in the NT which are not Psalms, see for instance the heavenly hymns in Revelation chapters 4-5.

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<sup>19</sup> The early Ephesian church was a mixture, but not heavily populated by Jews who refused Paul's message causing him to withdraw and preach in a public hall (Acts 19). Paul did not plant the church in Colosse (Col 2:1) and little is gleaned from Acts. However, in Colossians Paul clearly has to deal with the emerging Gnosticism, not Judaizers, and this would suggest a Greek background.

<sup>20</sup> Although the word 'spiritual' is not used in this verse, it is clearly what is being referred to. A few verses later Paul explains that such a life results in expressing gifts, the same gifts are elsewhere described as spiritual gifts (e.g. prophecy).

In fact the phrase '*new song*' is mentioned. These hymns focus upon Christ, his glories, his atonement wrought at the cross and the benefits to men. If anything, the last book of the NT is encouraging us to sing new songs which focus upon the name of Christ and celebrate his person and work and give thanks for that work in us.

We should also note that the Psalms themselves issue the command to '*sing to the Lord a new song*' (Ps 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1). At least one prophet echoes this instruction (Isa 42:10). Alternatively, the Psalmist states that God has put a '*new song in my mouth*' (Ps 40:3) or that he '*will sing a new song unto thee*' (Ps 144:9). New songs were always being written in the Old Testament. It is a normal feature of going on with God; as we learn more of God, we sing about his excellencies. Are we to assume that God's command to sing new songs stopped during the dispensation of shadows so that the glorious revelation of God's only Son was not to be remembered in song by those who witnessed his glory? The corollary to the Old Testament instruction to sing a new song is when the New Testament states that a new song is being sung (Rev 5:9, 14:3). This new song is the glorifying of the revealed Messiah, unknown to the psalmists except by faith in God's provision. We sing of a saviour revealed.

If the sufficiency of scripture demands that hymns composed by men cannot be sung in church, why then are not sermons and prayers also excluded as these are the works of men over and beyond Bible words? In any case, the Bible records that Mary, Zacharias and Simeon composed appropriate non-Psalm hymns of praise as a response to the work of God.<sup>21</sup> The fact that these became scripture later does not alter the fact that their original compositions were not based upon Biblical words, but their experience of God.

A final note is that the early church certainly sang portions of the NT in worship. For instance: the '*Gloria in Excelsis*', the '*Magnificat*', and the '*Nunc Dimittis*'. This is recorded by historians like Schaff.<sup>22</sup>

I have no problems with the use of Psalms, which indeed are most wonderful to glorify Christ, my problem is with the sole use of Psalms. If the Presbyterian argument is true, then we cannot use NT texts to sing the glory of Christ, and we cannot mention the name of Jesus. This seems incredible to me. My response to the argument proposes a reasonable basis for Christians to write '*spiritual*' songs to be used as well as Psalms.

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<sup>21</sup> Zacharias composed a '*Benedictus*' (starting with '*Blessed*') under the direction of the Holy Spirit which incorporated texts from the Psalms (Lk 1:68-79), Simeon said the '*Nunc Dimittis*' (Lk 2:29-32), while Mary uttered the '*Magnificat*' ('*Magnify*', Lk 1:46-55).

<sup>22</sup> P. Schaff, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, Vol 1, p247, note 14.

## Were contemporary hymns used in the early apostolic church?

There is a complicated argument surrounding this question which we cannot delve into here in detail. The question is, are the texts: Rm 11:33-36; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16 (and possibly 2 Tim 2:11-13) early hymns, or portions thereof? Suffice to say that:

- the early church almost certainly sang portions of the NT so they were not restricted to Psalms alone. We will never be sure if these texts were hymns or not but a very substantial case can be made that they were and most modern expositors accept the argument. At the very least they have the form of verse, so although they may only be poems, there is a strong likelihood that they were also sung and the writers inserted them into the text due to their renown.
- If it is true that Greek falls easily into poetic form - and that's merely the situation here - why is it only here, in these few cases, that there is contention that they are hymnic? If it looks like a hymn, sounds like a hymn and works as a hymn, and is used in a worshipful sense, it probably is a hymn.
- If one argues that these texts are merely poetry, not hymns, we have made the case for the use of poetry in worship since they have inspired apostolic sanction as valid, an equally unpopular case for the 'Psalm only' apologists.
- If the apostles quoted from popular hymns around at the time, it proves that Christians were writing worship songs, they were in common use, they were well known and the apostles approved of them and quoted from them in presenting didactic truth.
- Early Fathers (like Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Justyn Martyr) mention early Christian hymns. Clement (150-220) actually composed hymns himself as did Athenagoras (177AD) whose last hymn was used by Christians for centuries. Tertullian (150-225) tells us that at the Agape love-feasts, brethren were invited to sing scripture or songs they had composed.<sup>23</sup> Ambrose (337-397) wrote many hymns. Eusebius (260-340) tells of congregations joining in the last verses of hymns begun by someone.<sup>24</sup> The *Odes of Solomon* (42 early Christian hymns) cannot easily be dismissed as Gnostic (a mystical heresy).<sup>25</sup>
- As well as the hymns already mentioned (Magnificat etc.), in the first six centuries the church also used: the 'Morning Song' and the 'Evening Song' in the Apostolic Constitutions, the 'Te Deum', the 'Ter Sanctus' and several ancient liturgical poetic prayers.<sup>26</sup> After the Edict of Milan in 313 and the protection of Christianity under Constantine, uninspired songs began to appear more widely. Due to the nature of persecution before then it is not

<sup>23</sup> Tertullian, *Apology*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>25</sup> David E Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (1991), p296.

<sup>26</sup> P. Schaff, *The Greek and Latin Hymnology*, British and Foreign Evangelical Review, (1866) p680.

unsurprising that hymnbooks have not survived. What is absolutely certain is that portions of the NT were also used in worship, as well as the Psalms, within a few decades of the death of the apostles.

In considering the Psalms only argument a question arises: why is a westernised translated metrical Psalm different from the best modern scriptural choruses and songs? Many decent choruses are paraphrases, or even straight translations of scripture texts. If the Presbyterian metrical Psalms are considered acceptable for worship, so are these better choruses. The following is an example:

*The Lord your God is in your midst / The Lord of hosts to save / He will exalt over you with joy / He will renew you in his love / He will rejoice over you / With shouts of joy.*

Compare:

*'The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.'* (Zephaniah 3:17; KJV)

*'The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.'* (NKJV)

Another example is the following chorus:

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised / In the city of our God, In the mountain of his holiness / Beautiful in situation, The joy of the whole earth / Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north / The city of the great King / Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north / The city of the great King.*

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God, In His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, The joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, The city of the great King. (Psalm 48:1-2 NKJV)*

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. (Psalm 48:1-2 KJV)*

This chorus is closer to the KJV than the NKJV (in fact, it's an exact copy - apart from the repeated last refrain). The weakness with modern choruses, in comparison with Psalters, is that they usually only use a few verses of the Psalm. The sad thing regarding the above-mentioned choruses is that they are now considered old hat and are rarely sung in Evangelical circles.

The main reason why it is important to sing portions of the NT, as the church has always done (Magnificat etc.) is because only in the NT do we see the name above every name. If we only sing Psalms, although we can sing about Christ, we cannot ever name him. This cannot be right. The Son is the

constant object of heaven's praise and is the name we will sing constantly of in the glory. Surely we should start doing that while we have breath?

The OT church occasionally sang songs in worship which were inspired but which are not included in the Book of Psalms. The early church certainly sang various portions of the NT, and quite likely sang songs written by believers as well as Psalms. The end-time church is said to sing the song of Moses which is not a Psalm (Rev 15:3) and the Lord's people in heaven sing a new song, not a Psalm (Rev 5:9, 14:3). There is a very strong case for singing good translations of any scripture, but especially Psalms and NT portions, and a reasonable but less-strong case for writing valid, 'spiritual' new songs which major on truth and glorify God.

*'I know of no obligation we are under to confine ourselves to it [the Book of Psalms]. I can find no commandment or rule of God's word, that does any more confine us to the words of scripture in our singing, than it does in our praying; we speak to God in both. And I can see no reason why we should limit ourselves to such particular forms of words that we find in the Bible, in speaking to him by way of praise, in metre, and with music, than we speak to Him in prose, by way of prayer and supplication... [In the OT] the greatest subjects ... are spoken of under a veil, and not so much as the name of our glorious redeemer ever mentioned, but in some figure or as hid under the name of some type.'*<sup>27</sup>

### **The hymns only argument**

This stance argues that the good old fashioned hymns were full of solid doctrinal truth, have an inherent natural reverence for God, nurtured the church for centuries and helped people gain a deep understanding of theology. In fact many Western churches adopted hymns fairly late; hymn singing was kept out of Anglican churches until about 1820 in preference of the English Psalter.

Choruses, on the other hand (a term which usually includes modern songs that may have several stanzas as well as a chorus) lead to a dumbing down of the people of God, tend to irreverence, are mostly theologically naive and Arminian and are usually superficial and directed to the emotions rather than the mind. Some writers even argue that choruses are part of a Satanic conspiracy which purposed to introduce occult elements into church worship, especially with the use of repetitive, droning short songs accompanied by New Age or rock music.

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<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, Vol 1, Banner of Truth, p396.

### **The real problem - mixture of good and bad**

Are the charges against choruses tenable? The real answer is - yes and no. Yes many hymns are glorious expressions of truth and help people learn Biblical doctrine. But not all hymns are such; many hymns are rubbish; throughout history some whole hymnbooks were heretical. Yes it's true that many choruses and modern songs are intellectually light, superficial, emotional, poorly written and lead to repetition for effect. However, some choruses, and many modern songs, are close Biblical translations or express as much solid truth as old hymns. Like many things in life, one has to discern what is good and avoid what is bad. The problem arises when a church uses a certain compilation hymn book or songbook which contains the good the bad and the ugly. Then the congregation will expect to sing popular songs even if they are poor.

