



O LORD, OPEN OUR LIPS!

*Church Hymnody and Worship in
History and Today; Including an
Exposé of the Hidden Agenda
Behind the New Style of Worship*

Abstract

A devastating ecclesiastical crisis has been unfolding during the last few decades in the realm of Christian worship. Plainly, there has been something of a ‘revolution’ in the worship in churches during this time. Central to this upheaval has been a bumper bandwagon of new songs — and one is either travelling on this bandwagon or not. To be off it is to be left out in the cold. Moreover, to resist this bandwagon will inevitably bring accusations of “not keeping up with the times”, of “resisting the move of the Spirit”, or of “standing in the way of the inevitable global revival”, and so on. In this paper, I will examine the issues involved, trace the history of hymnody and corporate worship, expose the movements which have led to this ‘worship revolution’, show the connections with New Age occultism, and demonstrate the glaring hidden agenda which lies behind it all.

Alan Morrison

diakrisis-project@outlook.com

O Lord, Open Our Lips

*Church Hymnody and Worship
in History and Today;
Including an Exposé of the
Hidden Agenda Behind
the New Style of Worship*

፬፻፱፱

Dedicated to my Divine Master
The Christ
who walked this earth in the flesh
fulfilled His mission
defeated the forces of darkness
and who will come again
with power and great glory

፬፻፱፱



This eBook (3rd edition) was published on November 7th, 2023, by **Under the Radar Publications**. For further information, please contact us at this email address: diakrisis-project@outlook.com

Written and designed by: Alan Morrison.

Website link: <https://diakrisis-project.com/>

Text copyright © 1997, 2000, 2023. Under the Radar/ Alan Morrison.

Although copyright, this eBook is a labour of love and may be freely distributed, on condition that such distribution keeps the same title, PDF file format and design in which it was published, that nothing is added to the text and nothing taken away from it, and that it carries a link to the original source of the eBook.

The body-text of this eBook is set in Book Antiqua font at 11 pts.

This is v.1.0 of this eBook. Check on the website for new versions. If you spot a typographical error, please report it using the email address above.

This is an ‘interactive’ PDF document, containing the following mouse-clickable or touchscreen elements: All bookmarks, headings on the Contents pages, email addresses and weblinks in both the main text and footnotes. It can be read in any PDF ‘reader’, such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, Google Drive PDF reader, etc. You can also easily import it to your Kindle reader or into the Kindle programme on your desktop/laptop computer, tablet or phone. A good-sized smartphone will work, but It will look at its best and be easiest on the eyes on a desktop/laptop computer or tablet. A tablet is especially recommended for easy reading and portability as a substitute for a Kindle experience.

Bible references in this eBook can be from a certain few translations, but often the [Berean Standard Bible](#) is used verbatim. The author also always consults the Hebrew or Greek texts and often uses his own personal translations of them in order to get as close to what he believes to be the best meaning possible.

Table of Contents

PREAMBLE	8
INTRODUCTION.....	9
My Own Initial Struggle with this Subject	10
Hypnotic Triggers	12
I. HYMNODY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA	14
1. In Praise of God’s Attributes	14
2. Thanksgiving for Deliverance.....	15
3. Praise Him for His Judgements	16
4. The Centrality of Didacticism.....	16
5. Cries for Deliverance out of Affliction	18
6. Hymning Intercession.....	18
7. Proclaiming the Prophetic	18
II. HYMNODY IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA	20
III. HYMNODY IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC ERA.....	24
IV. IDENTIFYING THE PRIMARY TRENDS IN HYMNODY TODAY.....	29
1. The Substitution of the Old Testament Temple Model of Worship for that of the Synagogue	29
David’s Dancing Does Not Justify an ‘Anything Goes’ Model of New Testament Worship	29
Scripture Reading and its Exposition Were the Centrepiece of Early Church Worship	31
The Nuts and Bolts of New Testament Meetings in the Early Church	33
2. The Shift from Classical Form to Romanticism	35
3. The Eclipsing of the Sovereignty of God in Favour of Humanistic Sentiment	38
4. The “Dumbing Down” of the Human Mind	40

5. Moving Away from Seasonal Song to Manipulative Music.....	42
Manipulative Church Music is Rooted in a Manipulated ‘Conversion’	45
The New Style of Worship Manipulates an Altered State of Consciousness	48
6. The Move Away from Biblical Separation to Woolly Ecumenism.....	53
7. The Move from Participative Congregational Worship to Spectator Entertainment Performance	53
8. The Movement away from the Presentation of the Self as a Living Sacrifice before God to the Exhibitionist Parading of one’s ‘Gifts’ in the Church.....	55
9. The Move from Reverence and Awe to “Leisurewear Levity”	56
10. The Movement Away from the Worship of the Trinitarian Godhead to a cool “Buddy-Buddy” Relationship with “Jesus”	57
11. Moving Away from a Timeless Musical Idiom to the Transient, Corrupted Idioms of Rock and Pop	58
i. Rock Music is the Music of Rebellion	58
ii. Rock and Pop music is the Music of the Flesh.....	60
iii. Rock/Pop Music Rely Mainly on Manipulative Effects	62
iv. Rock and Pop Music are Birthed in Egocentricity.....	64
V. THE STRATEGIES BEHIND THE NEW STYLE OF WORSHIP	67
1. To Render Congregations Incapable of True Discernment.....	69
2. The Progressive “Charismaticisation” of Worship and the Church	70
3. To Distort the Place of the Church in the World.....	72

The Unbiblical Fantasy of a Global Revival to Usher in the Return of Christ	73
The Kingdom Idea of the Restorationists Contradicts The Lord Jesus.....	75
4. To Make the Holy Spirit the Focus of the Church instead of the Lord Jesus Christ	76
5. To Cause Emotional Catharsis Under the Pretence of Genuine Spiritual Experience	77
Chasing a Highly Illusory “Baptism with the Holy Spirit”	78
Gibberish ‘Tongues-Speaking’ is Another Vehicle for Brainwashing.....	81
An Altered State of Consciousness is the Doorway to the Occult	85
The Pentecostal-Charismatic New Style of Worship is an Initiation into a Christianised Version of the New Age.....	87
The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement Peddles Kundalini Energy	88
CONCLUSION	91
This Has Nothing to Do with Ethnic Differences ..	91
The Questions Which Need Asking	93
Content and Style Must Be God-Honouring, Edifying and Reverent	93
This is Spiritual Warfare!	93
Do Not Be Fooled by Similar Terminology	94
This is All Part of a Major Downgrade Caused by the “Tyranny of Novelty”	94
One of the Most Successful Satanic Ploys in Church History	96
Solid Songs by Spiritual Giants Are Needed	97

PREAMBLE

“Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so **worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.** ‘For our God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:28-29).

A devastating ecclesiastical crisis has been unfolding during the last few decades in the realm of Christian worship. Plainly, there has been something of a ‘revolution’ in the worship in churches during this time. Central to this upheaval has been a bumper bandwagon of new songs — and one is either travelling on this bandwagon or not. To be off it is to be left out in the cold. Moreover, to resist this bandwagon will inevitably bring accusations of “*not keeping up with the times*”, of “*resisting the move of the Spirit*”, or of “*standing in the way of the inevitable global revival*”, and so on.

I keep hearing how “exciting” the *New Style of Worship* is. But that is solely a verdict of the flesh, which should have no bearing on the matter. Entertaining the goats has now come to take precedent over feeding the sheep. **However, the litmus test for the worship of God should not be personal ‘excitement’ but the nurturing of reverence and awe in a congregation of the faithful.** That is both the starting point and bottom line in any consideration of worship.

Readers will have to put on their ‘discernment caps’ if they are going to grasp the fullness of what is written in this paper. They will also need to set aside any preconceptions and compare everything that I am saying with not only the actual Scriptures but also the complete essence which those Scriptures represent.

In this paper — which began life as a smaller piece in 1997, was updated in 2000 by 100%, and has just been expanded by a further 45% — I will examine the issues involved, trace the history of hymnody and corporate worship from the Old Testament to the present, expose the movements which have led to this ‘worship revolution’, show the connections with New Age occultism, and demonstrate the glaring hidden agenda which lies behind it all.

INTRODUCTION

“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare
Your praise!” (Psalm 51:15)

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

I have to confess that I am by no means unbiased in this ongoing debate. However, my bias has been forged out of what I consider to be objective evidence based on solid research which has profoundly disturbed me. For I believe that a number of very serious questions impinge on this whole area of hymn-singing and worship.

For example, in spite of the oft-made claim that the *New Style of Worship* heals rifts and brings unity in churches, is it not true that there is very often much harmful division created through its introduction, and that its advocates heartlessly dismiss its

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

detractors as being ‘on a lower spiritual plane’ and ‘obstructive to the worship of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit’, “an obstacle to revival”?

So this issue is not merely a question of choosing between two different kinds of hymnody, but it has also become a massive pastoral issue in churches today, interfacing with numerous other controversies. Is it not also true that where the *New Style of Worship* songs are introduced on a small scale to placate the demands of a tendentious faction in a church, there will soon be many more demands for the increasing liberalisation of worship, with numerous new, pernicious influences which bring many pastoral problems in their wake? Although they are rarely perceived as such by those who engage in them.

Moreover, how did such an evil deception as the so-called “Toronto Blessing” establish itself so easily in so many churches professing to be evangelical during the 1990s? That is the knotty question. Surely, it was because the previous introduction of the *New Style of Worship* songs and idiom in these churches had already provided a fertile seedbed — an *avant-garde* forerunner or, better, a harbinger — so that such developments would merely seem like a natural outgrowth of the worship.

Mission Praise was initially the most popular of all the contemporary songbooks. Because of its inclusion of older hymns, it is often found in some otherwise conservative evangelical churches. It thereby became the ideal ‘Trojan Horse’, softening up congregations for a whole range of further neo-evangelical developments.²

My Own Initial Struggle with this Subject

It would be worthwhile at this point to highlight my own struggle with this subject. I came from a background steeped in rock music — not heavy rock or metal, and certainly not “death metal”, but the music of Haight-Ashbury/Laurel Canyon hippiedom. From

² I use the word “evangelical” to represent the fact that so much of evangelicalism these days sits on the fence and wobbles around so as to avoid taking a firm stand for truth on controversial issues.

the 1960s until my turbulent time of *metanoia* in the mid-1980s, I was an avid listener of Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band, the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and many other musical icons of the hippy 'counterculture' (which is not really a counterculture at all but merely a seductive alternative culture which is still under the power of Satan).³ When I first came to Christ the rock, poppy, happy clappy *New Style of Worship* was getting started. At that time, I half believed that if secular rock music could be transformed into "Christian" rock then it would somehow become sanctified. However, within a very short time, I began to be increasingly uncomfortable with the entire idiom of the *New Style of Worship*. **As my understanding of the true nature of God increased and my knowledge of Scripture deepened, I came to comprehend the complete inadequacy and even impropriety of rock and pop music as a suitable vehicle for profound Christian worship involving reverence and awe, not to mention my discovery that there was a hidden agenda behind this new style of 'worship'.**

The purpose in revealing these things is to show that I have myself wrestled with these issues over many years and I do understand the difficult position in which many find themselves as they try to discern what constitutes appropriate churchly music. It has now become more vital than ever before to be hyper-discerning and not just passively receive things as if they are solely what they appear to be. For most things today are not what they seem at first glance.

So many of the *New Style of Worship* songs trivialise the high truths of salvation. Many are in a style which is simply not suited to the holy spirituality which is due to our God. Moreover, due to their pietistic, subjectivist roots, many of today's songs are highly

³ Ironically, most of those supposed 'rebels' of the music from that era — of those who are still alive — have now become stuffy establishment figures, feted by the captains of that establishment, ambassadors for the dangerous Covid vaccine, pillars of self-serving mediocrity, mere caricatures of themselves.

self-centred in their expression, and they pursue an almost obsessive musical celebration of “Me and My Wonderful Feelings” rather than glorifying the Lord and His amazing works.

Hypnotic Triggers

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

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

None of this has happened in a vacuum but is surely part of a major downgrade and even a necessary cog in a much wider apostasy of mind-blowing proportions. Yet, because of the stealth-like manner in which it has been executed, comparatively few professing Christians are aware of the seriousness of the issue. **It is my earnest hope that this little book will rectify that situation in some hearts.**

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

realm of nature. In Scripture, we see in many places the divine approval of hymnody, singing praises to the glory of God. Even during the creation the angels were singing (Job 38:7). What a joy it would be to hear that! Imagine the purity of angel-song. If only worship could truly be "*on earth, as it is in heaven*".

My intention, in this paper, is first to discover what Scripture reveals to us about how and what we should sing to God; then to look at hymnody in the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic early Church eras. Then we shall examine the leading trends which have conditioned the direction of worship in recent years. Finally, we will look at the strategies and hidden agenda which lie behind the making of the *New Style of Worship* songs.

I. HYMNODY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA

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

Some have found it easy to handle the difficulty of picking one's way around the modern hymn/chorus minefield by taking refuge in the exclusive singing of the Old Testament psalms. I respect their position and even have some sympathy with it — believing that the psalms should indeed be sung (and read) far more often than they are in churches. But I do not believe that the “*new song*” revealing the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:8-10; cf. 15:2-3), as jubilantly voiced by all believers in the Gospel Age, could possibly be restricted solely to the types, shadows and prophecies of an earlier, less glorious, covenant administration (Hebrews 7:22; 8:1-13; 12:24).

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

1. In Praise of God's Attributes

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

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

The promotion of God's attributes, such as His strength, His power, His glory and His holiness, can only promote wholesome worship, so that **reverence and awe become the central pillars of corporate worship**, especially if it is open to all, believers and unbelievers alike. **Reverence and awe.** Take those three words into your heart because they are indeed the very heart of what worshipping our Creator should be about. This is the verdict of Scripture:

“Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so

worship God acceptably **with reverence and awe**. ‘For our God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:28-29).

This is the key. When unbelievers or potential believers (what I call “disciples-in-waiting”) are entering our domain, we have to be doubly careful of the kind of character we exude. **Is it reverence and awe, or is it roll-around-on-the-floor?** Because the latter, or its equivalent, is what can happen in many assemblies today in the false name of ‘spontaneous works of the Spirit’.

When that text in the Letter to the Hebrews says, “worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. ‘For our God is a consuming fire’”, those last seven words are a direct quotation from Deuteronomy 4:24, where it is a warning about idolatry, about putting something else on the pedestal for worship which is other than God. When we do not approach God with reverence and awe and engage in song idioms and practices which are not conducive with that reverence and awe, then we are up to our eyeballs in idolatry and are in line for the consuming fire of God’s judgement. The very thought of this should make us all stop dead in our tracks to consider what it is we are doing when we come before God in worship.

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

2. Thanksgiving for Deliverance

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

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:2-4).

This hymnodic rejoicing in a historical event is echoed in the words sung by Moses and the children of Israel after the jubilant exodus from Egypt and the miraculous passage through the Red Sea: *“I will sing to the Lord because He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”* (Exodus 15:1).

3. Praise Him for His Judgements

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

The other Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 31 is a further example, about which God had specifically said:

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

In other words, these hymns were not merely in praise of God’s attributes and judgements but there was another vital undergirding principle and that is in the words above, “teach it”. Which brings us to our next facet of Old Testament hymnody.

4. The Centrality of Didacticism

At the heart of the psalms of Scripture is the vital influence of didacticism, which means ‘systematic instruction’. There are two principal ways that God teaches His people: one is what we can call “heuristic”, where we learn by the experiences of life in which He has placed us and by which He trains us (Hebrews 12:11). The other way that God teaches us is through “didactics” – and this is also the principal way – involving instruction in the form of

words, from the Bible, through teachers and preachers and other outward systematic means.

One of these means is through our songs. God teaches us about Himself and His truth through the songs that we sing. **Hymns should therefore function as ‘teachers of faith’.** This is why it is vital that our songs of praise have a didactic heart to them, rich in healthy teaching.

Thus, the words that we sing and the manner in which we sing them, and the entire mode of our worship are immensely significant in ways which many may not even realise. Even the words you sing have a deep teaching function, whether it is a pop song or a hymn. They either teach explicitly through the lyrics or they influence more subtly by infusion. **Whichever is the case, when you sing in worship you are ‘chanting your spirituality’ and teaching yourself whatever are the lessons carried by the words.** Hymns and spiritual songs are therefore theological, for better or for worse. This is hugely significant for what lies at the heart of this paper.

Psalms 1 is a classic example, graphically teaching the difference between the godly and the ungodly. In Psalm 51, we are systematically taught about the vital teachings of repentance and original sin:

“Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be proved right when You speak and blameless when You judge. Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:2-5).

Incidentally, this is not some emotionally-charged mantra that says “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit in me*” over and over and over again, outside of any real context (as does one modern chorus). This Old Testament psalm is an example of *substance* — a cry for deliverance from sin, born out of

the heartfelt avowal that God is a great and mighty Judge who causes His Spirit to indwell a person.

It is high teaching, but it should also move us into a worshipful realm where we see that what lies behind this teaching is a mighty God, worthy of our praise.

Another facet of Old Testament hymnody is

5. Cries for Deliverance out of Affliction

Can you imagine today's neo-evangelical/Charismatic churches singing this: *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word... It is good for me to be afflicted, That I might learn Your statutes"* (Psalm 119:67 & 71)?! So many churches these days would send you for "deliverance" from some spiritual quack attempting to cast demons out of you if you said you were afflicted and that it was good for you, labelling you as having a demon of affliction! But such cries for real deliverance that we see in this psalm (rather than the phony, heretical "deliverance ministries" in so many churches today) is what assemblies really need! It may not be the modern way, but it is the Bible's way of singing praises to God. We should be crying out to Him for deliverance from affliction because it is a sign of our dependence on Him and thus magnifies Him in our worship. Worship is not only about us feeling great and 'having a good time'. How we have lost our way in this!

6. Hymning Intercession

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

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

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

7. Proclaiming the Prophetic

Another important aspect of hymnody in the psalms is the extolling of the prophecies of the Lord. We see classic examples of this in Psalms 2, 16, 22, etc. An example of this in our hymns today

would be the famous: *"Lo, He comes with clouds descending"*, where we are exalting the Lord in the prophecies of His second coming.

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

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

What about in the New Testament? Are there any principles there for us to glean? There are indeed many!

II. HYMNODY IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA

In the Apostolic church it was the preaching of Christ and the application of Scripture passages about Him which were central to worship (e.g., Luke 4:16-27; Acts 5:42; 13:14,15,23,46; 14:1ff; 18:28; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Colossians 1:28-29; 3:16). As R.P. Martin says in his interesting book on worship in the early church *"The Christ-centered nature of Christian worship is one of the most clearly attested facts of the New Testament literature"*.⁴ Acts 17:2-3 suggests that Paul preached through a theme on three consecutive sabbaths — that Christ must suffer, that He must rise again, and that He is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Ralph Martin also states that in the early church the reading and exposition of the Scriptures is

"an inheritance we have received, through the early church, from the worship of Judaism, and which makes the model Christian service a Word-of-God service".⁵

This is immensely significant for our study here. **From the outset, church worship was a "Word-of-God service"**. Emblazon that in your hearts and minds! The truths of the Bible were at the heart of worship. Paul said to the pastor, Timothy, *"devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation [i.e., preaching], and to teaching [i.e., biblical and pastoral instruction]"* (1 Timothy 4:13). And this was also true insofar as the singing of songs was concerned. The singing of spiritual songs — whether Old Testament psalms or New Testament hymns — was a predominant feature of the apostolic church. And it is the view of many biblical scholars that there are a number of texts in the New Testament which were actually sung as hymns (e.g., Luke 1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:29-32).

It is also probable that the Old Testament Book of Psalms continued to be used in the worship of the early church and that

⁴ R.P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, (Marshall, Morgan & Scott), 1964, p.131.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.69.

new hymns were composed or made from the reworking of Old Testament passages and the writings of the godly. As one commentator states:

“We learn from the writings of several in the first ages of Christianity (particularly from a letter of Pliny’s, and some passages in Justin Martyr and Tertullian) that the Christians were accustomed to sing hymns, either taken out of scripture, or of more private composure, in their worship of God”.⁶

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

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to reckless indiscretion. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-21).

The contextual contrast here is that on the one hand we have the drunken stupor of the heathen, along with the attendant dulling of the mind, mayhem and frivolity which characterises their lives and especially their pagan “worship”. But on the other hand we have the Spirit-inspired worship which finds its expression through wholesome psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. A similar contrast appears in the passage where Paul addresses the subject of spiritual gifts, where he tells the saints at Corinth: *“You know that when you were pagans, to dumb idols you were led, as if being carried away.”* (1 Corinthians 12:2). **To be “carried away” to dumb idols by a crazy heathen impulse, riding on a tide of human emotion, is in direct contrast to the Christian way, where the body, with its baser instincts, is disciplined and brought under**

⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, comment on James 5:13.

subjection (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27). This should be told to today's churches which encourage "crazy impulses", being carried away as if they were "of the Spirit", though if one examines the fruit, it is mostly a pagan spirit of suggestion-based emotionalism which is being invoked.

In Ephesians 5:18-21, the contrast is not between being drunk on wine and being "drunk" on a dram of the Holy Spirit, as many who have imbibed Pentecostalism and Charismaticism believe today. (I have actually heard it said as such in some Charismatic meetings). As in 1 Corinthians 12:2ff, the contrast is between, on the one hand, the humanistic, uncontrolled, emotion-based, trance-inducing, sensuality of heathen religion and, on the other hand, the gentle spirituality of a worship which is Christ-centred, reverent, and which engenders a genuine attitude of awe towards God.

True worship is not about singing trite and unedifying songs, going into a trance, twitching and falling down, or being immersed in "Christian" rock and pop music, as is taken for granted in so many churches today. It is about the conscious, mindful, intelligent use of one's words towards God, in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an expression of reverence and awe. Thus, if your church sings the tendentious songs of the *New Style of Worship*, even if it does not involve the sensationalist 'pyrotechnics' of so many other churches today, you are still verbally promoting in song the faulty theology which lies behind that (the theology of which I will be opening up in later sections).

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

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

First, Paul says that the doctrine of Christ and the Gospel should be firmly established within us "*with all wisdom*" – not with some hideous and even blasphemous perversion of the Gospel, or a

misunderstanding of the faith, or a pet hobbyhorse, but the richness and wisdom of Christ.

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

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

It is interesting that after noting how pagan music involves ribaldry (bawdiness) and carousing (drunken merrymaking), John Calvin states: *“Paul would have the songs of Christians...to be spiritual, not made up of frivolities and worthless trifles”*.⁷ Is that not also a word for our own time? How important it is to contrast “spiritual” songs with those which consist of “frivolities and worthless trifles”, as are so many of the modern choruses and rock-based themes which are being written and sung in so many churches today.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*, comment on Colossians 3:16.

III. HYMNODY IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC ERA

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

Andrew Wilson-Dickson, in his “History of Christian Music” says that in the early church, *“the style of singing in worship was absolutely distinct from the night-club atmosphere”*,⁸ and he quotes Arnobius the Elder (d. AD 330), teacher of Lactantius, writing around AD 297:

“Was it for this God sent souls, that beings of a sacred and august race should here practise singing and piping; that they should swell out their cheeks in blowing the flute; that they should take the lead in singing impure songs, and raising the loud din of the castanets, by which another crowd of souls should be led in their wantonness to abandon themselves to clumsy motions, to dance and sing, form rings of dancers, and finally, raising their haunches and hips, float along with a tremulous motion of the loins? Was it for this He sent souls?”⁹

So already we can see that worship was wholly distinguishable from secular entertainment. And especially so with the hymns. So what was the focus and tenor of early church hymns? In his “Ecclesiastical History” (AD 325), the historian Eusebius speaks about a piece of writing in the early 3rd century (possibly by Hippolytus), which was pitted against the heresy that Christ is a mere man, saying:

⁸ Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *A Brief History of Christian Music* (Lion, 1997), p.40.

⁹ Arnobius the Elder, *Against the Pagans*, Book 2, sect. 42. Arnobius Afer (as he was known) is one of the more interesting characters in the early church.

“Many psalms and hymns, written by the faithful brethren from the beginning, celebrate Christ the Word of God, speaking of him as Divine”.¹⁰

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

So we find Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia, writing in AD 112 to the Emperor Trajan about the Christians in his province: “On the appointed day the Christians had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn to Christ, as to a god”.¹¹ In other words, even the pagan Pliny recognised that it was Deity which was being asserted in the hymn of worship – in his words, “as to a god”. **That is what formed the essence of those early Christian hymns: the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the recognition of that.**

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

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

¹⁰ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, chapter XXVIII, §5.

¹¹ Henry Bettenson (ed.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press), 1943, p.4.

we will see is the case with so many of the songs of the *New Style of Worship* today.

What we see, therefore, is that the didactic and high theological nature of the congregational singing of psalms and hymns in churches is absolutely necessary to any undertaking in the creation of a hymnbook. Hymns for worship must not be chosen lightly, neither must they be created out of superficial and titillating material. As one of the greatest of English puritan thinkers, Thomas Manton, stated concerning the attitude in his time to the creation and choosing of hymns for worship: *"I confess we do not forbid other songs [as well as Scripture psalms]. If grave and pious, after good advice they may be received into the Church"*.¹²

"If grave and pious". That would no doubt seem boring to the hyped-up worshippers in so many churches today. But if one wants to avoid a circus in the churches and not bring fleshly mundanity into them, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs must be designed to promote reverence and awe. **Thus, from the beginning of the New Testament era, hymns were extremely profound and very much aimed at extolling the dignity and omnipotence of God and the Deity of Christ with that great sense of reverence and awe.** The idea that hymns would be used to generate feelings of blissfulness or specially to 'conjure up' artificially a 'worshipful' atmosphere (as is the case in so many churches today) is completely foreign not only to the pages of the New Testament but also the annals of the early church. **Indeed, throughout the entire Gospel Age, hymns have functioned in a twin capacity as 'glorifiers of God' and 'teachers of faith'.** Any hymns which did not fit into this requisite mould were rejected by responsible gatekeepers (elders, pastors and teachers) as being wholly unsuitable for worship of the Creator of the cosmos.

This needs to be appreciated today. Hymns make up 15-20% of each worship service. In many less doctrinally healthy assemblies, this figure can even be 50% and above! Because of the deep level at which music functions in the human psyche – especially in

¹² Thomas Manton, *An Exposition upon the Epistle of James* (Banner of Truth, 1962, first published 1693), p.442.

relation to the worship of God — the singing of hymns surely plays a major part in the very shaping of our minds and souls. It can even affect our DNA, as the science of epigenetics has revealed.

For this reason, it is important that our hymnody should promote wholesome teaching and the right frame of mind for genuine biblical worship which is God-honouring and glorifying. It is also necessary to ensure, from a pastoral standpoint, that members of our flocks are not going to be led into error and heresy through following any false teachings of the composers of the hymns they sing — especially if they are living composers, as is the case with the agenda of the Charismatic *New Style of Worship* songwriters of today. And there IS an agenda, as we will see in later sections of this paper, in much detail. In this connection, it is very interesting to read the Preface to John Wesley's 1780 "Collection of Hymns". There he says frankly:

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

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

Regarding the content of Wesley's hymnbook, we discover that he actually arranged the order of it — rather in the manner of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* — to represent "*a spiritual biography*

of the sort of person whom he called in his preface 'a Real Christian'".¹³ That was Wesley's "role model" for his hymnbook. And that must always be the case with any hymnwriter. Their music will reflect the nuts and bolts of their own spiritual pilgrimage which should be a solid one.