A key problem is worldliness in the church. Certain songwriters have become modern icons, like evangelical pop stars. Folk develop an affinity for one or two of these and feel obliged to sing every song and latest offering from these people, no matter what the song is like. This is obviously wrong. The answer is to properly pastor the flock so that such worldly attitudes are nipped in the bud. The church must be taught to discern and make judgments that count. Scripture insists that Christians make sound judgments and prove all things, this relates to what we sing as much as to anything else. Another point is popular music. Some awful songs have catchy melodies that people love to sing. Here we must discipline ourselves, focus upon truth and dump songs which teach wrong theology.

### **The specific problem of choruses**

It is the nature of a chorus to make a simple effective point which is then repeated as desired; as such, choruses are used as a refrain in a longer song to hold the attention and breed familiarity. Choruses were always used to assist participation in folk music, from the ditties in traditional English folk songs, through the world-wide sea shanties to the African work and call songs which led to the Blues. Choruses have always been with us, they are a valid part of civilised and ancient culture. In Victorian times there was a proliferation of popular, music-hall type choruses which has led to some attaching a base and superficial ethos to all choruses, but this is not the case. The chorus structure has been used in nursery education, enhancing social and family structures, aiding the corporate progress of work crews and such like for centuries. It is a musical structure which has many uses and is no more good or evil than the uses men put the structure to. The fact that Victorian variety stars turned it to the service of lightweight or bawdy entertainment has no relevance to the use of the structure in the service of God. The hymn structure has also been used to tell bawdy and pornographic stories (e.g. rugby songs) for centuries, does this negate the use of hymns in church?

So, the chorus is a useful device for certain purposes; but it also has limitations. It cannot be used to elucidate a longer didactic argument or develop a complex spiritual theme, unlike a hymn. They are short and simple by nature. When they are extended, they don't function as a chorus but become a short song, thus they are less memorable and fade in use. We should not expect a chorus to be rich and full in theological facts and teachings; they are not suitable for such work. What they are good for is to encourage and exhort the flock in a certain direction or a particular truth. They are excellent at making a certain theological point, with an edifying emphasis, which is easily remembered. Now, as long as this is not all the church is fed with, choruses are a good and useful tool.

So, the key matter to consider is - does the Bible encourage us to think that short, pithy exhortations are of value in the gathered worship of the church? The answer is clearly yes. Prophets and sages of all dispensations have used such material - the book of Proverbs is full of them. We are commanded to encourage and exhort one another repeatedly;<sup>28</sup> these are not sermons but short challenges and supporting words to stir up love and good works (Heb 10:24). The short exhortation is a valid contribution to the edification of the gathered saints. The chorus is such an expression in musical form.

A real benefit of choruses is that they can undergird a single theological point being made by an spoken exhortation better than anything else. In a meeting where mutual edification (*koinonia*) is encouraged, two or three people may share an encouragement from scripture. A suitable chorus, which states the doctrine of this word simply, is a most apt way of cementing the thought into the congregation's consciousness. With it's several verses and multi-layered themes a hymn could detract from the simple point of a short exhortation; however, it would be beneficial in supporting the various themes of a sermon.

But the chorus can have another valid dimension also; it can take the form of a love sonnet.<sup>29</sup> When someone is declaring love for another, a structure which is long and hymnic is not always suitable to make a short, simple proclamation of adoration. Wordy formalities may come easily to some in such circumstances, but most folk feel more comfortable with a short statement. I am not deploring the use of hymns to declare love in a series of statements of truth, but there is a place for the expression of the heart. As Jonathan Edwards stated, true religion is a matter of the whole man in a renewed intellect, will and emotions; there is a valid place for the simple expression of emotional feelings towards God. To some, such choruses can appear trite but to the true worshipper, who longs to express his or her

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<sup>28</sup> Heb 3:13; Rm 12:8 (notice this is differentiated from teaching in v7); 1 Cor 14:13; 1 Tim 4:13. Exhortation can be with 'many words' (Acts 15:32), or with just one sentence (Jer 11:7).

<sup>29</sup> In formal poetry a sonnet has 14 lines with specific rhyming structures.

thankful adoration to a faithful God, we dare not castigate the value of such simple methods.

For me the best choruses are those which take a portion of scripture and translate it into verse as literally as possible. Surely there can be no question that such a song is valid? Several songs from one modern songwriter are close translations of passages like Ephesians 1 or Colossians 1. How can this be wrong?<sup>30</sup>

Finally, what about repetition of choruses, is this not bad? No, vain repetition is unhelpful, good repetition is instructive. If we have a chorus that focuses upon a simple truth, it does no harm to repeat it two or three times. Scriptural songs often do this. The phrase, *'For his mercy endures forever'* is repeated 26 times in Psalm 136 alone and 41 times in the Old Testament. The danger with repetition is when songs are repeated ad infinitum in order to make an audience passive and suggestible. Some hymns are vainly repetitive containing 15 or more verses with a chorus after each. Mild repetition of truth is educational.

### **The answer - a full-orbed variety of the good**

A problem with hymn-only churches, such as many traditional Baptists, is that they rarely use any metrical Psalms at all. The church is thus denied a whole realm of inspiring, godly material with full Biblical sanction. They also give no place to the short exhortation in song or the simple expression of adoration. These are sad limitations which ought to be corrected.

If we accept that the church can sing modern, human compositions instead of only singing Psalms, then all types of song should be considered. A hymn is often a song that was once set to a modern melody but has now become old fashioned; I'm told that the Wesleys frequently used the equivalent of modern pop tunes for their lyrics (some dispute this, but it has been widely asserted). My main point is that a local church should carefully discriminate what they sing and not trust the compilations established by previous generations or modern publishers. Pastors will be accountable to God for what the church sings as much as what it says and listens to. Old hymns and modern songs are equally valid if they pass the following tests:

- Are they Biblical in doctrinal content?
- Are they reverent in attitude?
- Do they promote true worship?
- Are the tunes compatible and acceptable to godliness?
- Do they tend towards decency and order?

If so, then I can see no reason why they should not be used.

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<sup>30</sup> I am thinking here of David Fellingham, who has written some superb NT paraphrased songs (especially his earlier work) - but also some appalling Charismatic propaganda anthems.

## Quotes

*[Our] plan is to follow the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers of the church, and to compose psalms for the people [in the] vernacular, that is spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may be among the people also in the form of music. Martin Luther <sup>31</sup>*

*The gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music. Martin Luther <sup>32</sup>*

*A Jesuit named Conzenius is known to have remarked that Luther persuaded more people with his hymns than with his sermons. <sup>33</sup>*

*Luther did not insist that all texts used [for hymns] in the church service had to be literally from the Bible or close adaptations thereof; however, he did require that texts be theologically sound ... doctrinally 'pure and apt'. <sup>34</sup>*

*Nothing so arouses the soul, gives it wing, sets it free from the earth, releases it from the prison of the body, teaches it to love wisdom, and to condemn all things of this life, as concordant melody and sacred song composed in rhythm. John Chrysostom<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> Luther's Works II:68.

<sup>32</sup> Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae Lucundae*, Luther's Works LIII:23.

<sup>33</sup> Buszin, *The Melodies of Lutheran Chorales*, 43.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. P J Janson, *A Reason To Sing*, *Reformation & Revival Journal*, Vol 4, No 4 (1995), p21.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in *Reformation & Revival Journal*, Vol 4, No 4 (1995), p64.

# The Use Of Music In The Church

There are two aspects to music, as used in the church, the first is the composition of songs – whether accompanied or not, and secondly the matter of instrumentation. We have discussed the question of musical instruments, in the church today, and concluded that they are not explicitly sanctioned by scripture – either directly in the NT or by interpretation from the OT. Music can undergird a particular end (such as getting troops to march) but its main function is to draw thoughts to itself, it is for contemplation of what it communicates.<sup>36</sup> This is why an emphasis upon music in churches is wrong as it detracts from true worship.

However we also concluded that there is a basic need for some musical backing to assist Western churches which have lost many social skills. We need not discuss this aspect further. Presuming we use a basic music format to support singing, three matters then affect us: what sort of melodies do we write, what poetic forms are acceptable and which type of arrangements do we utilise?

## **Absolute values**

The bottom line regarding musical quality is – does it please God or just us? When Israelites brought their offerings to God, they were commanded to offer a perfect lamb without blemish as a sacrifice; only the best was good enough for God. When bringing the sacrifice of praise the same applies, we must not bring tawdry, cheap, unorthodox, blemished songs as an offering of worship. Both the words and the music must be of good quality to warrant singing as an offering of praise. What is sung is not primarily designed to please the singer but to produce thankfulness to God (Col 3:16).

## Taste

Modern church-goers are often focused upon their own interests and satisfaction; we determine what music or song makes us feel good, or sing that which makes comfortable. This brings up the thorny question of taste. Historically, aesthetics were mainly an objective matter; in fact the word ‘taste’ derived from a Greek word meaning ‘to perceive’. ‘Taste’ originally meant ‘the power to discern and enjoy that which is artistically excellent’ or ‘the ability to discern what is of good quality or of a high aesthetic standard’. Put another way, *‘Taste is a fact of wisdom; it is the ability to distinguish what has value from what does not.’*<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as godly people we must sing that which is excellent and admirable (Phil 4:8). Today, however, things are

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Art offers ideas for contemplation: verbal ideas through words, abstract ideas by instrumental music.’ John Mason Hodges, *Reformation & Revival Journal*, Vol 4, No 4 (1995) p72.

<sup>37</sup> J I Packer & T Howard, *Christianity: The True Humanism*, Word Inc. Dallas, (1985), p163-185.

different, taste now means ‘that which is acceptable to me’, ‘personal preference’.

### Subjective preferences

Unfortunately, our generation has been brought up by fast moving media sound bites, clip-edited films, fast-moving band videos, sloppy dumbed-down television and glossy superficial advertising. Everything around us is easily digestible, demands no thought or discrimination and weakens our attention span. Not only do we lose the ability to discern quality, we endorse the cheap and tawdry as acceptable. All too often this way of thinking runs into church activities.

Simply because we like something, we claim excellence for it; our subjective feelings claim priority over objective facts. But we must be careful of thinking this way as our feelings are easily manipulated. Not only does our enemy tempt us through our emotions, but worldly-wise manipulators are everywhere. How many teenagers have been made blissfully happy or thoroughly sad by the words and music of a pop song written to a formula by middle-aged producers in clinical studios for the purpose of making money? How many middle aged couples felt a warm tug of their heartstrings when a young boy walked up a steep village hill to the melody of a Dvorák piece in order to buy Hovis bread on a TV advert? How many cheap soap plots have caused tears to well in women’s eyes when connected to the strains of melodramatic string music?

### Musical manipulation

Music can be easily utilised to manipulate us. Experienced musicians can readily compose pieces that influence emotions since music creates an atmosphere. Worship musicians can do exactly the same when emotional exuberance is mistaken for a spiritual experience. One writer likened this to fast food – all the fun of real food without any nutritional benefit.<sup>38</sup> Why do certain chord progressions get used time after time? Because they work. The chords C, Am, F, G or C Em F G (and inversions of them), played slowly, will make any love ballad effective. A 12-bar song played fast will make you want to dance. E followed by F and repeated slowly will make you feel moody or threatened. Many modern rock songs are variations of the form: Am, G, F, G. At any one time the top 20 can contain several songs based in different ways upon this progression alone. Pop culture knows these tricks and manipulates us with them. The danger is that the church can get caught up in this and mistakenly offer to God what is tawdry, banal, sentimental, superficial, melodramatic and identical to what the world listens to.

### Absolute values

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<sup>38</sup> John Mason Hodges, *Reformation & Revival Journal*, Vol 4, No 4 (1995) p74.

Until the modern age, everyone believed in a set of objective absolute values – there were certain things which were accepted as universally true since they were based on God’s law. Regarding music – some compositions were pure, others were universally agreed to be base. After Kant and Hegel, this concept was overturned; gradually values became individualised – what ‘I’ feel to be true is what is important and what ‘you’ feel to be true is what motivates you. Relativism now dominates all modern society and is clearly demonstrated in the Inter-Faith Movement which states that all religions are equally valid.

In his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant stated that the idea of beauty was completely subjective – beauty was in the eye of the beholder. In other words, there are no absolute standards. Before Kant, beauty was related to the harmony of the constituent parts; what harmonised in nature or art was beautiful. There was an objective standard for beauty and this standard derived from God: *‘beauty is not the product of our own fantasy, nor of subjective perception, but has an objective existence, being itself the expression of a Divine perfection’*.<sup>39</sup>

Theologians (like Jonathan Edwards) argued that the source of beauty is always God. The perfect nature of God and the relationships in the Godhead were the origin of beauty – a harmonious agreement of purpose and will. But this beauty is reflected in nature: consisting of a harmony in form, manner, purpose and design showing: symmetry, order, proportion, uniformity and harmony. For Edwards this is modelled in the beautiful proportions of the human body, the mutual agreement of the sides of a square or the mutual consent and agreement of the various notes of a melody. The physical world thus correlates with and reflects the beauty and arrangement of God. There is an absolute basis to beauty. This idea has vanished.

### *Is music neutral?*

In its original pure form music may have been neutral. When the first notes on the first instruments were played by Jubal, perhaps they had no suggestive moral qualities. However, certain musical forms, chord sequences and melodies immediately began to suggest different things. Certain patterns naturally evoked certain passions, as we have stated. Man soon learned that 2/4 time was good to stimulate marching armies, fast 4/4 time was good to dance to, slow melodies suggested introspective feelings, repeated discordant notes elicited fear, trumpet blasts suggested majesty and so on. As the years passed, each generation and each culture also generated its own local images and feelings associated with certain types of music through repeated practical use. Certain melodies would summon up certain feelings because people were used to hearing those melodies in various social contexts. Music is never neutral but always influences the emotions, depending upon what music we have grown up with. The Classical Greeks considered that real music was

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<sup>39</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures On Calvinism*, Eerdmans, (1931), p156

always moral but also knew of immoral music, thus certain instruments were taboo for many great thinkers like Plato.

It is the arrangements (backing) of songs that are most clearly affected by association. The same tune can be made to sound like almost any genre depending upon the type of arrangement. The historic associations people have with this type of sound will be evoked by the performance and will generate the deep-rooted feelings they have towards it. Some responses are universal, some are individual. At the moment several UK Christian song-writers are favouring a Celtic flavour to their performances. This means the use of Irish (Uilleann) pipes, tin whistles, flutes, and bodhrans (a percussive hand drum) and certain styles of improvisation around the melody. Those who like Irish music will enjoy this, those who do not will be put off singing this particular song.

Other associations are universal. Certain styles of traditional jazz would be entirely unsuitable for use in church. Firstly, there is the clear association with strip clubs and seedy American bars. Trad. Jazz grew out of these haunts in New Orleans and will forever be associated with this lifestyle. Secondly, the fussy style of simultaneous, multi-instrument improvisation would completely detract from the singing. Now this does not mean that individuals must never listen to Trad. Jazz; the genre featured some of the world's best musicians and much of it was purely instrumental, neutral at least as far as any verbal message goes. But the associations everyone connects with this form makes it unsuitable for hymn accompaniment.

This is yet another reason why church music should be simple, comprising of one, or very few instruments, and utilising plain arrangements. We need to avoid genre-associations and keep the music simple.

Regarding modern music, anything goes. Even music which is clearly base or corrupt pleases someone and has a ready made audience somewhere. Liberals refuse to label this as debasing since it goes against their philosophy of the neutrality of music and the validity of all tastes. This idea has been imported into church services which currently use: rap, reggae, rock, pop-rock, folk-rock, easy-listening, light-jazz, disco and even club music. Most mainline churches opt for the least threatening form and settle for pop-rock – but that can be as demeaning a form as any other and certainly has little gravitas.

### **Practical values**

Song texts must have weight and value while the music which supports the words of praise songs must be able to stand on its own. A song which only works when it has a certain type of accompaniment or which mainly rely on a certain rhythmic backing is not effective. Neither lend themselves to unaccompanied singing which is what we should strive for. Too much modern

music is an end in itself; people are drawn to the music and the effect of the band, rather than to the words and melody. Accompaniment must always support the words, not draw people away from them.

John Calvin was right when he suggested that music should be the handmaiden of the text. What is needed is not catchy tunes, throwaway ditties, but simple music which enables the singer to concentrate on the words and remember them. But the music must also have gravity and weight since it seeks to reflect the truth of God and is sung in his presence.

Music must be appropriate for the message; a lightweight tune is not suitable to sing about Calvary, an amusing ditty is not a valid vehicle for expressing the glory of Christ, a limerick is not the right poetic form to exhort us to praise God. Too many choruses have sentimental pop-song love-formats which do not do justice to the relationship between God and his people. Many old Pentecostal choruses smacked of the music hall rather than spiritual songs. Yet some old hymns stand equally condemned. The old hymn talking of showers of blessings was not enhanced by the lines, *'Let some droppings fall on me'*. Then again, the moody hymn *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind* has music which cannot stand on its own without accompaniment. Too many songs have to rely upon repetition in order to gain relevance. Left bare without music they would sound puerile simply spoken aloud. Repetition must be for valid emphasis or thankful celebration rather than forming the structure of the song.

### **Discernment regarding songs**

Whether we like it or not, we are commanded to be discerning people; proving and testing all things (1 Thess 5:21); this must include music and songs. We are to take every thought captive (2 Cor 10:5) and this also must include our thoughts about music. Should we settle for certain songs just because we like them or feel moved by them? A moving song may be full of error; a song in a style we don't prefer may be full of solid truth and power. If we are to obey God's command to be discerning, we will judge songs and avoid those that are unsuitable. Pastors have the responsibility to lead in this area. The following qualifications may help our discernment:

- Does the song exalt and honour God in its words and music style?
- Is the song theologically sound or closely reliant upon Biblical texts?
- Is the song beautiful or admirable?
- Does the song use vain repetition?
- Is the music creative and harmonious or simplistic and crude?
- What mood does the music invoke?
- Does the song smack of the world? Is it unnecessarily sentimental, melodramatic or derivative? Does it depend upon a current fashion?
- Does the music help me to remember the words?

- Does the singing of this song encourage the congregation to truly worship God?

We need to mould our music to convey a sense of the glory of God, with music supporting and enhancing the message proclaimed in the words. It's time we ceased copying the world's ideas and stopped using cheap superficial clichés, carefully considering what we sing and abandoning the erroneous, the tawdry and the ungodly replacing them with what truly glorifies God.

## **Quotes From Historic Theologians On The Use Of Instruments**

### **Early church and Middle Ages theologians**

Clement of Alexandria (?-215 AD)

*'Joseph Bingham, the eminent author of 'Antiquities of the Christian Church, unhesitatingly says: "Clement rather argues that instrumental music, the lute and the harp, ...was not in use in the public services". ... Johann Caspor Suicer, a noted Latin writer of the seventeenth century ... makes certain quotations from Clement among which is the following: "Superfluous music is to be rejected because it breaks and variously affects the mind ... Nothing therefore has Clement written which would favour organs and their present day use even the least, yea, directly the contrary"' (M.C. Kurfees, Instrumental Music in the Worship, (1950) Gospel Advocate Co. Nashville, p125-134)*

*When a man occupies his time with flutes, stringed instruments, choirs, dancing, Egyptian krotala and other such improper frivolities, he will find that indecency and rudeness are the consequences. Such a man creates a din with cymbals and cult ... Leave the syrinx to the shepherds and the flute to superstitious devotees who rush to serve their idols. We completely forbid the use of these instruments at our banquet. Quoted by Dr. D Robert Godfrey (Professor of Church History, Westminster Theol. Seminary. Calif.) in Ancient Praise, Reformation & Revival Journal, Vol 4, No 4 (1995), p62.*

John Chrysostom (347-407 AD)

*'David formerly sang in psalms with lifeless strings, the church has a lyre with living strings. Our tongues are the strings of the lyre with a different tone indeed, but with a more accordant piety.'* (Quoted by Edward Dickson in Kurfees, op. cit. p145)

*'In keeping with his era, John favoured a cappella singing in worship and opposed the use of musical instruments. Instruments were allowed in the Old*

*Testament to entice people to attend worship, he said, but Christians shouldn't need such inducements.'* (Kevin Dale Miller, *Christian History*, Issue 44, p2.)