Herein lies the key to the true nature of the *New Style of Worship* songs. As Charismatic songwriter, Dave Fellingham, writes: "*My ministry has evolved from my spiritual pilgrimage*".¹⁴ This is a vitally revealing statement. For when we examine the nature of the spiritual pilgrimages of the modern Charismatic songwriters, we have to ask ourselves if this is an influence that we want to introduce into our churches through their ministry of song. **For with their songs you will be bringing in a whole raft of theological aberrations and outright heresies.** For their songs teach things too. But they do not teach the nuts and bolts of the faith. They teach you how to be a Charismatic, with all the waywardness that this entails, as I will show below. Yet how many elders (gatekeepers) in the churches care about this?

For in every case, the key to the pilgrimages of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters has been a whole range of phony quasi-'Christian' experiences, especially the so-called "Baptism in the Spirit", which has played a major role in the realm of the *New Style of Worship* songs in the last couple of decades, as I shall develop more fully below.

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

¹³ Bernard Lord Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley & Watts* (Epworth Press, 1943), pp.11-12.

¹⁴ Dave Fellingham, *To the Praise of His Glory* (Kingsway, 1995, p.27).

IV. IDENTIFYING THE PRIMARY TRENDS IN HYMNODY TODAY

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

First, a notable leading trend in hymnody today has been

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

One of the main reasons that so much confusion has entered the church scene today is that so much of what calls itself “worship” is being modelled on an Old Testament temple model, which is entirely inappropriate for a New Covenant church. Actually, even that is based on an *imaginary* Old Testament temple model of worship, as all sorts of unwarranted data is brought into the picture.

David's Dancing Does Not Justify an 'Anything Goes' Model of New Testament Worship

As a classic example of that ‘imaginariness’, David’s dancing before the Lord in 2 Samuel 6 is often used to justify any spontaneous offerings from anyone in our worship today, yet that was *not* part of the highly regulated temple order. **In any case, anyone who believes that those attending the temple could just get up and do their own thing – dance, play any old instrument at hand, start clapping, or call out a spontaneous “hallelujah” – is truly living in cloud cuckoo land!** So let’s just crack this open a bit before moving on.

It has to be said that David’s spontaneous dance does not provide us with an example for corporate worship, as many ignorant folks claim. David was witnessing the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem, his centre of power. Was his dance just for joy at seeing the power which the Ark represented, Divine power, or was it because of his own acquisition of this sacred artefact and what that represented. I more than suspect it was a little of both. When Uzzah was struck

down by God for touching the ark as it was on its way to Jerusalem, David became angry at God's judgement as this had introduced some 'shade' on the proceedings and messed up his carefully laid plans to get the ark to his seat of power (2 Samuel 6:8). That episode does not seem to me to show David in a very good light. It was three months later that the Ark finally came to Jerusalem, and it was then that David got carried away with his dance, which would have been that kind of half-turn leaping common in the middle-east. **No aspect of this episode with David is normative for corporate church worship of any era, and it is ludicrous that it should even be suggested.** Yet it so often is vehemently asserted by those in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement who want to attempt to justify their *New Style of Worship*, clutching at straws to try and validate the no-holds-barred kind of service where anyone can spontaneously do anything they like and no one should ever object or they are just as horrible as David's wife, Michal, who berated her husband for doing what he did (2 Samuel 6:16). That is pure spiritual blackmail over something which has nothing whatsoever to do with corporate worship in the Church Age. The dancing of David is a complete 'red herring' in the whole debate. So I hope that puts that little false justification to bed.

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

"As to the influence of the Synagogue on the Church, there can be **no doubt that the earliest Christian meetings and meeting-places were modelled on the pattern of the synagogues**".¹⁵ [emphasis added]

And as Ralph P. Martin also states: "*The influence of the synagogue on Christian worship was more permanent and deep [than that of the*

¹⁵ W.K. Lowther Clarke (ed.), *Liturgy and Worship* (S.P.C.K./Macmillan, 1932), *Synagogue Worship in the First Century*, p.75.

Temple]”.¹⁶ It was the synagogues that remained after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, NOT the Temple! The original purpose of the synagogue was primarily for Scripture-reading and exposition of the passages being read (Luke 4:16-22; Matthew 13:54; Mark 1:21-22; John 6:59). There was also prayer (Matthew 6:5) and, although there is no specific mention in the literature of singing in the synagogue, it is considered most likely “*that those parts of the Liturgy which were connected with Temple worship, like the recitation of psalms...were sung*”.¹⁷

Scripture Reading and its Exposition Were the Centrepiece of Early Church Worship

So long as one’s idea of worship is rooted in the Temple concept, one will crave triumphalist “celebrations” and big displays rather than quiet humility in reverence and awe. The charismatic style of worship naturally arises out of this false concept of the Old Testament Temple. However, the chief element in synagogue worship – its central factor – was not ceremonial or display but something which was of vital importance to the shaping of the subsequent life of the local churches upon which the synagogue was so influential. **That element was the reading and exposition of Scripture.** Worship in the early church involved “Word-of-God” services. Ralph Martin very appropriately called the reading and exposition of Scripture “*the centre of gravity of the synagogue’s service, with the blessings and prayers gathered around it*”.¹⁸ How strange, then, to find charismatic songwriter Dave Fellingham stating: “*A major influence on the early church was the music of the Jewish temple*”.¹⁹ But that would simply be, as Ralph Martin said above, “the recitation of psalms”, while the real influence which can really be called “major” was the reading and exposition of Scripture, around which everything else was concentrated. Fellingham then goes on to say:

¹⁶ R.P. Martin, op. cit., p.66.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.66-67.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Dave Fellingham, *Worship Restored* (Kingsway, 1987), p.17.

“It is possible that the Levites, who were appointed to serve in the Temple twice a year for one week, brought the influence of Temple worship back with them into the local synagogue”.²⁰

Again, this is pure supposition to support a tendentious concept. They want the whole of Temple worship to provide some kind of basis for everything they do in their churches today so they can have a big show! It is easy to say the words, “*It is possible...*”. But to build an entire approach to worship for all New Testament churches on such a supposition is questionable, to say the least! **It was not the whole panoply of Temple worship which was brought into the synagogues, and thereby into the churches, but merely “the recitation of psalms”, which was done in simple adoration, while the heart of the meetings was Scripture reading and exposition.** Moreover, this was Scripture which they were singing in the psalms, not some superficial hypnotic ditties, or funky tunes or rock music creations which those in the churches had invented!

Therefore, in view of the fact that “*the earliest Christian meetings and meeting-places were modelled on the pattern of the synagogues*” (as quoted above on page 28), this surely gives us a major clue as to what should be central in our meetings today. As already shown, worship in the early church involved “Word-of-God” services in which the reading and exposition of Scripture were the centrepiece.

Although it is true to say that the Triune God is the *personal object* of all our worship, it is the reading and exposition of the written Word of God which should provide the *foundation for the structure of that worship.* Surely if churches had not moved away from the consolidating and unifying factor of the public reading and exposition of the *written* Word of God as the very heart and soul of its worship, how much division, heartache and mayhem might have been averted. But then we are in a time of great apostasy, so that these developments become understandable, even though they are not at all palatable.

²⁰ Ibid., p.21.

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

“For Moses has been preached in every city from ancient times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21).

The Early Church found its pinnacle of worship in the simple reading and exposition of the Word in the synagogue, not in the elaborate spectacle of the Temple. **For this reason, the 16th century European Reformation involved a return to that Early Church synagogue-based model rather than the syncretic Temple model perpetuated in the Roman Catholic sect (some may say “cult”) for the previous thousand years.**

The Nuts and Bolts of New Testament Meetings in the Early Church

The synagogue model for worship was adopted by our Lord's Apostles from the beginning, instead of the Temple, as is clearly demonstrated in the New Testament allusions to worship. Such would herald a necessary break with the Old Covenant, which had now been superseded by the New Covenant. **Therefore, it is the authoritative Apostles who have set our example, and we should follow that.** We know from Scripture the nuts and bolts of New Testament worship meetings, which were: **Song** (Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), **Prayer** (Acts 2:42; 4:31), **The public reading of Scripture** (1 Timothy 4:13), **The exposition of Scripture** (1 Timothy 4:13; 5:17), and **The Breaking of bread** (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20-26). That is not an extra-biblical source. It is important to know this and the beauty of that makes me long to see it in all the churches.

When I think of the fact that so many have no idea what a New Testament worship meeting truly is, my heart bleeds. I just received an email from a mature disciple of Christ who had previously spent much of her lengthy spiritual life in either a Charismatic setting or a New Age one, and sometimes these even overlapped. It all confused her, so she got out of it all. Then she wrote to me (in part):

“The result now is that I don’t really know what proper congregational worship should look like. I loved singing hymns in a choir setting, and feel this is probably more akin to worship than anything I experienced”.

I think perhaps that she speaks for many. **The time has come for courageous, faithful pastors to demonstrate to her, and the countless other faithful ones like her who long for a real New Testament assembly, what such an assembly should actually look like.**

However, whereas under the Old Covenant all the minutiae of worship were plainly spelled out in rules and regulations, such has not been the same under the New Covenant.²¹ We do not have a full account of a service of worship (apart from some details in the Corinthian church, which was plainly way off-beam). However, the fact that we also have some externally documented early church accounts of worship is very helpful to us. Obviously, they do not carry the authority of Scripture, but they merely serve to buttress what we are claiming about the Apostles establishing early church worship on the basis of the synagogue rather than the temple. The study of Church history is often very enlightening as external evidence and confirmation of what is contained in Scripture.

During the past half-century we have seen a complete undoing of the simple synagogue-based style of worship in “Word-of-God services” which had been reaffirmed in the Reformation, as so many churches have opted for a lavish entertainment type

²¹ One has to bear in mind here that Old Testament Israel was largely made up of those who were not genuine followers of the Lord, and not of the faith of Abraham (Romans 9:6 & 8), as was repeatedly revealed by their collective behaviour (with the exception of the minority of the faithful). The real followers were known as a *“remnant according to the election of grace”* (Romans 11:5). This is why the children of Israel were so hedged about with rules and regulations, even in Temple worship. But New Testament assemblies are not for groups that are in the majority unbelievers but are primarily for the believing body of Christ to meet together, although unbelievers who are seeking truth are not exempt.

of approach to worship which is based more on an imaginary view of the Temple of the Old Testament rather than how it really was. The effect of all this has been disastrous, paving the way for even more foolish delusions, such as the so-called “Toronto Blessing” in the mid-1990s, which was a catastrophic watershed of evil that has ricocheted down to the present day.

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

2. The Shift from Classical Form to Romanticism

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

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

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

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

Thus the theocentric solidity and consonance of monophonic and polyphonic church music was carried over into the classical music repertoire, as its very foundation.

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

“man’s emergence from the immaturity which caused him to rely on such external authorities as the Bible, the church, and the state to tell him what to think and to do... The motto of Enlightenment was *Sapere aude* — ‘Have courage to use your own understanding’”.²²

This same philosophical process eventually followed in the world of music, so that instead of music being composed for music’s sake as a pure idea, it began to be composed *as a monument to a person’s ego*. Suddenly, composition was all about “*me and my high-powered feelings*”.²³ The essence of the Romantic Movement was not “How

²² Colin Brown in Walter A. Elwell [ed.] *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Marshall Pickering, 1984), p.355.

²³ The fountainhead of this phenomenon can actually be traced to Ludwig van Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, known as the ‘Pastoral’.

can I create a great piece of music" but "How can I express **my** angst, **my** ecstasy, **my** unique feelings, in a way that I think is right?" The problem with this development was that – however scintillating and great to listen to the result may have been in terms of the composition of secular classical music – so far as the worship of God is concerned, such an approach can only be destructive.

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

"In our society the old school continues to promote self-discipline and a stiff upper lip, while a new generation promotes self-awareness and emotional release. The same culture clash is found in the Church and is at the root of the conflict over recent events".²⁴

Here we have a quintessential statement on the difference between Classicism and Romanticism – yet it is being applied to the difference between old-style worship and the new Charismatic/Toronto style which has been effected in part through modern Christian music. So, on the one hand, there is self-discipline, the subordination of one's ego to the pure idea of the worship of God – the awesome realisation that this isn't about ME but it is all about God (for in worship He must increase and I must decrease). It is **that** which mirrors Classicism. But on the other hand there is a new trendy, laid-back, catharsis-seeking generation which promotes "*self-awareness and emotional release*". Self-awareness in itself is no bad thing if it refers to that necessary

²⁴ The Independent, Sat. 18th February 1995, p.14 – article entitled "*It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar*".

part of progressive sanctification by which we become acutely aware of our sinful behaviour and inappropriate responses to life-situations and then change the way we behave as a result of that. But self-awareness in the manner in which Patrick Dixon means it so approvingly is the antithesis of Divine worship — unless one wants to make a little god out of oneself!

Suddenly, the expression of worship changes because the focus has changed. Instead of it being “me worshipping God as God”, it is “ME struggling to express myself through emotional release in whatever way I feel is right” — and that is *very* different. What should be Divine worship then becomes a kind of therapy session for the ‘worshipper’! **That is NOT worship but it is a celebration of the human will.** It is, as the Bible so graphically puts it, “*self-willed [arbitrary and unwarranted] piety*” (Colossians 2:23, as revealed in Strong’s Concordance to be the meaning behind the Greek word there, ἐθελοθρησκεία, *ethelothréskia*). And it is *this* in the *New Style of Worship* which mirrors the Romantic Movement.