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)

*'He adjured believers not to turn their hearts to theatrical instruments'* (Quoted by Edward Dickson in Kurfees, op. cit. p54-55)

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

*'Instruments of music such as harps and psalteries, the church does not adopt for divine praises, lest it should seem to Judaize. ... "Instruments of this sort more move the mind to delight, than form internally a good disposition.'* (II:2.2.91, A. II.4, *et conclusio*, in *Works*, vol. 4 (Ratisbonae, 1884), p.646.)

A canon of one of the councils of Carthage

*'On the Lord's day let all instruments of music be silenced.'*

## **Reformation and later church theologians**

John Calvin

*'To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery unquestionably formed a part of ... that dispensation of shadows and figures; but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving.'* (on Ps 71:22)

*'... instrumental music ... of the Old Testament ... was figurative and terminated with the gospel.'* (on Ps 81:3)

*'Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps and the restoration of the other shadows of the law'* (on Ps 23)

Calvin's church in Geneva did not use musical instruments and almost exclusively used the Psalms for sung praise.

James Begg (Presbyterian)

*'As good an argument can be made for the use of incense, priests, sacrifices, indeed of the whole temple system, as for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship.'* (*On the Use of Organs*, p18)

Alexander Blaikie (Presbyterian)

*'Instruments of music in the worship of God had there fulfilled their mission, in common with the blood of bulls, of goats, and the ashes of heifers, and they finished their course when Jesus died. No blast of rams-horns, nor other "things without life-giving sound" had any longer a place with acceptance in*

*the worship of Jehovah. The ceremonial, sensual, and ritual in his worship there forever ceased to be appointed by and acceptable to God.'* (*The Organ and Other Musical Instruments, as Noted in the Holy Scriptures.*)

Rev. Dr. Porteous

*'But as all the sacrifices of the Hebrews were completely abolished by the death of our blessed Redeemer, so instrumental music ... being so intimately connected with sacrifice, and belonging to a service which was ceremonial and typical, must be abolished with that service; and we can have no warrant to recall it into the Christian church, any more than we have to use other abrogated rites of the Jewish religion, of which it is a part.'* (Dr. Candlish, *The Organ Question*, pp. 87-88.)

Dr. Ritter (Director of the School of Music, Vassar College)

*'We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part of the religious devotion of the first Christian congregation. It was, however, purely vocal. Instrumental music was excluded at first, as having been used by the Romans at their depraved festivities; and everything reminding them of heathen worship could not be endured by the new religionists.'* (*History of Music*, p144)

Prof. John Girardaeu (Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina, Presbyterian)

*'The church ... had no instrumental music for twelve hundred years [by this he means was not in widespread use in the churches] ... it is heresy in the sphere of worship.'* (*Music in the Church*, p179).

Adam Clarke (Famous Methodist teacher and writer)

*'I believe that the use of such instruments of music in the Christian church, is without the sanction and against the will of God; that they are subversive of the spirit of true devotion ... I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of God. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor.'* (*Commentary*, Vol 4, p686)

H. B. Coder (Brethren)

*'As the reality of Christ departs from the soul, ritualism takes the place, and forms without life rise up on every hand. To such an extent has this grown that even the world is losing respect for a Christianity which seems more bent on entertaining than converting men. We believe, therefore, that any use of instrumental music in the worship of God, from end to end, in the Sunday School, the Gospel meeting, or any other ... will be found to have a tendency to lower the character of Christianity itself.'* (*400 Questions and Answers*, Loizeaux Bros. (1928) p212-213)

(Brethren author)

*'We may pray and sing and bless God in the Spirit, but has an organ a spirit? Musical instruments would no doubt aid the accuracy and the time of our singing, but would hinder the spiritual character of worship, and this alone is what is acceptable to God.'* (*The Young Christian Magazine*, Vol 30, Bible Truth Depot, St Louis (1940), p132-136)

Methodist leader John Wesley was also opposed to the use of instruments in the church.

Baptist leader Charles Haddon Spurgeon used no musical instruments in his church.

*'The ancient fathers seem to have had at least three reasons for opposing the use of instruments. The first is ... the fathers feared that the instruments would over-stimulate and make worship too emotional, leading to sexual immorality. The second reason is that the musical instruments were closely linked to pagan sacrificial worship. The fathers linked instruments with idolatry. The third reason was that the instruments were linked to the worship of the OT temple. Some fathers believed that the use of instruments would "Judaize" Christian worship.*

*'Only in the late ancient or early medieval period did the use of instrumental music in the churches develop in the Western church. The organ, developed in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, remained a controversial instrument for church use for centuries. The Eastern Orthodox churches do not permit the use of instruments in their churches to this day.'* Dr. D Robert Godfrey (Professor of Church History, Westminster Theol. Seminary, Calif.) in *Ancient Praise, Reformation & Revival Journal*, Vol 4, No 4 (1995), p62.

# Conclusion

Our great and loving heavenly Father has set us free from the kingdom of the enemy and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. The written statement of the law against us has been rescinded as our sins have been fully and graciously forgiven upon the payment of the precious blood of Christ. Not only that, but we were brought into God's own family when we were enemies against him, and have been given a new life in which we will be able to enjoy God forever. Our hope is that Jesus will soon return to wind up this evil world, renew the earth, finally destroy the works of sin and Satan and take us to his side. How can we not worship such a wonderful saviour? How can we not celebrate the eternal purpose and plan of God?

Consequently, our worship should be continual, and involve our whole heart (Ps 9:1; 86:12). Our whole being should be brought into the service of worshipping our saviour and creator – body, soul and spirit (Matt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). Before we can ever hope to serve God faithfully, we must first learn to be true worshippers. The first work of a priest is to minister unto (serve) the Lord (Lev 7:35; Matt 4:10; Heb 9:14).

When we come together, we don't so much come to worship, but come as worshippers. Gathered saints are gathered worshippers who assemble to testify to God's glory and build each other up in the process. The concept of merely sitting down to be entertained is as far from the Biblical concept of church as could be imagined, whether the silent, non-participating congregation is merely entertained by an expository preacher, or whether they are enthralled by a loud worship band playing pop songs. Saints gather for mutual edification.

Saints meet to edify one another and glorify God. Both are done in simplicity with an emphasis upon the human voice being the key feature. Biblical components of the service such as Bible reading, teaching, sung praise or the Lord's Supper all serve to both edify believers and honour God.

Let's determine to get our worship Biblical!

## Appendix One

# Words For 'Worship' Used In The New Testament

### ***Proskuneo***

Strong's 4352, from 4314 [and a probable derivative of 2965 meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand].

**proskune,w** [pros-koo-neh'-o]; verb.

Use in KJV - worship 60; total - 60.

Meaning:

- 1) to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence.
- 2) among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence.
- 3) in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication.
  - 3a) used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank.
    - 3a1) to the Jewish high priests.
    - 3a2) to God.
    - 3a3) to Christ.
    - 3a4) to heavenly beings.
    - 3a5) to demons.

This is the most common NT word used for 'worship' and demonstrates the overriding feature of complete obeisance. When saints met with God it was normal for them to fall on their faces in reverential fear (Rev 1:17, 4:10, 19:10, 22:8). Paul explains that this should characterise a Christian worship setting. Proskuneo does not emphasise romantic love, as some have suggested (by focusing on 'kiss'). It was the normal word used to describe a vassal meeting a king. Respect, decency, submission, honour and deference is the essence of this word and such characteristics should be fundamental in Christian worship to God.

### ***Latreuo***

Strong's 3000

**latreu,w** [lat-ryoo'-o]; from *latris* (a hired menial); verb.

Use in KJV - serve 16, worship 3, do the service 1, worshipper 1; total - 21.

Meaning:

- 1) to serve for hire.
- 2) to serve, minister to, either to the gods or men and used alike of slaves and freemen.

- 2a) in the NT, to render religious service or homage, to worship.  
 2b) to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship.  
 2b1) of priests, to officiate, to discharge the sacred office.

***Sebomai*** (4576)

**se,bomai** [seb'-om-ahee] ; middle voice of an apparently primary verb.

Use in KJV - worship 6, devout 3, religious 1; total - 10.

Meaning: to revere, to worship.

***Eusebeo***

Strong's 2151 from 2152

**euvsbe,w** [yoo-seb-eh'-o]; verb.

Use in KJV - worship 1, show piety 1; total - 2.

Meaning: to act piously or reverently towards God, one's country, magistrates, relations, and all to whom dutiful regard or reverence is due.

Although other words are tenuously connected by some to worship (e.g. 'rejoice', 'exult' - *Chairo, Agailiao*), the above mentioned are the only Greek words directly related to the concept of worship in English translations.

## Appendix Two

# Examples Of People Worshipping

*Oh worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Tremble before Him, all the earth.*

*(1 Chron 16:29; Ps 29:2; Ps 96:9)*

*In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. (Ps 5:7)*

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. (Ps 95:6)*

*... falling down on his face, he will worship God. (1 Cor 14:25)*

The consistent example of godly people worshipping the Lord is that they bowed quietly in reverential obeisance. There are no examples of exuberant, exotic, partying worship.