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

That is what lies at the heart of so much of what claims to be Christian worship today: Me and my wonderful feelings. The new evanjellycal says with a proud flourish: “*No one’s going to put ME in a hymn sandwich — I need emotional release*”. And a subtle little voice pipes up from the depths of the pit: “*You will be like God...*”, without even realizing the blasphemy involved. Satan’s perfect work right inside the churches.

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

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

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

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

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

In contrast to this, a great many of the newer songs contain human sentiments that make a mockery of the sovereignty of God. Consider the line: “*As I let You reign supreme within my heart*”. “Let you”?!? What a thing to say! The same wimpish, self-glorifying humanistic idea of “allowing Jesus” into your heart that we hear in so much evangelism has framed their songs too. **This is the deification of the human will.** Or how about this verse:

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

That is the kind of thinking which appears repeatedly in the modern songs and represents the degeneration of God-honouring content into slushy, effeminate, easy-believist, human-centred sentiment. The genuinely awestruck believer knows that it wasn’t him or her who initially *decided* anything. It was God who decided to have them from “*before the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4), and anything which they ‘decided’ was a subordinate result of that. “*For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet these new songs are full of their boasting about their ‘decisions’ and their ‘graciously’ “allowing” God to come to them. What are we coming to? **The old hymns glorified the sovereignty of God. The New Style of Worship celebrates people and their feelings.**

Hence one finds such a huge difference between many of the old style of hymns and the majority of the modern choruses. The

former tend to glorify God first and speak of what has happened in our hearts second. Whereas so many of the latter begin with ME and what Jesus has done for ME.

This also accounts for the difference between the Charismatic style of worship and the genuinely evangelical one. The majority of those who attend the Charismatic style of worship are first and foremost seeking an experience for themselves, and judge the effectiveness of worship on that basis, what kind of a 'buzz' they have received, and so on. When they walk through the door they want to be hit by all the 'pyrotechnics' of light shows, huge screens, a cool band and a rock venue, cabaret ambiance. On the other hand, most of those who attend the genuinely evangelical style of worship have gone first of all to worship their Creator and Redeemer, without a thought as to what's in it for them – whether or not they come away with a warm fuzzy feeling. They may do so, or they may feel pensive and quiet, or they may feel utterly humbled, or they may feel profoundly disturbed because God has fingered them where it counts and they have to clean up, or they may feel utterly overwhelmed by the lovingkindness of God and the fact that they have an intermediary to Him through their Redeemer, the Lord Christ Jesus.

Unfortunately, so much of what passes for Christian 'conversion' today is little more than a change of lifestyle prompted by a powerful psychological experience, about which I will have much more to say below. **The widespread nature of this bogus transformation has ensured the composition and use of a mountain of music with trite, sentimental lyrics to match, ten thousand miles wide and half-an-inch deep.**

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

4. The "Dumbing Down" of the Human Mind

We live in the age of the soundbite in all areas. Consequently, there is a growing crisis of the human consciousness engineered in the main by the media which has rendered the unbelieving world in a state of mindless acceptance of anything, viz. corrupt presidents get a second term of office, Lady Di becomes a saint, false-flag operations and psyops proliferate undetected by most, while not-too-serious pandemics are made out to be bring-out-

your-dead plagues, while countries are illegally invaded, genocides are deceptively enacted, and the mass of people are so dumbed-down that they accept it all without dissention and without realising what is taking place. Such dumbing-down has also widely affected the professing Church and produced a fog of phony pietism, crazed activities masquerading as ‘revival’, and little respect for deep Bible teaching or genuine pastoral authority.

This “dumbing down” of the mind means that the best the world can produce is the Spice Girls, Taylor Swift, ‘celebrity’ reality shows, the Housewives of Wherever, Lady Gaga, Madonna and the Teletubbies, and the best the Church can produce is a cornucopia of soundbites and advertising jingles masquerading as “hymns” to which one can “do the actions”. **Church then becomes a Las Vegas style Sunday School, to the approval of many.** Superficial songs for a superficial “faith”.²⁵

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

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

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

“Jesus, you’re terrific,
Jesus, you’re terrific,

²⁵ This subject of the “dumbing-down” of the mind is expanded further in a number of articles on the Diakrisis Project website. Notably <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/04/01/teach-me-your-way-o-lord-the-demise-of-didacticism/> and this one too: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/09/23/whatever-happened-to-the-christian-mind-transcript-of-a-talk-given-in-2001/> .

You took me from a dustbin
and now you treat me like a star”.

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

Another leading trend in hymnody today has been

5. Moving Away from Seasonal Song to Manipulative Music

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

It is important to realise that the bulk of the *New Style of Worship* songs have been written by people who are ardent advocates of Charismatic teachings which previous generations of believers rejected as “fanaticism” and “enthusiasm”.²⁶ These songs have

²⁶ By ‘enthusiasm’ I am referring to “religious extravagance” (Chambers English Dictionary). The Puritans used the word “enthusiasm” to refer to utterances and physical manifestations which were claimed to be happening under the pretence of ‘Divine inspiration’. Thus “enthusiasts” were those who readily gave vent to any religious feeling which was based on subjective sentiment rather than objective truth. Today these terms would encompass the extravagances of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, including the bizarre manifestations which masqueraded under the title “Toronto Blessing” and the associated phony “revivalism” which was a watershed of evil in church history. Incidentally, the word “enthusiasm” has a very telling etymology, being derived from the Greek *enthousiazein*, a compound word meaning ‘to be inspired by a god’, which was derived from *en*, ‘in’, and *theos*, ‘a god’. In the case of the *New Style of Worship*, which god is it? I would suggest it is “the god of this age”, one which expresses the *zeitgeist* of this humanistic era.

been composed for the deliberate purpose of seeding their teachings in churches. **In other words, the *New Style of Worship* is promotional – and what it seeks to promote is another gospel and a form of religion which is very far removed from the Bible, although the majority of professing ‘Christians’ today would be unable to recognise that.** The *New Style of Worship* songbooks have been deliberately published in order to effect a change in churches towards this new misrepresentational form of “Christianity”. One only has to read the books written by the major advocates and composers of the *New Style of Worship* to be convinced of that, as I shall show in the final section of this paper.

In their misplaced attempt to make themselves “relevant” to today’s culture (which is actually a satanic culture), churches which buy into these new songbooks are importing heresy into the heart of the fellowship. **People need to realise that this isn’t about a cosy debate concerning which songs to use in your church, on which we can politely agree to differ. This is warfare!** This is why resistance to the *New Style of Worship* and the trivial choruses associated with it is not merely an option but it is vital if we are to avoid having the Church plunge even further into the theological crisis which has largely been promoted through hymnodic and worship-style changes in recent decades.²⁷

As a graphic illustration of the kind of “Christianity” which lies behind the new hymnody, consider the following interview with that veteran of the *New Style of Worship*, Graham Kendrick, which was conducted by Noel Stanton, who was the supremo of the neo-Charismatic cult known as the Jesus Army Fellowship,²⁸ and in

²⁷ Although ten thousand words have been added to this paper during the past week for this new edition, I wrote the particular words of this reference number twenty-six years ago and look where it has all led. The *New Style of Worship* has now become the norm and anyone who refuses to get with the programme is deemed to be “holding back the march of revival” – their phony revival which is based on humanistic feelings and warped theology.

²⁸ The Jesus Army Fellowship existed from 1969-2020, when it was disbanded after a massive slew of historic allegations of child abuse and sexual assaults, including abuses committed by Noel Stanton, who

which he was asked monumental questions regarding the origin of his faith.

NS: "What are the landmarks in your life?"

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

NS: "You were a rebel?"

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

NS: "Did that lead to Baptism in the Spirit?"

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

NS: "When was this?"

GK: "It was about 1971, when the charismatic renewal movement was in its early days and was quite controversial. Lots of people would warn you off and say it was of the devil! Tongues were as controversial then as the current manifestations of shaking and falling are now".²⁹

conducted this interview with Graham Kendrick. For further details, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48447066>.

²⁹ *Jesus Life Magazine*, from the Jesus Army Fellowship website: <https://web.archive.org/web/20010409162154/http://www.jesus.org.uk/kendrick.html>. This interview was also reproduced on "The Graham Kendrick Website" under the link "Graham's Christianity".

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

What is more, I have no idea how Mr. Kendrick could possibly have allowed himself to be interviewed by the head of such a corrupt setup as the Jesus Army. Even back then it was blatantly obvious that one was dealing with a huckster outfit with more than cultlike overtones. But in the Charismatic scene anyone else who seems to be Charismatic is deemed to be okay, because of "unity" and all that.

Manipulative Church Music is Rooted in a Manipulated 'Conversion'

Firstly, while there is a verbal mention of sin and forgiveness in this interview with Mr. Kendrick, there is not the slightest indication of true repentance and an understanding of what sin is all about. Surely this is the most important aspect of a conversion experience, as shown in those examples in the early church, when folk were utterly "*cut to the heart*" (e.g., Acts 2:37). While I do not at all deny that small children can be regenerated and converted — recognizing that their understanding of the Gospel will not be identical to that of a theology professor — there must surely be a real awareness first of the *need* for forgiveness and a subsequent

desire for repentance, otherwise conversion becomes a mere mental assent which, in so many cases today, it is.³⁰

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

Thirdly, in this testimony, there is that typical feature of neo-evangelicalism: the constant desire for increasingly exciting experiences, always *“seeking more of God”* — a buzz-phrase in the Pentecostal-Charismatic scene meaning wanting some extra sensational ‘pyrotechnics’, such as getting ‘zapped’ by the Spirit, falling down, speaking gibberish, etc. Regardless of what Mr. Kendrick says here, he was indeed a *“crisis person”* who was actively seeking a *“crisis experience”*. Is there not a link here back to that early prayer of his which engendered *“an excitement deep inside me”* but which apparently failed to kindle godly sorrow and contrition? Coming to Christ is not about the engendering of

³⁰ It should be pointed out here that there are two equal and opposite errors into which we can fall on the experience of conversion. One is what is known as ‘Sandemanianism’ — named after Robert Sandeman, 1718-1771, the Scottish minister who first publicly propounded this doctrine — which involves the idea that a person merely needs to give verbal assent to the propositions contained in the Gospel in order to be saved, without any evidence of a heart change or regeneration. The other is what we can call ‘Preparationism’ — whereby a person is persuaded of the need to enter into a massively over-prolonged (or even indefinite) period of intense preparation for conversion, during which he must go through the most oppressive heart-searching rigours, without which he cannot be saved. We must always be sure that our evangelism does not encourage either *“easy-believism”* or its opposite: *“bondage-making preparationism”*. They lie at contrary ends of the spectrum, but both are deadly, conversion-stifling errors.

human “excitement” but about contrition and serious humbling. The Christian Union meeting, he believed, was not good enough for him as it seemed “drab” — which means that it was not Charismatic, for no fancy ‘pyrotechnics’ means boredom in those circles. But instead of seeking out some orthodox Christians who promote healthy teaching to point him in the right direction, like so many immature, misguided seekers he goes in search of sensational ‘pyrotechnics’.³¹ In any case, the housegroup scene of the Charismatic Movement has always been a pastoral minefield, and if you go down that pathway you are far more likely to wind up in a mini-cult rather than a healthy assembly!

Fourthly, the account of being “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” is decidedly suspect. Christians are certainly instructed to “*go on being filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18) throughout their Christian lives; but it is so typical of the sensation-seeking, crisis-loving evangelicals of today to highlight one incident as their supposed “baptism in the Spirit”.³² And is it not strange that what Kendrick describes as “*a real watershed*” in his Christian experience should occur entirely as an incidental experience while he happened to be “*brushing his teeth*”? Frankly, I find it hard to credit the fact that in a serious interview, designed to display in a public

³¹ From the present writer’s experience of this kind of complaint, that “*particularly drab Christian Union meeting at college*” could easily have been made up of godly youngsters singing hymns in the old-style and bowing quietly in prayer before the Lord (without the almost mandatory trance-induced arm-waving and gibberish kind of “tongues-speaking” one finds among most university and college Christian Unions today). This is considered dull and boring in the kind of circles where so-called Contemporary Christian Music is extolled, and especially among carnal youngsters who have been processed to ‘conversion’ on the easy-believest conveyor belt of evangelism.

³² For a full discussion of this spurious twentieth and twenty-first century experience, as well as many other aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic aberrations (while comparing them to New Age phenomena), you can download this free eBook from the Diakrisis Project website: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/05/13/new-book-signs-wonders-divine-revelation-the-gifts-of-the-spirit-their-abuses-in-todays-churches/> .

medium the testimony of the work of God in his life and his faith in the Son of God, we should read such a flippant narrative. This is entirely in keeping with the superficial nature of the *New Style of Worship* as a whole; and the question must be asked here: Is it right for churches to worship God from a songbook of which almost 10% of the songs were written by a man whose public testimony would not have any credibility in more orthodox churches?³³ I am sorry if you think that is somewhat harsh, but the greatest menace of all in the churches today is a ‘me-centred’ superficiality which is crippling the witness of the *Ekklesia* and it pains me to the core because of the fruit which it has borne and the damage which it has caused, both theologically and pastorally.