### **Abraham**

*... the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.* Abraham was intending to sacrifice his son to God and trusting he would be raised. (Gen 22:5; Heb 11:17-19)

### **Abraham's oldest servant finding a wife for Isaac**

*Then the man bowed down his head and worshipped the LORD. (Gen 24:26)*

*And I bowed my head and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth (Gen 24:26)*

*When Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth. (Gen 24:52)*

### **The children of Israel upon hearing Moses news of deliverance**

*So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. (Ex 4:31)*

### **The Israelites at the first Passover when God killed every Egyptian firstborn**

*So the people bowed their heads and worshipped. (Ex 12:27)*

### **Moses receiving the new commandments on stone**

*Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (Ex 34:8)*

### **Joshua meeting Jesus as the commander of the Lord's army**

*And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" (Jos 5:14)*

### **At the dedication of the temple**

*When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshipped and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever." (2 Chron 7:3)*

### **Jehoshaphat**

*And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. (2 Chron 20:18)*

### **The restoration of temple services under Hezekiah**

*So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. (2 Chron 29:30)*

### **At the return to Jerusalem as Ezra preaches**

*And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. (Neh 8:6)*

### **When Job hears of the death of his children and the loss of all his property**

*Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshipped. (Job 1:20)*

### **When the Magi visit the baby Jesus**

*And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. (Matt 2:11)*

### **At the resurrection of Jesus**

*Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. (Matt 28:9)*

### **John, when confronted with the Revelation**

*Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your*

*brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." (Rev 22:8-9)*

### **The worship of the saints in heaven**

*Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever. (Rev 5:14, 11:16, 19:14)*

### **The worship of the angels in heaven**

*All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God. (Rev 7:11)*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Worship involving dancing, partying, revelling**

Some people tell us that God is having a big party and that we should worship him in an extravagant manner. After all, they say, we will be partying in heaven forever and that is a place of loud noises. If we don't get used to it now, we will never be able to cope with the idea of partying in heaven.

There are no texts connecting the words 'worship', 'worshippers', 'worshipped' or 'worships' with the words 'dance', 'dancing', 'dances' or 'party', 'partying'. The only case where dancing and a worship time is described is:

*The Israelites worshipping the golden calf (Ex 32: 6-8, 19) where Israel committed idolatry and was judged; many died as a result. Israel's original privilege regarding the priesthood of the first born was ruined by this sin.*

There are oblique references to the worship of Baal being a party or involving frenzied leaping & dancing (e.g. 1 Kg 18:26-28) and we know from history that it included fertility rite dances, but scripture doesn't specifically connect Baal with the words above, it just condemns this type of worship.

**Revelling and carousing (the nearest NT words to partying) are always mentioned in condemnation by the apostles (e.g. 2 Pt 2:13; Rm 13:13).**

There are two possible references to praise and dance (Ps 149:3; 150:4 but the latter may mean a musical pipe or horn), but these were part and parcel of the Old Covenant temple worship system, which the NT states has passed away. For instance, Ps 149 tells these dancing people to take their swords to kill kings and foreign nations. If people insist that we obey this Psalm and dance, we must also kill evil tyrants who oppose God's law.

There is one case where David danced and one where Miriam danced to celebrate God's work (2 Sam 6:14; Ex 15:20); but these are not described as worship. This was the natural reaction of this culture to occasions of joy, and in David's case, the rejoicing ended in death and fear (1 Chron 13:6-13). In some cultures such dancing still normal (e.g. African). Other cultures would be aghast at this behaviour in worship (e.g. Japanese). Since we worship in spirit and truth we must be true to ourselves and not try to behave as another culture does. Otherwise we would be forced and hypocritical and thus untrue. But even for a demonstrative culture, scripture shows that dancing and partying is not conducive to worship. Jews who danced easily in celebrations only worshipped with bowed heads.

## Conclusions

1. Worship is to be done in the fear of the Lord
2. This is always connected with bowing, kneeling and prostration. Indeed this is what the NT word worship (*proskuneo*) actually means: falling down and kissing the hand of a Lord.
3. Worship is often done in sombre times like the death of children, the loss of goods etc. and demonstrates a submitted heart. Worship does not have to include joy.
4. The atmosphere of partying is not conducive to worship.
5. Dancing is never mentioned in connection with worship.
6. There is no NT command or encouragement to dance; but there is to worship.
7. Even in heaven raised saints do not dance but bow their heads or prostrate themselves before a holy God.

## Appendix Three

# Singing In The Spirit

### 1 Cor 14:1-33

1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.

2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?

7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?

8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance.

11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me.

12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.

13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

**15 What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.**

16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;

19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

21 In the law it is written: "With *men of* other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord.

22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. 26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret.

28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.

30 But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.

31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

## Observations

- 1 Corinthians 14 is about corporate activity. The individual in private prayer is not the focus of this text. This singing, therefore, is corporate singing or singing to edify the body.
- Paul is also trying to redress the balance on tongue speaking in Corinth. Tongues were being shared repeatedly without interpretation and the goal had become a mystical expression of the spirit instead of edifying each other, just as pagan ecstatic singing.
- What does '*with the spirit*' mean here? Charismatics teach that it means to pray or sing in tongues as suggested by v14: '*if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.*' Praying in a tongue is the praying

of my spirit without my understanding (see v2,14,15.). Others suggest that it means singing improvised songs that have not been prepared in advance intellectually. If it were singing in tongues it must conform to the apostle's teaching on tongues, and that must include interpretation and cannot be corporate – which would be chaotic gibberish. Furthermore, corporate ecstatic singing was a pagan activity, common in heathen rites and associated with passivity – something condemned in God's word.

- What must be interpreted? Spoken, individual tongues v13: *'Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.'* There is nothing about sung tongues being interpreted, which is significant as it appears that Paul had no problem with the singing in the spirit in Corinth. This confirms that this was not singing in tongues.
- Paul climaxes his argument about tongues in v15. Here he concludes (*'what then'*) by saying that they should pray in normal language to edify, and pray in tongues when there is a likely interpretation. He says nothing more about singing in the Spirit as he has nothing to correct here, it is just mentioned as a matter of fact; this adds weight to the case that it is not singing in tongues.
- There is no preposition in the Greek, it is literally, *'I will sing spirit ... I will sing understanding'*.
- Robertson (*'Word Pictures'*) says: *'There was ecstatic singing like the rhapsody of some prayers without intelligent words'*, in the early church. If this is so then it must have been an individual's sung prayer in tongues that was then interpreted. It would not indicate a corporate activity.
- *Bless (euloges)* in v16 means 'to praise' - Robertson: *'He means that, if one is praying and praising God (10:16) in an ecstatic prayer, the one who does not understand the ecstasy will be at a loss when to say "amen" at the close of the prayer.'* It is a further reason to pray sensibly. The same argument would apply to sung prayers.

## Note

It is not my intention to enter the general cessationist vs. spiritual gifts debate in any detail here. As I indicated in my introduction, my job is to identify the Biblical teaching on the subject of worship. That clearly involves the use of prophecy and tongues in many scriptures. The apostolic teaching does not qualify these with temporal restrictions in 1 Corinthians 14, but does suggest the cessation of tongues in 1 Cor 13:8 since a different word is used. The texts must be left to speak for themselves and readers must make their own decision as to whether tongues and prophecies ceased at the close of the apostolic age or will cease at the close of the Gospel age. My personal view is that tongues ceased, having fulfilled their initial purpose, by the time the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem. In any case all agree that tongues ceased by the end of the first

century or thereabouts; the argument is over whether they started again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Paul does not give us enough information to be unequivocal about this matter and we must be careful not to use uncertain exegesis to justify practices that have no other scriptural basis and which conform to pagan practices.

## Appendix Four

# A Concise History of Music in Church Worship<sup>40</sup>

Time period	Events
Pentecost plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Jerusalem, converts attend some temple services temporarily, there is no centralised organisation, some local structural confusion and frequent persecution. Apostles set up house churches where the emphasis is upon <i>koinonia</i>.</li> <li>• Outside Jerusalem, converts begin to establish house meetings based upon the synagogue after the Jewish synagogue elders throw worshippers of Jesus out. Singing of scripture and chanting of Psalms follows the Jewish idiom with some Hellenistic (Greek) musical influences as well.</li> <li>• Worship services of: prayer, praise, sung Psalms, edification, scripture reading and the Lord's Supper. No records of music.</li> <li>• The content of worship meetings was not written down and prescribed in a liturgy, but was spontaneously led by worship leaders (elders or their delegates).</li> </ul>
Apostolic age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House churches are established everywhere. No music, corporate <i>koinonia</i> based worship (with above components), godly communities, apostolic input and correction.</li> <li>• Some evidence of composed worship songs.</li> <li>• Degeneration of churches on occasion but not widespread.</li> <li>• Meetings often at night or in early morning (many converts were slaves who had no free time on any day).</li> <li>• Little time spent in establishing elaborate formal services since the expectation was for the early second coming of the Lord.</li> </ul>

<sup>40</sup> Various sources have been trawled for this section, including an extensive use of *Music and Religion*, Rev W.W. Longford DD, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co Ltd, London (nd); *Collins Music Encyclopedia* (1959); *A History of Christian Worship*, Oscar Hardman, Univ. of London Press (1937); and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* CD 97.

Post apostolic church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degeneration in churches began at end of apostolic age, noted by John.</li> <li>• Some definite use of composed hymns, plus the Psalms and scripture portions like: <i>'Gloria in Excelsis'</i>, the <i>'Magnificat'</i>, and the <i>'Nunc Dimittis'</i>.</li> <li>• Musical instruments and ritual dances are associated with pagan religion and avoided. Rhythmic verse gives way to prose. Singing is in unison. The whole point is to worship in a noticeably different way to the world.</li> <li>• Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan describes a Christian meeting and mentions antiphonal singing (c.115). <sup>41</sup></li> <li>• During persecution, meetings were held in secret, often in caves, catacombs (burial chambers) and forests.</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church Orders begin to appear. These are manuals of liturgical regulation, thus formalising worship leading. For instance: <i>The Didache</i> (c.100).</li> <li>• Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Justyn Martyr mention early Christian hymns.</li> <li>• Clement (150-220) and Athenagoras (177) composed hymns.</li> <li>• Tertullian (150-225) tells us brethren were invited to sing scripture or songs they had composed</li> <li>• The <i>Odes of Solomon</i> (42 early Christian hymns).</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church orders include: <i>The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus</i> (c.217), <i>The Didascalia</i> (c.250) and the <i>Apostolic Church Order</i> (c. 300).</li> <li>• Worship begins to be performed in buildings set apart for it. Some musical developments take pace.</li> <li>• The Church is becoming a universal (catholic) unified body but forms of worship differ.</li> <li>• Eusebius (260-340) tells of congregations joining in the last verses of hymns begun by someone.</li> <li>• In Antioch, ceremony becomes extravagant and musical. It was probably here that Jewish Psalms were wedded to Greek modes of music (many fundamental musical scales were developed in Greece). Antioch introduces applause and females in choirs in church services, deprecated elsewhere.</li> <li>• From earliest times there are two types of church with very different worship styles:</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> Antiphonal originally (as here) meant two bodies of singers singing in alternation, one group answering the other. Antiphon later came to mean: certain processional melodies, four hymns in honour of Mary, or more usually a plainsong setting of sacred words in connection with a Psalm. Anthem is an English corruption of the word.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ The overt, institutional, formal church system (the Roman Catholic Church until the Reformation) - for which we have a varying degree of historical evidence of worship development.</li> <li>♦ The underground, communal, organic, home-based, brethren type of church (frequently persecuted by the institutional churches) for which records are slight.</li> </ul>
Edict of Milan 313	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With legalisation of Christianity by Emperor Constantine the church is compromised but spreads – flooded with nominal converts happy to please the emperor.</li> <li>• Public buildings (basilicas) put to use for churches. These have a raised dais (platform or stage) and lead the church towards the idea of a Greek performance and display.</li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pope Sylvester founds a school of singing (the prototype of choir training and also the germ of the medieval university) in the early 4<sup>th</sup> c.</li> <li>• Bishop Leontius (c.350) writes of two choirs singing antiphonally in Antioch. Before this response singing had largely prevailed.<sup>42</sup></li> <li>• Ambrose (337-397, bishop of Milan and teacher of Augustine) wrote many metrical hymns and introduced singing by antiphonal choirs to the West in 387. He also fixed the authentic modes for church music, limiting it to four tones to avoid profane melodies. Milan introduces Eastern features to the West and is the dominant church influence at this time.</li> <li>• Liturgical books appear which prescribe the actual forms to be used by officers in church services, superseding Church Orders. These service books contain selected passages of scripture, the Psalter, canticles and hymns for singers. Books called Sacramentaries, containing miscellaneous collections of prayers, were provided for the priest.</li> <li>• The <i>Gallican Liturgy</i> service established by either Auxentius (Ambrose's predecessor) or Ambrose. Used in Gaul, Spain and Britain until displaced by Roman forms. Has Eastern features including: anthems, the <i>Trisagion</i>, the <i>Benedictus</i> with lections, and hymns.</li> <li>• Composed songs proliferate.</li> <li>• Churches in the great cities become palaces, choirs become spectacles of virtuosity rather than leading the people in praise. The choirs use gestures and receive applause.</li> </ul>

<sup>42</sup> Response singing is where the choir or congregation answers the part sung by the leader or priest.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pagan style religious dance begins to appear.</li> <li>• As church life deteriorates, monasticism emerges in a quest for purity.</li> <li>• Council of Laodicea (367) tries to reform abuses and confines church music to a body of ordained singers.</li> <li>• Two treatises by Niceta of Remesia (who probably composed the <i>Te Deum</i>) form an apologetic for keeping vigils (special evening and morning services) with psalmody and hymn singing.</li> <li>• In England, the Celtic church is strong well before the arrival of the Romanising mission of Augustine in 597. According to Giraldus Cambrensis (writing in the 12<sup>th</sup> c.) Celtic Christian music was sung in parts in natural harmony in a minor key accompanied by harp, crwth and pipe.</li> </ul>
5 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pope Leo the Great (440-461) establishes a singing school.</li> <li>• Antiphonal choirs adopted in Rome by mid century.</li> <li>• Western Europe (not Rome) flooded with new liturgical forms and church songs. These later merged with general plainsong.</li> <li>• Barbarian invasions influence society and church with pagan customs; classical modes displaced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Visi-Goths under Alaric overrun Italy, Southern Gaul and settle in Spain</li> <li>➤ Ostro-Goths under Theodoric settle in Italy.</li> <li>➤ Vandals and Burgundians establish kingdoms in Gaul, Spain and Africa.</li> <li>➤ Franks take northern Gaul.</li> <li>➤ Lombards take the Po valley.</li> <li>➤ Angles and Saxons begin to invade Britain.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time of great transition.</li> <li>• <i>Gregorian Revival</i>: Gregory I, the Great (540-604), bishop of Rome, becomes the effectual founder of the papacy by dint of his reorganisation and statesmanship. Rome begins to have a greater influence than Milan in the West.</li> <li>• The Roman church had been slow to accede to new musical developments in the Roman Empire, but Gregory kick started a revolution in the late 6<sup>th</sup> c.</li> <li>• Gregory founds a school of singers at Rome, fixes the order of the Mass, and widens the scope of church music by</li> </ul>

	<p>authorising additions to the modes of Ambrose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He compiles an Antiphonal<sup>43</sup> of liturgical music. However, he does not necessarily compose it all. The simplest songs are considered to be of his writing, the more elaborate are drawn from many Greek and Syriac sources.</li> <li>• The <i>Antiphony of Gregory</i> contains provision for Psalmody and directions for the musical parts in the Mass, including solo chants.</li> <li>• Note: Gregorian music is wider than <i>plainsong</i>.<sup>44</sup> All <i>plainsong</i> does not derive from Gregory, there were many musical resources in existence from his own Benedictine order.</li> <li>• Music generally becomes the virtual province of the church until the days of the Troubadours.</li> <li>• 578, women excluded from singing performances in the Roman church.</li> <li>• System of notation developed (6-7<sup>th</sup> c.) based upon the invention of <i>neumes</i>,<sup>45</sup> attributed to Ephraim of Edessa (d. 378). This ensures preservation and transmission of songs in writing. Benedictine monasteries play a big part in this preservation.</li> <li>• At this time, Irish missionaries ensure that Irish musical forms have a widespread influence in Europe as Rome was in chaos until Gregory's time and his reforms took time to take effect. The base Irish musical scale was like the Greek Dorian mode, but Celtic music was not based on Greek scales. Celtic Christians appear to have used the Irish harp and the <i>crotta</i> (<i>crwth</i>) as mentioned by Fortunatus (bishop of Poitiers) in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century.</li> </ul>
7 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gregory's reforms begin to affect English churches, and later</li> </ul>

<sup>43</sup> The book containing the official music sung by the choir in the Roman church; except for the Mass, which is contained in the 'Gradual'. [Also 'Antiphoner', 'antiphony'.]

<sup>44</sup> *Plainsong* chant (or 'plainchant', 'Gregorian chant' or 'smooth song') is the name given to Western chants as opposed to Gallican, Ambrosian, Eastern etc. comprising an unaccompanied single line of melody. It is noteworthy for its absence of rhythm and the arrangement of tone and semitone. Modern popular music has two modes (major and minor), Greek song had four modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian and Mixolydian, comprising the white piano notes beginning on E,D,C and B.) Ambrose established four modes while Gregory added four more, each mode had different intervals of tone and semitone. The range of expression in *plainsong* is thus more varied than modern music. It originated from Jewish scripture cantillation and is therefore, prose music set to speech patterns. Most musical idoms (including church idoms) derive from dance forms and have a set rhythm; *plainsong* has no such limitation. This protects it from pagan, rhythmic emotionalism, as there is no appeal to bodily motion.

<sup>45</sup> Musical signs over the words of plainsong.

	<p>also Irish ones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Antiphoner</i> of Bangor Monastery, Co. Down (680) contains Irish (Celtic) hymns, the <i>Te Deum</i>, the <i>Gloria in Excelsis</i>, Biblical canticles and hymns of Cyprian and Ambrose.</li> <li>• <i>Cursus Scotturum</i> of Columba describes rules for chanting the Psalter.</li> <li>• Singing schools set up at Canterbury and York.</li> <li>• In 680 the Abbot of Wearmouth, Benedict Biscop, borrowed John, the precentor of St. Peter's in Rome, in order to teach the Roman style of music in Northumbria.</li> <li>• Roman innovations influence Gallican churches, spread from England by missionaries.</li> <li>• Many hymns are written in this century, especially in the East, however musical instruments are forbidden in the East but begin to be encouraged in the West.</li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John of Damascus – reformer of church music in the Eastern church.</li> <li>• In the West, Charlemagne's rule ensures the success of Gregorian chants. All other musical types swept away. Ambrosian collections destroyed.</li> <li>• Alcuin set up as Charlemagne's head of learning. More schools of music established.</li> <li>• The organ begins to have prominence in support of Gregorian music (except at Rome where it was forbidden). Various instruments were in use in the Middle Ages for secular purposes (e.g. shawm, trumpets, organs, bagpipe, harp, psaltery, flute, vielle, drums) but until the organ found favour with Charlemagne, church music was unaccompanied and had been from the beginning. Secular instruments begin to appear more and more in church.</li> <li>• Music undergirds the expansion of Roman authority. Organ use primarily begins in Spain and England. Prior to this organs had been secular instruments. Charlemagne introduces organs into the larger churches in Europe, except Rome. Organs were, however, limited by construction at this time and did not accompany the choir but gave the intonations.</li> </ul>
9 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huebald of Flanders (b. 840) experimented with part singing within plainsong by adding descants to melodies.</li> <li>• <i>The Organum</i> appears where the melody is doubled at the fourth or fifth interval (like round singing).</li> </ul>