There is a clear connection between the truncated “Christianity” of this kind of “conversion” experience, and that which the *New Style of Worship* is promoting in churches today. This is an example of “easy believism”, with a subsequent psycho-religious catharsis masquerading as an “infilling of the Spirit”. **Such phenomena form the undergirding theology which governs the style and content of the *New Style of Worship* songs, which are deliberately manipulative of a bogus spiritual experience.** A person who has had a superficial “conversion” experience will always spend his or her time seeking a more profound so-called “second blessing” (and a third, and a fourth, ad infinitum). **Consequently, in place of the simple desire for reverential praise of the Triune God, we find that the search for an ever-greater “high” also becomes the goal of worship.** Hence, these songs are often used to bring a person into what is known as an “Altered State of Consciousness”, which I shall now open up.

The New Style of Worship Manipulates an Altered State of Consciousness

In fact, the modern idea of going to church to worship on a Sunday, the Lord’s Day, is that one must enter an Altered State of Consciousness (or ASC) in order for worship to have occurred at all! In his pro-“Toronto Blessing” book, *“Signs of Revival”*, charismatic church elder Dr. Patrick Dixon claims that ASCs “seem

³³ Mission Praise contains 8.5% of Graham Kendrick songs. Songs of Fellowship contains 10%.

to be a normal, common part of Christian prayer and worship",³⁴ and that unbelievers will be more open to a personal relationship with God if they can be put into an Altered State of Consciousness.³⁵ Dr. Dixon, who also tellingly describes the modern charismatic "tongues" experience as "*emptying the mind of logical, language-related thought, and helping to induce a trance-like state*",³⁶ is a leading medical writer in the Christian scene, and a vigorous advocate of the use of Altered States of Consciousness in Christian life and worship. In an article in a major U.K. newspaper, he wrote:

"The human brain has three states: waking, sleeping and somewhere in between. It is in this third state that we usually have our most profound spiritual experiences, when awareness fades of the immediate and we become sensitised to another dimension".³⁷

Elsewhere, Dr. Dixon states that although altered states of consciousness do not actually bring us into God's presence, they can "*make us aware of a presence to be brought into*".³⁸ **The advocacy of the use of altered states of consciousness for Christian life and worship is a serious departure from the orthodox historic Christian faith, and has far more in common with the Gnosticism which plagued the early church, Eastern mysticism, the occult and the New Age scene.**

Entering an Altered State of Consciousness induces an "Alpha-wave brain state", and the production of euphoria-inducing endorphins in the body. Normally, during the focused consciousness of wakeful existence, the brain-wave pattern registered on an electroencephalograph is described as 'Beta', which is between thirteen and twenty-six cycles per second.

³⁴ Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival* (Kingsway, 1994), p.275.

³⁵ Ibid., p.266.

³⁶ Ibid., p.275.

³⁷ *The Independent*, Saturday 18th February 1995, p.14 — an article entitled "*It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar*". What a title! It sums up the madness which had come into the churches as far back as 1995 as a result of the so-called "Toronto Blessing".

³⁸ Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival* (Kingsway, 1994), p.277.

However, another brain-state has been identified in which there is a more diffuse awareness, registering between eight and thirteen cycles per second. This is what the yogi and the mystic seek to attain through meditation. This Alpha-wave brain-state is, in fact, a pre-hypnotic state in which a person is extremely open to suggestion — human or discarnate; and it has nothing to do with “*coming into the presence of God*”. One New Age meditation manual describes this Altered State of Consciousness as “*floating, pleasant blankness, or shifting consciousness, peaceful meditation*”.³⁹ We see this trancelike scenario duplicated in Charismatic New Style of Worship gatherings everywhere with the characteristic hands in the air, eyes closed while muttering gibberish.

In keeping with the mantra-chanting mysticism of both East and West, Dr. Dixon says that “*Repetitive praying or liturgy can also settle brain activity, bringing tranquillity or spiritual openness*”.⁴⁰ All this has nothing whatsoever to do with true spirituality. Such a state can easily be induced with a biofeedback machine, cannabis or occult meditation. It is the “Alpha-wave” feeling of well-being induced by these rhythmic breathing and mantric exercises which the person experiences, and then imagines to be the “presence of the Lord”, which, if such was really the case, instead of making people fall backwards laughing and twitching, as they do in Charismatic meetings, they would fall on their faces in trepidation and even in dread! It is worth remembering that **in the Bible it is only God’s enemies who fall backwards when confronted with His naked spiritual power**.⁴¹ Whereas the Lord’s true people always fall *forwards on their faces* in awestruck adoration and worship when God appears on the scene.⁴²

³⁹ Ray Van Over, *Total Meditation: Mind Control Techniques for a Small Planet in Space* (Collier Macmillan, 1978), p.107.

⁴⁰ *The Independent*, Saturday 18th February 1995, p.14.

⁴¹ e.g., Gospel of John, chapter 18, verse 6; cf. Book of Isaiah, chapter 28, verse 13.

⁴² e.g., Book of Genesis, chapter 17, verse 3; Book of Joshua, chapter 5, verse 14; Book of Ezekiel, chapter 1, verse 28; Chapter 44, verse 4; Book of Daniel, chapter 8, verse 17; Gospel of Matthew, chapter 17, verses 5-6; Book of Revelation, chapter 7, verse 11; chapter 11, verse 16.

I am drawing attention to these views about Altered States of Consciousness because they have largely conditioned the direction of Charismatic worship in many evangelical churches today. And the use of the *New Style of Worship* songs has played a major part in this. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Graham Kendrick speaks with approval of the benefits of the increasingly-popular use of repetitive Taizé chants in worship.⁴³ In a CNN news item entitled “*New Religion Uses Chants and Meditation for Worship*”, it was reported:

“A hunger for spirituality is leading people to a new type of worship that focuses on chanting and meditation... ‘There seems to be a hunger for this kind of spirituality,’ says Sister Suzanne Toolan, who offers Taizé services at the Mercy Center, a Catholic church in the San Francisco Bay area where hundreds come to participate in Taizé services each month... ‘You repeat it over and over again and it becomes more and more relaxing’, says Toolan. ‘And you go from whatever your state of consciousness is to a much more relaxed state of consciousness’”.⁴⁴

So the Taizé New Age chants which so appeal to monks in France and trendy Catholics in San Francisco (be sure to wear some flowers in your hair) are also approved by the man who is the most popular *New Style of Worship* songwriter in the U.K. today. This should not surprise us, given that so much of this style of worship is highly manipulative of the human mind, which its exponents are using to induce Altered States of Consciousness in Christian congregations. **This was unheard of in the life of the true church before this apostate era.**

⁴³ Jesus Life Magazine interview with Graham Kendrick, taken from the Jesus Army Fellowship website, now on the Internet Archive <https://web.archive.org/web/20010409162154/http://www.jesus.org.uk/kendrick.html>.

⁴⁴ CNN correspondent Susan Reed, writing in a CNN Web News posting on May 20, 1996. The then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, was also into Taizé.

Surely, if you have an entire congregation indulging in the current obligatory fashion for waving their arms about above their heads with their eyes closed, plainly in some kind of trance, it is most unlikely that any real worship is taking place, as it is all once again about “ME and my amazing subjective feelings, imagining I am in God’s presence” rather than the objective adoration of God. **Although many may regard such congregational arm-waving as a secondary issue, the fact is that if it is being used to lead an assembly into a state of trance it represents an assault on the centrality of God in worship.** It is this which so many, in their complete naivety, fail to realise.

To encourage a congregation to get lost in a mystical fog and then pretend it is an act of worship before God is, at the very least, what Scripture refers to in the Greek as *ethelothréskia*, which, as I showed above is, according to Strong’s Concordance, really translated as “*self-willed [arbitrary and unwarranted] piety*” (Colossians 2:23). It is further defined in a major Greek lexicon as “*worship which one prescribes and devises for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of faith which ought to be directed to Christ*”.⁴⁵ [emphasis added] That is a perfect summation of the *New Style of Worship*.

The irony is that if one’s relationship with God was truly God-centred rather than *self*-oriented, one would not have to resort to any humanistic techniques of ASC-inducement via repetitive or soporific songs in order to approach the Throne of Grace. **The reason that the modern Charismatic needs to enter an Altered State of Consciousness in church meetings is because of a failure to rest on the simple promises of the Bible to those who wish to approach the Lord in prayer or worship (Romans 5:1-2; 8:15; Hebrews 4:16; 10:19; Ephesians 2:18).** Christian prayer is primarily discursive, a conversation between a creature and his or her Creator (cf. Acts 16:25). It is not ‘bodily relaxedness’ and a ‘feel-good-factor’ which determine the quality of the believer’s prayer-life but, rather, total dependence on God and an awareness of His cosmic transcendent power in reverence and awe. **The substitution of the seductive inducement of Alpha-waves for**

⁴⁵ Thayer’s Greek–English Lexicon, 1889, dealing with the word ἐθελοθηρσκεία, *ethelothréskia*, in Colossians 2:23).

the saving power of the true Alpha (and Omega) is an entirely self-centred and Spirit-less exercise.

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

Another leading trend in the realm of hymnody today has been:

6. *The Move Away from Biblical Separation to Woolly Ecumenism*

Another major aim of the rock and pop music style of worship has been to bring together the denominations, no matter how apostate those denominations are. In the front of the “Mission Praise” songbook, the statements are made: “*This book is a declaration of Christian unity*” and “*This book has been compiled for a purpose: to unite Christians of all denominations*”. Well it has certainly furthered the uniting of the denominations (many of which are apostate), but has it really brought unity among true Christians, many of whom find the introduction of these songs an affront to the faith?

There is no doubt that the *New Style of Worship* has unashamedly played a major part in the promotion of the highly compromised modern ecumenical movement, exactly like the way that the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement has done so. So long as people are speaking gibberish, casting out demons from Christians, “practising the gifts”, singing the new songs, and getting Baptised with the Holy Spirit as a secondary experience, then they must all be one and joined in unity. So they think. But it is all a chimera based on pagan experiences and the aggrandisement of psychological and emotional states.

But how can such music be the product of the working of the Holy Spirit, as the composers of this music would claim, when it is leading local churches into the clutches of a body which will surely lead to the apostate global church prophesied in Scripture?

Another leading trend in the realm of hymnody today has been

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

Increasingly today congregations are seen not so much as participating worshippers but as audiences who need to be

entertained with dramatic presentations, musical revues and other varieties of lavish spectacle.

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

Early church worship (initially modelled on synagogue worship) consisted of the singing of a psalm or hymn, prayer, readings from Scripture, the Lord's Supper and – as the centrepiece – some Bible exposition or exhortation from an elder/pastor-teacher whose Christ-given role it was to *"work hard at preaching and teaching"* (1 Timothy 5:17) in order to protect the church and keep it from the wolves (Ephesians 4:11-14). If today's new evangelicals were suddenly to find themselves transported back to, say, AD 150, they would be bored beyond measure, believing that they had come to a dead church because their only yardstick for the worship of God is their own 'exciting' and 'stimulating' sensual 'pyrotechnical' experiences!

The only justifiable place for a musical instrument in worship is merely to assist in holding the tune and therefore to operate in the background as a subtle handmaiden to the voices raised in worship. However, on entering many neo-evangelical churches today one would suppose that the musical instruments are more important than the voices. Worship in such churches has become utterly overblown, with the necessity for professional "worship-leaders", complex orchestral arrangements, a big set of drums, grooving guitarists, and endless days of rehearsals!

Let me just say this: The purpose of a local *ekklesia* is not to entertain the goats but to feed the sheep. It seems that such food has pretty much dried up, while the entertainment has now reached Las Vegas proportions!

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

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

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

This egocentric rush to display one's gifts has especially developed in the establishment churches. **We bring ourselves as a living sacrifice, not as a ribbon-wrapped gift parcel to God.**

"Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

We must decrease; He must increase! Is that not the essence of biblical worship? But much of what takes place in worship services today is little more than exhibitionism hiding behind the excuse that "God wants me to use my gifts". Confirming this, a friend wrote to me recently, describing her previous experience in the *New Style of Worship* Charismatic scene,

"If you were brave enough to contribute something, like a song or dance or instrumental solo, then, if people liked it you might be praised and thanked for your efforts, which would bolster your sense of self-worth or even self-importance".

My friends, that is the very *antithesis* of what Divine worship should be about. Exercising gifts in the *Ekklesia* is an important

element of growing spiritually. **But in public corporate worship, developing a sense of self-worth and self-importance is the very last thing which should be happening.** He must increase; We must decrease. This is why only mature elders should be leading. Another dominant trend in hymnody today has been

9. The Move from Reverence and Awe to “Leisurewear Levity”

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

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

I am not saying that one has to wear one's best suit with collar and tie. There are no rules here. But surely making a bit of an effort in one's appearance is important rather than looking like you just got out of bed and couldn't care less, or were attending a nightclub or gymnasium.

Let me put it like this: If you were invited to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace or the White House, what would you wear? The same slobby outfit in which you dress as a couch-potato every evening to watch TV? Surely you would mark the occasion as different to all others and dress as if you had made an effort.

Now if you would do that when you were meeting the Queen/King of England or the President of the USA, why would you deliberately dress down for the King of Kings of this cosmos? “Ah”, you may say, “the Queen/King/President looks on the outside but God looks on the heart”. God certainly looks on the

heart, but is it not true that what we wear on the outside makes a big statement about what is happening on the inside? **With our clothes we literally wear our hearts on our sleeves.** If we put on our scruffiest clothes to come to public corporate worship, or dress as if we were going to play soccer with the lads on the local recreation ground, doesn't that say something about our attitude? Whereas if we mark our worship-times out as being different to anything we do anywhere else, a powerful impression is made both on ourselves and on those around us. This is not empty formality. I am not advocating dressing in a way which would be artificial for us, or over-poshly. But surely it is part of the due reverence and awe which we should give to the King of Kings.

This is very closely related to the hymns we sing. The Romanticism which leads to the centrality of self in many of the modern worship songs and music is linked with an insistence on informal clothes which says: "I just want to express **myself** in my clothes in my own way". It is far easier to be reverent and awe-struck in an atmosphere which is somewhat more formal, where people have made an effort not to look like homeless 'scruffbags' and which is less highly individualised and clothes-personality-based.

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

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

Hand-in-hand with the *New Style of Worship* is a casual approach to Deity, so that one only hears reference to "Jesus" rather than "The Lord Jesus Christ" or "Our Lord". **The main reason for this is that it is considerably easier to sing rock and pop idiom songs to a "chum" rather than to the "Lord of all creation".**

So one even finds that some modern-style songbooks, such as "Songs of Fellowship", list just "Jesus" in their subject index instead of "God the Son" which one finds in more solid hymnbooks. This is all part of the pattern of chummy informality towards God which pervades Charismatic worship and which

has, in great measure, been influenced by the rock and pop kind of worship songs, because how can rock and pop be truly devout? The final leading trend in hymnody today – but by no means the least – has been

11. Moving Away from a Timeless Musical Idiom to the Transient, Corrupted Idioms of Rock and Pop

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

Yet we are increasingly told today that we should be incorporating rock-and-pop-music-based songs if we are to attract unbelievers into our churches – especially if we desire to attract the egocentric, ‘woke’ youth of today. However this fails to discern a number of important facts about these musical idioms. To this we will now turn, with many points, as we are here coming to the disingenuous heart of the *New Style of Worship*.

i. Rock Music is the Music of Rebellion

Rock music has, from its inception generally been the musical expression of rebellion against elders, against law and order, against good manners, against sexual morality, against God’s appointed gender roles. It is, by way of origin, the music of the sex, drugs and rock n’ roll morality. Obviously, not absolutely every piece of music which ‘rocks’ has represented that. There have been some exceptions in terms of soft rock, prog. rock, or folk-rock. But on the basis of its origins alone, and general associations in the popular mind, how can a devout book of hymns to God possibly contain any songs which are based on this idiom? How can so many Christian congregations permit books which contain the *New Style of Worship* songs to grace the pews of their churches or to be video-played on the huge screens which festoon so many churches these days?

I know of a pastor who, when he went to his first pastorate, was immediately set upon by a delegation of young people who

demanding to hold a so-called “youth service”, with their own rock-band and a “preacher” drawn from one of the band. Not wanting to be perceived as heartlessly dismissive, the rookie pastor consented to hold a meeting with these youngsters for a dialogue. The spokesman of the group accused the pastor of being out of touch with things today and said a most revealing thing:

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

There was a real spirit of contempt for eldership in these youngsters. Is that the kind of spirit we want to encourage in our churches? **Rock music is the natural musical expression of rebellion.** We do not worship to have our egos stroked but to thank God for being who He is. We cannot do that with a music style which is the epitome of rebellion and insubordination rather than reverence and submission.

There is a considerable degree of contempt shown by the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* towards anyone who dares to say that their music is not reverent enough for Christian worship. For example, here is a song by the “Christian” rock musician, Don Francisco, entitled *Freedom to Move*, which is a vehement rap-rant against those critical of this music:

“I believe a believer has the freedom to move!
Now tell me, mister, what you tryin’ to do?
Those things you’re sayin’, man they just ain’t true;
You wave the Bible and you scream and you shout;
But you don’t have a clue what you’re talkin’ about.
You been goin’ through the churches like a Nazi for Truth
Sayin’ Christian rock music is destroyin’ the youth;
Slanderin’ your brothers that you don’t even know,
Ruinin’ reputations every place that you go.
You call it devil music, say it’s right from the pit,
Scarin’ parents everywhere right out of their wits.
They’re goin’ to your meetings, buyin’ books and buyin’ tapes,
But all you’re sellin’s legalism, guilt and sour grapes.

I know you wouldn't use it for your Sunday mornin' service,
 But that ain't no excuse to get so spiritually nervous.
 I know you don't like it, but now listen my friend,
 Just 'cause you don't like it doesn't mean it's a sin!
 I know it isn't heavy ministry, the lyrics are light,
 But it's got a funky rhythm and the band is really tight.
 There's a lot more to life than being down in the groove,
 But I believe a believer has the freedom to move.
 Won't you get off your soapbox and take off your shoes,
 You know it ain't the rhythm, it's the words that you use.
 It's not the drums or the electric guitar,
 It's all in the motives — it's in who you really are.
 So crank me up some country or some rhythm and blues,
 I really don't care what kind of flavor you choose.
 Let the lyrics stay clean, let the people all groove,
 And say "Thank you Jesus, for the freedom to move!"⁴⁶

Surely there is no need for a comment here, as the lyrics speak for themselves. Quite simply, rock music is the music of rebellion. Dr. David Noebel said, in his book entitled "The Beatles: A Study in Drugs, Sex and Revolution":

"The hard fact is that in this present revolutionary era, heavy beat music has become the catalyst for the young radicals in their announced plans not only to destroy Western culture but to dethrone God".⁴⁷
 [emphasis added]

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

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

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

⁴⁶ From the album *Come Away* (1992) by Don Francisco.

⁴⁷ David Noebel, *The Beatles: A Study in Drugs, Sex and Revolution*, 1971, p.8.

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

"The Temple of the Church consists not of inert building-blocks but of living stones, each of which is a miniature temple in its own right. The worship appropriate to this is spiritual (1 Peter 2:5) and reasonable (Romans 12:1). **It is devotion characterised by sobriety, watchfulness and self-control.** Such worship stands in contrast to pagan frenzies, 1 Corinthians 12:2: *"You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led"*. [By some crazy impulse, as it were]. Drivenness is a feature which ancient orgiastic paganism, modern voodoo-like cults with their possessed dancing, Wesleyan revivalism, snake-cultism, Pentecostalism, and rock music have in common. By pounding beat and rhythmic movements fleshly sense benumbs and overwhelms mind and spirit. New Testament worship, by contrast, keeps the body and the senses in check... A celebration, therefore, that relies on a 'critical mass' of the cumulative animal-heat of large crowds, has nothing to do with New Testament Christianity. 'Excitement', in the sense of the sports arena, has no place in the church, and its pursuit cheapens and degrades her worship".⁴⁸

Well said! As a further example of the "fleshly" basis of modern worship, we discover that a new song printed in the music column of the neo-evangelical newspaper "Evangelicals Now" has the musical direction *"Slightly Funky"* at its head.⁴⁹ The word "funky" is derived from "funk", which means to twitch or jerk. It is commonly used to refer to an animal kicking a leg out. "Funky

⁴⁸ Kurt Marquart, *Church Growth as Mission Paradigm*, Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Houston, 1994, pp.99-100.

⁴⁹ *Evangelicals Now*, March 1998.

music” is music which has a kind of jerk in it, making it most suitable for sensual discotheque dancing. It also has clear sexual undertones. How could a purportedly evangelical newspaper promote a “funky” song, even if it does have the qualifying word “*slightly*” tagged on to the front of it? How on earth could a song such as this properly be used in the Christian worship of a righteous and holy God?

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

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

Rock and pop is certainly the music of the flesh and their introduction into the churches is a blasphemy.

iii. Rock/Pop Music Rely Mainly on Manipulative Effects

Anyone in the rock and pop music business will tell you that there is a set of formulae to successful songwriting which guarantees a ‘hit’ every time. One of these formulae is known in the trade as “The Hook”. This involves ensuring that a certain line or phrase with a ‘catchy’ tune is repeated regularly in the song, so as to get Joe Public humming it after very little exposure and to hook you into buying it. The Hook is, in effect, a kind of ‘mantra’ designed to increase sales. The Beatles pop group — who were well taught

in these arts by their music arranger, George Martin, from the time of him signing them in 1962 — knew just how to use “The Hook” in virtually every song they wrote. How about “*She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah*” x 3, or *Help, I need somebody, Help, not just anybody, Help, you know I need someone, Help*”, or “*All you need is love*” x 3, or “*We all live in a yellow submarine, yellow submarine, yellow submarine...*” or “*Sgt. Pepper’s lonely... Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely... Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*”, or George Harrison’s “*Mm, mm, my Lord (Hare Krishna), My, my, my Lord (Hare Krishna), Oh, oh my sweet Lord (Krishna Krishna), Ooh, ooh, ooh (Hare Hare)*” [well, the Krishna Consciousness people already know a great deal about the use of repetition to get you in a trance!]. And so many more...

“The Hook” is more than a chorus; it is a song line with a dangling bait. Sometimes it is in the instrumental parts. A couple of examples of instrumental hooks would be in the fuzz-box guitar opening of the song, “(I Can’t Get no) Satisfaction” by the Rolling Stones, or the opening riff of “(Don’t Fear) The Reaper” by the Blue Oyster Cult.

We can see the same “Hook” technique used in many of the *New Style of Worship* songs — whether it is the endless repetition of the same verse, or a certain phrase that cloys in the brain. How about “*Shine Jesus shine*” (whatever that may mean!)? The typical placing of these swelling lines in the songs is like a trigger for the clonelike hands to go in the air!

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

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

I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven,
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven".

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

A friend who spent many years in the Charismatic Movement and in numerous fellowships which were immersed in the *New Style of Worship* wrote to me recently about this song. She said, “We sung the song, ‘I’m forgiven’, so many times! Outside of church we used to sing, “I’m a Gibbon”. We mocked ourselves so we must have had some idea how ridiculous it was”. I wonder how many others who are stuck in that *New Style of Worship* scene also feel that same sense of mockery about the ludicrous nature of so much of that empty repertoire. Maybe the present paper will be a sufficient wake-up call for them to be able to escape its clutches. I certainly pray so.

iv. Rock and Pop Music are Birthed in Egocentricity

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

To illustrate this, you should have seen the old “*Graham Kendrick Website*” before it was withdrawn (and unfortunately seems to have been wiped from the Internet Archive). It represented an outstanding example of the egocentric and superficial nature of the rock and pop scene both in the world and in the church. As Mr. Kendrick is the original and best-known advocate and composer of the *New Style of Worship* songs, it is surely of some relevance to know something about him. If you were to hold your

mouse-pointer over the page title on the “home page” of this website you would see the words “*The Funky Logo is here*”. The background to the “home page” consisted of 300+ identical tiled head and shoulders portraits of the songwriter. One of the pages consists of a number of pictures of the man, one of which has the caption “*Nice hair and beard!*”. Another page on the site is entitled “*The Graham Badge*”, by which “*you can show the world you’re a fan of Graham*”. The badge was a downloadable graphic which consisted of a picture of Mr. Kendrick surrounded by the words “*I Love Graham*”. This can be printed out and coloured in. Underneath the badge, we are told to wear it “*at all times*”.



This website, which received thousands of visitors in two years, provides us with a remarkable example of the vanity and “cult of the personality” which forms the foundational influence behind the *New Style of Worship*. This of course, was long before these folks began using very slick PR and web-designers such as they use today, no doubt having accrued much wealth by now. Maybe people will say that he was young then and has matured now. But that ‘immature’ website was precisely when the *New Style of Worship* was being sold bigtime to the churches as being of great value to the life of the church and worthy of the worship of the Creator of the cosmos. Now, more than two decades later, the greater part of the dirty-work has been done and their goal has been achieved. The churches have now been hugely infected, exactly as intended. **Reverence and awe have been replaced by superficiality and self-centredness masquerading as piety, and the litmus test for it all is the god of subjective experience.**

One can hardly imagine such a vain section of cyberspace being given over to the adulation of Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, Frances Havergal or Augustus Toplady! Indeed, if such hymnwriters had become aware of this kind of material in their name in a “fanzine” of their own time they would surely have put a stop to it instantly.

Clearly, the *New Style of Worship* plays host to a narcissistic mindset through its unhealthy emphasis on “image” and the ‘cult of the personality’. These are the natural outgrowths of the ‘rock-and-pop-vanity-idiom’ in which this music is set. And these folks dare to bring it right into the holy church of God. **Truly, dear friends, I have no qualms in calling out this kind of pretentious ‘worship’, with its rock music, pop hooks and foundational bad theology, as obnoxiously egocentric, menacingly masturbatory and downright inane.**

I say “masturbatory” because there is mostly just a bunch of weak-minded people revelling in their own self-indulgence, faulty theology and then calling it “worship”. Hiding behind that word “worship” and the supposed auspices of the Holy Spirit, they have brought noxious fumes into the house of God in order to perpetuate a movement. In fact, it is the ultimate ‘Trojan Horse’ for many elements of the apostate church of these times.

V. THE STRATEGIES BEHIND THE NEW STYLE OF WORSHIP

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

What the naïve advocates (rather than the leading perpetrators) of the *New Style of Worship* songs fail to discern is that there is a hidden agenda behind the advent of these songs in the Christian scene. For the music of the *New Style of Worship* is a door by which one enters a heterodox worldview concerning such key teachings as the Church, demons, the kingdom of God, spiritual gifts, the sovereignty of God, prayer, the Holy Spirit, sanctification, and many other aspects of Christian truth and the Christian life.

The strategy behind the *New Style of Worship* — and especially its songs — is virtually identical with the strategy of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement. It works by the process of infiltration, with the music of the *New Style of Worship* acting as a forerunner, ‘a softener-up’ to prepare the way for the installation of the whole Charismatic setup, their entire heterodox belief system.

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

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

“It is important to realise that the bulk of the *New Style of Worship* songs have been written by people who are ardent advocates of Charismatic teachings which earlier generations of believers rejected as

“fanaticism” and “enthusiasm”.⁵⁰ These songs have been composed for the deliberate purpose of seeding their teachings in churches. **In other words, the *New Style of Worship* is promotional – and what it seeks to promote is another gospel and a form of religion which is very far removed from the Bible, although the majority of professing ‘Christians’ today would be unable to recognise that.** The *New Style of Worship* songbooks have been deliberately published in order to effect a change in churches to this new misrepresentation of “Christianity”. One only has to read the books written by the major advocates and composers of the *New Style of Worship* to be convinced of that, as we will come to see”.