10 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At some point (around the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> c.) primitive staff notation appears. A red line is used, drawn through the neumes to represent the pitch of F. After this a yellow or green line was introduced for C. Then the lines were drawn black and marked F and C.</li> <li>• The book <i>Musica Enchiriadis</i> appears introducing theories of unison organum singing</li> <li>• Pérotin of Notre Dame is the first composer to write for three and four voices. Polyphony<sup>46</sup> begins.</li> <li>• To avoid obscuring the melody line, the tenor voice assumes dominance and holds the tune. This was called <i>faux-bourdon</i> (false-tenor).</li> <li>• The Benedictine independent monasteries had become the chief repositories of learning and education during the previous 500 years. Cluny, established in 910, was the most significant. The Cluniac Reformation begins to cleanse monastic life generally and would later bear fruit in a new artistic and musical culture.</li> </ul>
11 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of Western Europe's larger churches and cathedrals have organs. There is still no use of stringed instruments.</li> <li>• By 1025 the Benedictine monk Guido of Arezzo (990-1050) showed that the writing of neumes on three or more lines, marked at the beginning with letters of the monochord, made it possible for singers to read music for themselves. He also produced theories on the construction of counterpoint. This was a major advance in musical development and he was called the 'Inventor Musicae'.</li> <li>• Notation advances with the introduction of black notes indicating exact intervals and time-values. The descant is added in red.</li> <li>• Despite plainsong making a home in the big English churches like Canterbury, many parochial churches seem to have stuck to ancient forms of music. The Viking disruption and destruction of monasteries had impeded the Gregorian reform in some areas. Also King Alfred had entrusted music to a Celt, John of St Davids. Prelates after the Norman Conquest objected to this Celtic style and the Normans forced the English churches into line with Continental standards. The Norman Abbot of Glastonbury even made archers shoot down English monks at their altar for refusing to change their musical format.</li> </ul>

<sup>46</sup> Melody plus harmonic parts.

12-13 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The four line musical staff appears for plainsong and monophonic<sup>47</sup> chansons. The five line staff is used for polyphonic music.</li> <li>• The development of polyphony, instead of simple melody, limits the expression of worship more and more to trained singers. Choirs become vital and are composed of minor order clerics. The congregation ceases to play a part as it did in the days of Ambrose.</li> <li>• A manuscript dated 1220 shows the canon <i>Sumer is icumen in</i> was written in six parts in England. Harmony appears to have been prominent in England fairly early.</li> <li>• Latin is no longer the language of the people but it remains the language of the church liturgy. Only in monasteries do all sing and understand what is sung.</li> <li>• The treble clef (as we know it today) appears in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.</li> <li>• Ethelred of Rievaulx mentions cymbals, pipes and cornets being used in 12<sup>th</sup> century Yorkshire churches in <i>Speculum Caritatis</i>.</li> </ul>
14-15 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the 14<sup>th</sup> c. open notes began to displace the black and red ones in musical notation.</li> <li>• The Renaissance begins to influence church styles by a reversion to pagan art forms. In music this meant a return to rhythmic form away from the ecclesiastical prominence found in the Middle Ages of <i>a capella</i> vocal. Generally, music had been much wider in scope in pre-Christian times. Even Celtic music had a natural harmony but Greek, Hebrew and other ancient music rarely got harmony beyond the octave.</li> <li>• Music, instead of words, becomes the most important feature in the Mass. Secular and even ribald tunes begin to be used as themes. Similarly secular (and worse) forms appear in church sculptures.</li> <li>• In 1450 cymbals, organs and clarions are mentioned as being in use in English churches.</li> <li>• Josquin des Près (1440-1521), a singer belonging to the Papal Chapel, is the first significant composer of new religious tunes, though he also uses secular melodies. Music begins to be used as an actual language, to express thought in sound.</li> <li>• All voices begin to share the musical lines instead of the</li> </ul>

<sup>47</sup> Melody only without accompaniment.

	<p>Medieval practice of prominence given to the tenor, and mainly only using two voices ('dissonance').</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wickliffe's followers (Lollards) popularised their proto-reformed message with songs in the 14<sup>th</sup> c.</li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1517, The Reformation begins. Luther establishes singing as a powerful agent of reform through transmission of sung truth. Re-introduces singing to the laity. [The Roman Catholic church had only allowed the clergy to sing, and then in Latin.] Luther even insists on music lessons in his seminaries for preachers. Following the example of the leaders of the Bohemian Brethren, Luther produced hymns in the common tongue; this was really a re-kindling of the Old German vernacular song. Luther himself composes many fine hymns including, 'A mighty fortress is our God'. Luther extensively uses the device of the chorale. Unlike Calvin, Luther adapted some of the existing Roman Catholic tunes; his chief collaborator was Walther.</li> <li>• Other reformers also introduce the vernacular to songs, which inspires new compositions. Foremost in use were metrical translations of the Psalms.</li> <li>• The Bohemian Brethren, followers of Jan Hus, publish the first Protestant hymnbook.</li> <li>• The earliest Reformation Psalms were set to the music of the troubadour love songs in vogue in the court of France in the 13-15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1542 Clement Marot published 52 Psalms in metre set to French court music. These were adopted by Calvin and added to by Beza. <i>The Genevan Psalter</i> appears in 1562, first in French but later translated into German and Dutch; with tunes collected and composed by Bourgeois and others. This becomes the main tune book of the Reformed churches in Europe, which uses unaccompanied unison singing, except in Holland where organ music was allowed.</li> <li>• Refugees, who fled the Marian persecution, return to England in 1559 bringing with them the influences of Calvinism absorbed in Frankfurt and Geneva. English Puritanism is influenced by Calvinistic and French sources rather than Lutheranism. Coverdale's Psalter and songbook had introduced Lutheran hymns in 1539 (<i>Goostly Psalmes &amp; Spirituelle Songs</i>) but it had little influence. The reformed English Church ignored hymn-singing for 200 years, although anthems (e.g. by Byrd) were sung in cathedrals and large churches with choirs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sternhold and Hopkins produce an imitation of Marot, set to ballad and dance tunes which became very popular, despite being disdained by church authorities. It was known as <i>The Old Version</i> and the definitive edition appeared in 1562. This was only superseded in 1696 when <i>The New Version</i> of Tate and Brady appeared.</li> <li>• The Church of England clings to pre-Reformation liturgical ideals but Cranmer does not preserve old Latin hymns in Prayer Book services, except 'Veni Creator' in the Ordinal. The ancient English use of hymnody is omitted. Hymns are generally lost to the English church, except for use in University worship where Latin liturgical forms were allowed.</li> <li>• Vernacular services become widespread in England in the reign of Edward VI (from 1549-1553). Cranmer's Litany in English is introduced in 1544 followed by the <i>first Book of Common Prayer</i> in 1549, revised in 1552. Writers begin to compose in English instead of Latin.</li> <li>• In Scotland Knox issues <i>The Book of Our Common Order</i>, authorised by the General Assembly in 1562, containing the Psalms in English metre.</li> <li>• Organists, choir-masters and composers abound like: Taverner (1495-1545), Marbeck (1510-1585), Sheppard, Tye (1500-73) and Tallis (1505-1585) using plainsong forms of scripture and the Creed before the English Reformation.</li> <li>• In Elizabeth's reign (from 1558-1603), Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) composes powerful church music but Puritans oppose vestments, ritual, organs and antiphonal singing.</li> <li>• Rome seeks to reform abuses to survive the Reformation at the Council of Trent (closed in 1563). Pope Pius IV commissions Palestrina (1514-1594) to examine the religious potential of harmonic construction. Palestrina's music is considered sublime and idealistic. A new school of music is established in Rome under his influence. However, this did not preserve Rome's musical purity. The freedom gained by the Renaissance through expression in instrumental forms led to a loss of religious tone.</li> </ul>
17 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1623 George Wither's <i>Hymnes and Songs of the Church</i> is published, the first attempt at a comprehensive English hymnbook, but with little success.</li> <li>• Dominance of the metrical Psalter in non-conformist denominations, especially Presbyterianism, with no musical</li> </ul>

	<p>accompaniment. The Scottish Psalter appears in 1650, still used today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional churches still use chants, songs, choirs and organs, though few parochial churches have organs.</li> <li>• After the English Civil War, Cromwell removed organs from all churches.</li> <li>• After the Restoration of Charles II, musicians such as Henry Purcell and Cooke compose church music, especially items for the Chapel Royal. Plainsong merges into the traditional Anglican form of chant. Soprano part (treble) sings the melody line rather than the tenor.</li> <li>• John Evelyn, writing in 1662, complains of the introduction of violins in place of 'ancient' English cornet music.</li> <li>• Hymns begin to be freely written late in the century, especially amongst non-conformists. The Baptists pave the way.</li> <li>• In Germany Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) composes perhaps the finest Lutheran hymns. Others include Rist, Heermann, Dach, Isaak, Schein, Cruger, Hassler and Ahle.</li> </ul>
18 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate, complex and picturesque church compositions of J. S. Bach (1685-1750), who was greatly influenced by the Lutheran chorale and previous organists. Probably the greatest composer of all time for organ music.</li> <li>• George Frederick Handel (1685-1759) writes Latin Psalms, oratorios (e.g. <i>The Messiah</i>) and cantata-like anthems.</li> <li>• Henry Purcell writes fine anthems.</li> <li>• Emergence of popular Christian hymns: Augustus Toplady, Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge and Charles Wesley being the most famous hymn-writers. Watts' <i>Hymns and Spiritual Songs</i> appeared in 1707. Watts and Doddridge tended to paraphrase scripture. John Wesley issues a church hymnbook in 1737 which was the first successful hymnbook for use in the Church of England. Charles Wesley put ideas and experiences into poetic form as well as paraphrasing scripture and the Prayer Book.</li> <li>• In 1779 John Newton and William Cowper produce the <i>Olney Hymns</i>.</li> <li>• Reformed preachers, like William Romaine, object to hymns as being merely human compositions and not scripture.</li> <li>• Early church Fathers like: Ephraem, Athanasius, Chrysostom and later ones like Hilary and Ambrose had used hymns as a weapon of doctrinal defence in opposition</li> </ul>