I am convinced that we are dealing here not with the mere fact of modernisation or over-contextualisation, but with a very deceptive satanic strategy – so clever that it could even deceive the elect (if that was possible).

That is the only conclusion to which I can come, **a)** because of the extraordinary subtlety involved, and **b)** because of what is subsequently achieved in churches once the *New Style of Worship* songs take a hold of their congregations: The disturbance, the

⁵⁰ Just repeating this footnote, too, so we recall the meaning of this word. By ‘enthusiasm’ I am referring to “*religious extravagance*” (Chambers English Dictionary). The Puritans used the word “enthusiasm” to refer to utterances and physical manifestations which were claimed to be happening under the pretence of ‘Divine inspiration’. Thus “enthusiasts” were those who readily gave vent to any religious feeling which was based on subjective sentiment rather than objective truth. Today these terms would encompass the extravagances of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, including the bizarre manifestations which masqueraded under the title “Toronto Blessing” and the associated “revivalism” which was a watershed of evil in church history. Incidentally, the word “enthusiasm” has a very telling etymology, being derived from the Greek *enthousiazerein*, a compound word meaning ‘to be inspired by a god’, which was derived from *en*, ‘in’, and *theos*, ‘a god’. In the case of the *New Style of Worship*, which god?

division, the conniving, the politicking, the poor treatment of those who resist change, the dumbing down of the congregation, the bad theology, the undermining of biblical authority structures, the demotion of the central place of Bible exposition, and ultimately the devastation of the credibility of the evangelical church in the eyes of genuinely-seeking unbelievers.

Frankly, most of the unbelievers I speak to think that happy-clappy ‘pyrotechnic’ churches are just plain silly! The charismatic movement – far from being a global force for change, as it sees itself – has made the church look shallow and ridiculous, while attracting only those who like the fleshly music and razzmatazz of it all. Is that not the fulfilment of Satan’s dreams as, being hellishly “*enraged at the woman [the church]*”, he goes all out to “*make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus*” (Revelation 12:17)? **Satan’s anger-driven purpose in the churches is to dishonour Divine worship (unless it is directed towards him because he thinks that he alone is ‘God’) and to sabotage the evangelism of those churches so that they become bastions of ‘easy-believism’ and shallow pseudo-sanctification.**

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

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

1. To Render Congregations Incapable of True Discernment

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

by one of their “deliverance ministry” shamans, which is another assault on the very meaning of salvation!⁵¹

This is not to say that churches which engage in the *New Style of Worship* have a poor confession of faith. On the contrary, often they will have a mainly acceptable confession on the main aspects. **But the big problem with such churches is not with what they confess but with what they fail to condemn.** Thus, as is the case with the Charismatic Movement, the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* will admit anyone as “Christian” provided they subscribe to their agenda of songs — whether a liberal, a Roman Catholic, or whatever. And the main reason for this is in order not to disturb ecclesiastical “unity”.

For example, the leading Charismatic songwriter, Dave Fellingham, says: “*Worship is also giving us a much greater sense of unity — when we’re all praising God together, we tend to forget our theological differences*”.⁵² While such an approach may give a warm sense of togetherness to a gathering of people, it is not going to protect the flock from the wolves.

It is a firm principle that whenever the *New Style of Worship* comes into a congregation it renders them increasingly unable to discern truth from falsehood, and it even takes away the desire to do so, as if they did they would easily see through their own spiritual proclivities.

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

2. The Progressive “Charismaticisation” of Worship and the Church

The *New Style of Worship* songs are rooted in a movement which believes in and advocates the idea that there is presently a restoration of the Apostolic age of miracle-working, healing and casting out of demons at the hands of modern-day ‘apostles’. This “Restorationism” is the key guiding force behind most of the *New*

⁵¹ For more about “deliverance ministries” please see my article <https://diakrisis-project.com/2022/02/15/delivered-from-evil-is-exorcism-ever-necessary-for-the-disciple-of-christ/>.

⁵² David Fellingham, *To the Praise of His Glory* (Kingsway, 1995), p.41.

Style of Worship songs. For example, the popular song by Graham Kendrick which says, “Restore O Lord the honour of your name, in works of sovereign power come shake the earth again”, may seem wholesome until you realise that the kind of works of power advocated by the songwriter are the pseudo-miracles of the ‘signs and wonders’ restoration movement to which he subscribes.

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

“These songs have become a fitting accompaniment to the growing involvement and use of spiritual gifts such as tongues, prophecy and healing within church services throughout the country... As we teach and encourage people to worship I long to see the unity of the body of Christ grow and the faith of many increase as they see the glory and majesty of God manifested in signs, wonders, healings, deliverance, the conversion of thousands and the restoration of His Kingdom in this land”.⁵³ [emphasis added]

We’ll have more to say about the relationship between the *New Style of Worship* songs and the progressive “charismaticisation” of churches through the Baptism in the Spirit, “tongues” and altered

⁵³ Philip Lawson-Johnson, *In Spirit & in Truth*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp.162-175.

states of consciousness in later sections. However, in that final phrase from the quotation of Lawson-Johnson, “*the restoration of His Kingdom in this land*”, we see here that linked in with this strategy of the progressive “charismaticisation” of churches through the *New Style of Worship* songs is yet another central strategy; and that is:

3. To Distort the Place of the Church in the World

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

“God is restoring worship in his church, and **the restoration of worship is always linked to something else – a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit**. One of the significant things about the end time move of the Spirit in revival is this: God will have a people of praise throughout the nations”.⁵⁴ [emphasis added]

Fellingham then cites the two popular *New Style of Worship* songs written in the late 1970s: “*For I’m building a people of Power*” and “*All over the world the Spirit is moving... as the waters cover the sea*”. He claims that these songs are ‘prophetic’ evidence of the global revival to come which would “usher in the return of Jesus”. Now a major component in that supposed revival is seen by all these *New Style of Worship* songwriters as having been fulfilled in the so-called “Toronto Blessing” of the 1990s.

How do you imagine that the “Toronto Blessing” managed to establish itself so easily in so many churches professing to be evangelical in the five years from 1993 – 1998? Surely, the previous introduction of *New Style of Worship* songs in these churches had already provided a fertile seedbed – an *avant-garde*, if you will –

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.41-43.

where such developments would merely seem like a natural outgrowth?⁵⁵

The Unbiblical Fantasy of a Global Revival to Usher in the Return of Christ

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

However, the biblical view of the place of the Church in the world is plainly given in Revelation 12 – under constant persecution in this wilderness of a world, but under continual protection by the Lord away from the presence of the serpent. That is the condition of the church until the end of this present evil Age. It is only on the Day of Judgement that the blood of the martyrs will be avenged (Revelation 19:2). In the Book of Revelation it is the Babylonian world-system (including the false church) which is “arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (Revelation 17:4), whereas the true church is “clothed in sackcloth”, as exemplified by the “two witnesses” who symbolise the Gospel witness of the suffering, persecuted church during this present evil age (Revelation 11:3).

There will certainly continue to be remarkable successes of the Gospel right to the very end, but the Scriptures know nothing of a pre-Second-Coming Christianisation of the world, as the *New Style of Worship* songwriters believe. Contrary to the belief of many Christians, the Bible does not present any evidence that the return of the Lord will be preceded by a Golden Age of global revival or a largely ‘Christianised’ world – a fantasy which has sometimes been called the “latter-day glory of the saints”. **It is most**

⁵⁵ And could the reason be that the mouths of so many Evangelical leaders were silent about these developments because they also are mistakenly longing for a global revival?

important that we understand this from a biblical perspective rather than from the systems and traditions of men, because the entire concept of a future *earthly* Golden Age is fundamental to Jewish and Gnostic belief-systems – not to mention the Maitreya of the Tibetan Buddhists, the ‘World Teacher’ of the New Agers, and the Mahdi of the Muslims – rather than to the Word of God. As the end of this Age draws to a close, believers will again have to muster that strength in the Lord in the face of the widespread persecution which will inevitably develop. That is the biblical reality, in contrast with the fantasy being peddled through the superficial, triumphalist *New Style of Worship* songs.⁵⁶ The Bible does **not** teach that there will be an Endtime revival. Instead, it reveals a descent into apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3), a period of great tribulation and a proliferation of “*false Christs and false prophets*” as the Lord Jesus puts it (Matthew 24:21 & 24) and the revealing of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), who slaughters the people of God (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 11:7; 13:7)!

These songwriters see a vital link between their songs and the bringing in of this “revival” and the establishment of their phony “kingdom of God on earth”. Jack Hayford (famous for his song “*Majesty*”) also subscribes to this link between the *New Style of Worship* songs and the bringing in of this “Kingdom”. He says in his book “*Worship His Majesty*” that “*from the church emerging glorious on the world scene will come the new reformation in worship*”.⁵⁷ Jack Hayford’s perennially popular song “*Majesty*”, refers to this concept with the term “*kingdom authority*”. This is all part of the Dominionist, Kingdom-now idea of modern Restorationism – imagining that they are bringing in the Kingdom right here on earth with power and authority. **By singing these popular songs, we are actually giving credence to a totally false concept of the Kingdom of God, which gradually works its way into the hearts**

⁵⁶ This has been covered in many of my articles and books. See especially my extensive 650-page commentary on the Book of Revelation, which you can download freely from this link: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2022/06/10/the-essential-apocalypse-making-sense-of-the-book-of-revelation-is-ready-for-download/> .

⁵⁷ Jack Hayford, *Worship His Majesty* (Word Books, 1987), see pp.20-25.

and minds of congregations through the regular worship. This is why I would never sing them and is also why they must be vehemently opposed.

The Kingdom Idea of the Restorationists Contradicts The Lord Jesus

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

"The phenomenon of the modern worship song is an integral part of what God is doing worldwide... The ministry of leading in praise and worship and of music is a vital one in helping to see the purpose of God fulfilled and the kingdom coming on earth".⁵⁸
[emphasis added]

In contrast with this statement, the Lord Jesus Christ said that His *"kingdom is not of this world"* (John 18:36), and *"the kingdom of God will not come with observable signs"* (Luke 17:20). When Fellingham says, *"what God is doing worldwide"*, he is referring to the phenomenal growth of the Charismatic movement which is seen as being evidence of this impending phony 'revival'. And he elaborates further on this theme in his book *"Worship Restored"*, in a section on worship and the kingdom, where he advocates the use of singing in tongues as a form of spiritual warfare, thus chasing away the demons and *"bringing in the kingdom"*.⁵⁹ What a lot of poppycock it all is! **Do you really want this music in your church, to be singing it, teaching it to yourself? Are you not obligated before God to resist it with great force?**

Another of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters, Noel Richards, writes: *"A church that is responding to the current prophetic emphasis will be introducing new songs. Those that are not, only sing the 'good old hymns'"*.⁶⁰ This *"current prophetic emphasis"* to which Noel

⁵⁸ Dave Fellingham, *In Spirit & in Truth* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp.53 & 56.

⁵⁹ Dave Fellingham, *Worship Restored*, op. cit., pp.118-123.

⁶⁰ Noel Richards, *The Worshipping Church* (Pioneer/Word, 1993), pp.30-31.

Richards refers is the restorationist/dominionist Kingdom idea. This is the hidden agenda in all the songs of the *New Style of Worship* which people are so keen to incorporate into their churches today. **‘Global world revival’ is a triumphalist Charismatic fantasy designed to justify their hidden agenda.**

The *New Style of Worship* gets so easily embedded in a church because untaught, easily deceived people get so readily hyped-up by all this triumphalist Kingdom talk. So many seem to believe that for the victory of Christ to be vindicated in this world, the Gospel must win over the vast majority of its population. But that is not living by faith but by sight, which is not how the Gospel and its successes work (2 Corinthians 5:7). The reality is, in the words of the Lord Jesus,

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and afflicted is the way that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

It is a “*little flock*” (Luke 12:32), not some hyped-up mass of the world’s population in a largely Christianised world. That does not at all signify failure, unless you see things only in worldly terms. It simply means that Christ knows those who are His — the ones that the Father has given Him — and He has and will come for them. Not one of His sheep will be lost (John 6:39). That is success!

The kingdom idea of the Charismatics and those peddling the *New Style of Worship* is far removed from what is taught in the Scriptures, like all their other teachings. This is why I will not have their words on my lips with their songs. It would be a betrayal of my faith.

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

4. To Make the Holy Spirit the Focus of the Church instead of the Lord Jesus Christ

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

There is a total obsession with the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles which comes out in its songs. However, the Lord Jesus Christ clearly said about the Spirit: "*He will glorify Me, for He will take from that which is Mine and will disclose it to you*" (John 16:14). It is Christ who the Spirit glorifies, not Himself. Our focus in worship should primarily be on the Lord Jesus Christ as very God of very God, the one and only Mediator through whom we come to the Father. **Certainly, the Holy Spirit is present, applying the Word, enabling us to pray and worship. But He is very much the behind-the-scenes 'energiser', very self-effacing, and not at all the primary focus which He is made out to be in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.**

Frankly, it is my contention that the "spirit" constantly peddled in these meetings and through these songs is more of a pantheistic spirit — a genie-in-the-bottle to be called up at will, a disruptive force-field which can become at one moment a laughing gas, the next moment a 100,000-volt electrical charge to knock you flat on your back. **This is not the Holy Spirit of the Scriptures. That is a pagan spirit.**

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

5. To Cause Emotional Catharsis Under the Pretence of Genuine Spiritual Experience

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

"In our society the old school continues to promote self-discipline and a stiff upper lip, while a new generation promotes self-awareness and emotional release. The same culture clash is found in the Church and is at the root of the conflict over recent events".⁶¹

⁶¹ The Independent, Saturday 18th February 1995, p.14 — article entitled "*It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar*".