	<p>to the schismatic teachers who wrote heretical songs. There is no doubt that reformed hymns had a widespread beneficial effect. Unfortunately, many popular hymns were Arminian.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Porteous (Bishop of London) declares in 1790 that, '<i>Psalmody is now almost totally useless in the Church of England</i>'.</li> <li>• Revivals in Kentucky between 1797-1805 spawn Negro spirituals like <i>Swing Low Sweet Chariot</i>.</li> </ul>
19 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Oxford Movement spawns a school of hymnody. Gradually, Anglican churches embrace hymn singing.</li> <li>• The <i>Methodist Hymnbook</i> is very popular.</li> <li>• Hymns were still formally outlawed in the Church of England until 1819 when a Sheffield vicar was charged with using a hymnbook in services. This test case led to hymns being legally accepted.</li> <li>• Anglican hymn-writers include James Montgomery (considered by many to be amongst the front rank hymnwriters), J. M. Neale, Charlotte Elliot, Sarah Adams, Reginald Heber, J. B. Dykes, Sir John Stainer &amp; Mrs. C. F. Alexander. Between 1800 and 1880, 220 hymnbooks appear within the Church of England.</li> <li>• <i>Hymns Ancient &amp; Modern</i> arises from the Oxford Mvt. In 1861, but is accepted widely by Anglicans. Within 100 years it sold 150 million copies. Later Samuel Sebastian Wesley (Charles' grandson) improves many <i>A&amp;M</i> tunes and gives each hymn its own dedicated melody. The Free Churches later shape their hymnbooks along the lines of <i>A&amp;M</i>. <i>The New Congregational Hymn Book</i> appears in 1859.</li> <li>• Hymns gradually begin to appear in Scottish services.</li> <li>• C. H. Spurgeon leads the largest Baptist church in England (6,000) but does not use a pipe-organ.</li> <li>• D. L. Moody brings Ira D. Sankey to sing solos on his first UK evangelistic crusade (1873-75), thus starting a trend for an emotional, musical preparation for the Gospel. Books of Sankey's songs (first appearing in 1873) become best-sellers and form popular household entertainment around the piano. It was said that fewer people listened to the works of Bach during the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century than heard Sankey sing in 1875.</li> <li>• In 1870 Moody and Sankey begin to collect hymns for their evangelistic campaigns. <i>Sacred Songs and Solos</i> had grown</li> </ul>

	<p>from a sixpenny pamphlet in to a book of 1200 pieces by 1903. The book included music from the secular Music-Hall ('Variety') and brought story telling into hymns. The better contributors included: Fanny Crosby and Frances Ridley Havergal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Booth establishes the Salvation Army in 1877 around the concept of a marching band to proclaim the Gospel in the streets, wedded to social work. This further conjoins music with the Gospel in the popular mind.</li> </ul>
20 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piano or small pedal-organ (harmonium) dominates most non-conformist churches while pipe-organ and choirs accompany institutional churches. <i>Hymns Ancient and Modern</i> is used in Anglican churches; <i>Redemption Hymnal</i>, <i>Keswick Hymnal</i>, <i>Christian Hymns</i>, <i>Hymns of Faith</i> and others are popular in other denominations. <i>Congregational Praise</i> arrives in 1951 while the <i>Methodist Hymnbook</i> is published in 1933. Pentecostal churches use chorus songs (e.g. 'Elim Choruses') as well as hymns.</li> <li>• The closest things to popular music in churches are Salvation Army bands and concerts, male-voice choirs, black Gospel spirituals and recitals of hymns.</li> <li>• Youth culture effectively begins with Rock 'n Roll in 1956. The role of popular music is revolutionised.</li> <li>• Advancing technology encourages new musical developments. The 1960's see a vast plethora of new pop musical styles (e.g. rock, funk, heavy metal, modern blues, jazz-funk, soul, reggae, progressive-rock, pop-rock, folk-rock etc.)</li> <li>• Evangelical churches begin to admit a folk style of acoustic music in some services by the mid 1960's (e.g singing 'Go Tell it On The Mountain' accompanied by acoustic guitar is considered revolutionary at this time). Elim choruses in use in some non-conformist churches along with various hymnbooks. Piano still dominates accompaniment.</li> <li>• A Salvation Army Gospel folk group (The Joystings) has a pop hit with <i>It's An Open Secret</i> in the early 60's.</li> <li>• UCCF student union meetings start adopting a folk format for singing worship as guitars are readily available to students in meeting rooms but pianos rarely are. A new guitar based chorus book becomes available - <i>Youth Praise</i>.</li> <li>• Folk style songs begin to emerge in force via the Charismatic Movement (<i>Sounds of Living Waters</i>, Fisher Folk songs).</li> </ul>

- Choruses begin to dominate the worship of many churches in the 1970's.
- Non-Charismatic churches bring out many hymnbooks, such as: *Grace Hymns* (Strict Baptist, 1974), *Christian Hymns* (1977), *The Methodist Book of Hymns and Psalms* (1983) and *Praise 2000*.
- The Restoration Movement (Charismatic) heavily features prominent musical worship in the modern idiom.
- Even large Charismatic churches are still effectively using folk formats by the early 1980's. Piano, small bands of acoustic music and some guitar accompany congregations of several hundreds via small PA systems.
- By the late 1980's most Charismatic churches have electric instruments, like guitars and keyboards, and use drums. Bands very similar to pop bands begin to take over worship accompaniment.
- Songs and choruses by modern writers like Graham Kendrick dominate Charismatic and many other churches.
- John Wimber's mid 80's conferences influence many churches to adopt his free style of worship, music and West Coast (USA) pop songs.
- Pop-rock becomes the dominant style of Evangelical worship accompaniment.
- Charismatic choruses and songs become sloppy, unorthodox in content, emotional and sentimental. Some are staggering in their heresy or irreverence. Most are Arminian in basis. Fewer and fewer focus on Christ and the great truths of the Gospel, while most concentrate upon 'me'. Unorthodox notions in many choruses contribute to a solemn lack of mature doctrinal understanding amongst the Lord's people.
- Worship leaders begin to be a saleable commodity. Worship CD's become a growth industry while *Contemporary Christian Music* emerges as a genre in secular recording labels and becomes the fastest growing market in American record sales by the mid 90's.
- CD sales of 'worship' songs soar. Many folk feel that they can worship while doing housework, or other menial tasks, if these records are playing.
- Some worship leaders hold large venue rock concerts which purport to be worship. To all intent and purposes there is no difference from an ordinary secular rock concert. Modern Charismatic worship becomes mere entertainment.

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worship bands become so loud that older folk often take ear-plugs to church services. Secular music styles dominate ‘worship’, while the worship time dominates the service. Many churches abandon breaking bread altogether. Even small churches feel that a PA system and a worship band are of vital importance.</li><li>• Most ordinary Christians associate worship with singing to emotional music. The real concept of spiritual worship is largely lost within mainstream Evangelicalism.</li><li>• At least one generation of Christians now has no knowledge of hymnbooks at all and no practical experience of <i>koinonia</i> and shared ministry in Sunday meetings.</li></ul> |
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## Appendix Five

# How do we give a proper expression to the NT injunction to rejoice and be glad?

The apostolic experience of God's grace in church included a joy which required several superlatives to describe:

*And there was great **joy** in that city.* (Acts 8:8)

*And the disciples were filled with **joy** and with the Holy Spirit.* (Acts 13:52)

*The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and **joy** in the Holy Spirit.* (Rm 14:17)

*Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with **joy** inexpressible and full of glory.* (1 Pt 1:8)

*And these things we write to you that your **joy** may be full.* (1 Jn 1:4)

*And not only that, but we also **rejoice** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.* (Rm 5:11)

*Finally, my brethren, **rejoice** in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.* (Phil 3:1)

***Rejoice** in the Lord always. Again I will say, **rejoice!*** (Phil 4:4)

These are just a few of the references to joy in the NT. Philippians alone has 14 references to joy or rejoicing (NKJV). The joy is linked to Christ, truth, peace, suffering, trials, tribulation, the kingdom, fellowship, love and so on. Joy should be full, complete, inexpressible and full of glory. How do we do justice to these words in church life? Can we just stand motionless and model such instructions?

We must find a way of expressing the glory and joy of what God has done for us in Christ which does justice to these words but does not lead into the excesses of the flesh or impinges upon indecency and chaos. Every church must find its own way of doing this. Churches which forbid any form of physical activity or emotional expression must surely err since they cannot be manifesting an intense joy which is '*inexpressible<sup>48</sup> and full of glory*'. Christian worship will manifest an intense

<sup>48</sup> The fact that it is inexpressible does not mean that it was not expressed but that it was extreme. The word really means *unspeakable* and is also used by Paul to refer to the gift of Christ (2 Cor 9:15). Though the fulness of Christ's atonement and God's grace is unspeakable, this does not prevent the Gospel from being spoken about. Similarly, unspeakable joy is also expressed in church life.

joy on occasion; but apostolic teaching shows that this is done within the limitations of decency and good order.

Great joy will mainly result in great thankfulness and this should always be a primary constituent of our praise. Thankfulness will work itself out in prayers and sung praise and these will form the principal expressions of worship in church life. However, there may be occasions where joy overflows into other expressions which, while remaining within the bounds of decency, are more exuberant than normal. Caring shepherds will know how to cope with these and when to curb them.

This booklet features a number of papers, produced for the church at various times, collected together with amendments and new sections in 2001.

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