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

Chasing a Highly Illusory “Baptism with the Holy Spirit”

Consequently, in the *New Style of Worship* scene, an integral part of that worship is getting into these emotional experiences. **In the ‘easy-believest’ atmosphere of today, because there is very often no real heart change when the alleged conversion takes place, this has to be followed up with all kinds of emotional experiences to convince you that you really do have the Spirit – always wanting “more from God”, never satisfied with what you have.** A person who has received the Spirit at the moment of repentance and conversion, *metanoia* (which is the normal Christian experience) rather than as a tag-on episode *after* conversion, does not need to be running around seeking a “second blessing”. They are already blessed! In full! But the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement always renders people seeking after increasingly sensational experiences and having dissatisfaction with what they already have.

This is the context of the “Baptism in or with the Spirit” which so many claim to receive as a post-conversion experience.⁶² And the music of the *New Style of Worship* is very much a part of that, paving the way for the promotion of an Altered State of Consciousness in a worship service.

As I stated previously, the modern idea of going to church to worship on a Sunday is that one must enter an Altered State of Consciousness (or ASC) in order for worship to have occurred at all. What is happening is that an emotional catharsis is being

⁶² For fuller details about this bogus “Baptism in the Spirit”, please freely download the detailed book I have written on the subject here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/05/13/new-book-signs-wonders-divine-revelation-the-gifts-of-the-spirit-their-abuses-in-todays-churches/> .

generated under the pretence that it represents genuine spiritual experience. This is what the much-vaunted “Baptism in the Spirit” is all about, and its offspring, the so-called “anointings”, which we find enshrined in the “Toronto Blessing” and the “Slain in the Spirit” experience.

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

“Lots of Christians, even skinny ones, wear a tight-laced corset on their hearts, and it needs removing if they are ever to open up in wholehearted worship and praise to the Lord. There is only one thing that will achieve it — **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**. That the **rediscovery of the charismatic dimension** to Christianity has been paralleled by a **surge of living worship** in our day is no coincidence. **The two belong together**”.⁶³ [emphasis added]

There it is, openly stated. The *New Style of Worship* belongs together with the wholly spurious and heretical “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” experience. In the same magazine, there is the testimony of a man who recounted what it was like to put his hands in the air for the first time in worship. He says:

“There was a certain release, rather like my first time riding a motorbike... I returned home feeling rather pleased with myself, thinking I had won a great victory... **Around this time, I experienced the Baptism with the Holy Spirit**”.⁶⁴ [emphasis added]

Again, we see that there is an intimate connection with the *New Style of Worship*, its obsessive arm-raising and Charismatic experience in a congregation. Now perhaps we can see why the advocates of the *New Style of Worship* are so zealous to get their

⁶³ *Restoration Magazine*, Jan/Feb 1985, p.18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.16.

songs and music into congregations. **It is propaganda, pure and simple, for heresy and false teaching.**

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

“A minister can lead his church into worship by **firstly teaching on the Baptism of the Spirit and inviting members to come for the laying on of hands, letting everyone see exactly what happens...** As members of the church begin to get baptised in the Spirit and to catch the vision, worship will introduce itself. **They will begin to do what they have been taught**”.⁶⁵ [emphasis added]

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

All the *New Style of Worship* songwriters have been initiated into the bogus Pentecostal-Charismatic post-conversion experience known as being “Baptised with the Spirit”. **And when a person gets this experience, as is the case with all cultish actions, they are suddenly seized with the desire to get everyone else initiated into it too.** This is essentially because it is a cult.

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

⁶⁵ Phil Rogers, *How to be a Worshipper*, Coastlands, 1984, p.48.

propaganda designed to lead you into all the trappings of the Pentecostal-Charismatic delusion.

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

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

Gibberish ‘Tongues-Speaking’ is Another Vehicle for Brainwashing

Allied with this institutionalised Altered State of Consciousness experience known as the “Baptism in the Spirit” is the advocacy of ‘tongues’-speaking and especially singing in these pseudo-‘tongues’ by all the songwriters of the *New Style of Worship* scene.

One of these songwriters, Noel Richards, writes: *"Why not start off a period of worship by singing for several minutes in tongues instead of our native language?"*.⁶⁶ Like I say, there is a definite agenda.

Incidentally, just to show the extreme spiritual naivete and mysticism of this author, we read in a section entitled "Carrying the Presence of God" in this book:

"I sang in a number of wine bars back in early 1982. One owner eventually offered me the prime evening slot because, as he put it, 'There is a different atmosphere in the place when you are around'. I was not singing about Jesus. I was singing classic pop songs. However, we can take the presence of God with us into every situation".⁶⁷

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

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

It is interesting to note that according to Dave Fellingham, support for this practice of a collective Altered State of Consciousness through singing in the gibberish style of 'tongues' is found in a sermon of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on 1 Corinthians 14:15, where he apparently claimed the verse was about "*spiritual ecstatic singing*".⁶⁸ That has nothing to do with so-called "tongues-speaking".

⁶⁶ Noel Richards, *The Worshipping Church*, Pioneer/Word U.K., 1993, p.33.

⁶⁷ Ibid. P.22-23.

⁶⁸ Westminster Record, Vol.43, No.2.

The Bible shows that the original spiritual gift was the supernatural ability to speak in an identifiable ethnic language, which is what the word “tongue” used to mean in the olden days. Alongside its highly regulated use in public worship at the time (when it had to be interpreted or not practised at all), it was given as a sign to unbelieving Jews that judgement was coming upon them for their rejection of their Messiah, as indeed it did in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.⁶⁹ But the teaching of the Charismatic Movement and the *New Style of Worship* songwriters on tongues-speaking is entirely false and designed to lead a person into an Altered State of Consciousness, which is more New Age than Christian.

For example, the charismatic church elder, Dr. Patrick Dixon, actually describes the modern charismatic ‘tongues’ experience as “emptying the mind of logical, language-related thought, and **helping to induce a trance-like state**”.⁷⁰ This is standard teaching in these circles, where it is believed that spiritual worship — especially tongues-speaking — involves a complete bypassing of the mind, driving a gulf between mind and spirit. That is a very dangerous view indeed. Yet it lies behind so many of the *New Style of Worship* songs. Will you be singing these tendentious musical offerings next Sunday in your church? You really need to reconsider that.

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

⁶⁹ Again, please see my book, *Signs, Wonders & Divine Revelation: The Spiritual Gifts & Their Abuses in Today’s Church*, where all this is explained in copious detail. It is available for free download here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/05/13/new-book-signs-wonders-divine-revelation-the-gifts-of-the-spirit-their-abuses-in-todays-churches/>.

⁷⁰ Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival*, op.cit., p.275.

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

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

And that’s it. But sung a few times, it has a mighty effect on a congregation. Yet this has nothing whatsoever to do with the worship of God. It is about “ME and my wonderful feelings” and how I can get the Spirit to start ‘doing stuff’ in me. **It is not about me humbly presenting myself before God as a living sacrifice. It is about what I can get out of God through His Spirit, as if He is a genie in a bottle that can be summoned by anyone ‘to do stuff’.**

How often does one hear these manipulative songs sung to the accompaniment of the administration of the “Toronto Blessing” or the similarly induced experience of what is erroneously known today as “the Anointing” — when someone has hands laid on them for the express purpose of getting them to fall down in a trance and also do crazy stuff like twitching and shaking, laughing hysterically, or even making animal noises. The *New Style of Worship* songwriter, Chris Bowater, writes: “Be sensitive in administering the anointing”.⁷¹ **But such sensitivity is hardly the issue when that “anointing” involves an unbiblical act bringing about an initiation into what is a cult!** In any case, one never sees the remotest sensitivity whatsoever in the administering of this “Christianised” occult Altered State of Consciousness experience known as the “Anointing”. Folks just queue up like cattle to the slaughter and go down like ninepins! Believe me, it’s a cult.

⁷¹ Chris Bowater, *Creative Worship: A guide to Spirit-Filled Worship* (Marshall-Pickering, 1986), p.48.

An Altered State of Consciousness is the Doorway to the Occult

Any occultist will corroborate the fact that the essence of their craft is to find entrance into an Altered State of Consciousness. All this violation of worship through the manipulation of altered states of consciousness brings the Evangelical/Charismatic scene into close fellowship with the occult. **This is why I have to say that the Charismatic Movement is an unwitting part of the occult, and the *New Style of Worship* songs are avidly promoting the occult wing of the professing church today.** Even occultists themselves see the Charismatic Movement as very much a part of the New Age. In all my researches over the years, I have read numerous accounts by leading occultists in which they identify the Charismatic Movement as being the collective exercise of psychic power operating under the cover name of 'Christian'. Christianised occultism and psychic power are what lie at the heart of the Pentecostal-Charismatic experience. **Take away the altered states of consciousness and there is no Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement.** That is what they deal in exclusively in the Christian scene, with their 'worship', 'tongues', 'words of knowledge', and so on. It all goes back to some phony so-called "revival" in 1906-1915 in Azusa Street, Los Angeles. You can research that for yourself. **It was the moment that Satan grabbed the Church by the short and curlies and took it for a ride.**

It is no coincidence that occultists and New Agers themselves see these movements in the Christian scene as very much a part of the New Age. One example is Peter Spink, who became the Canon of the Church of England's Coventry Cathedral in the UK in 1970. Canon Spink – in common with a number of his Church of England ministerial counterparts – was a New Ager as well as an Anglican clergyman and later a Roman Catholic. And he speaks about this connection between the Charismatic Movement and the New Age in his book, which is brazenly entitled "*Beyond Belief – How to Develop Mystical Consciousness and Discover the God Within*". Could his credentials be any more blatant with that title? He says:

"Since the 1960s a great deal of supernormal or charismatic energy has been released into Western society. Many factors have contributed to this

development. The old secular and religious stereotypes have been challenged. Shocks have been administered to ancient institutions... Within the Christian Church a movement which came to be known as the Charismatic Revival came to birth in the transition period of the 1960s. This movement has acted as a catalyst for a great manifestation of energy in churches which for centuries had been locked in stereotyped forms. Over a wide spectrum religious conventions have been shocked into oblivion. The [Charismatic] movement has been characterised by a great proliferation of psychic gifts. Hitherto subservient and conventional congregations have experienced great explosions of energy. Understood to be 'gifts of the Spirit', powers of healing, speaking in tongues, clairvoyance and clairaudience have characterised the movement... The break with centuries of conventionalism has undoubtedly achieved a great deal. The weakness of the movement lies in the fact that frequently it has failed to perceive itself to be in a stage of transition and as a result has turned introspectively in upon itself... Various New Age groups have effected similar results from the use of shock techniques. The Findhorn Community...has pioneered the way in this field, organising a great variety of courses bringing thousands of young people into experiential situations designed to release creativity".⁷²

My dear readers, the Charismatic Movement and the Findhorn Community (one of the original New Age communities, which was greatly influenced by Alice Bailey disciple, David Spangler) are just two different aspects of the New Age Movement. **The Charismatic Movement is simply a "Christianised" wing of the New Age Movement, whether it likes it or not.** As soon as you

⁷² Peter Spink, *Beyond Belief: How to Develop Mystical Consciousness and Discover the God Within*, Piatkus, 1996, pp.67-68.

deliberately seek out and open yourself up to an Altered State of Consciousness you lay yourself wide open to interference from the powers of darkness. So why do you sing these songs and engage in this type of false worship?

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

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

**The Pentecostal-Charismatic New Style of Worship is an
Initiation into a Christianised Version of the New Age**

All this has a great bearing on the experiences being generated in Charismatic-Pentecostal circles today. **For the ecstasy and altered states of consciousness being induced in these circles is nothing less than an initiation into the New Age, though hiding behind the skirts of Christian terminology.** The intense religious experience which is being induced in Charismatic-Pentecostal circles – under the guise of "worship", "praise", and "the Anointing" – is no different to that being induced in countless world religion circles and New Age communities. Only the

terminology is different and the application. As far as the Yogic practitioner, Tantric Buddhist, Neo-Gnostic, Navajo 'Hand-Trembler' or Arctic Shaman are concerned, the modern Charismatic practices (which are very different to the original New Testament practices laid out in Scripture) are immediately identifiable with their own. Such experiences are not only common in these cultures but are counted as something to be eagerly sought after. In the pathway of the Indian mystic on his way to his imagined 'enlightenment', for instance, such psychic powers are known as 'Siddhis'. He seeks to achieve a state which is known in Sanskrit as 'Nirvana', the literal meaning of which is "a blowing-out-of-the-mind" — hence the psychedelic drug-user's phrase which refers to a 'mind-blowing' experience. This blowing out of the mind is precisely what the Charismatic phenomenon is all about. These also are the facts which account for the huge success of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in the so-called Third World countries, where magic, witchcraft, occultism and superstition hold sway.

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement Peddles Kundalini Energy

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

To gain a sense of the uncanny parallelism between the psychic powers developed within the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement and those 'Siddhis' produced through the practices of Eastern mysticism, compare the *"numerous signs and symptoms [of Kundalini arousal] that may be experienced by the aspirant"*:

"Creeping sensations in the spinal cord; tingling sensations all over the body; heaviness in the head or sometimes giddiness; automatic and involuntary laughing or crying... the chin may press down against the neck; the eyeballs roll upwards or rotate; the body may bend forward or back, or even roll around on the floor... The body may revolve or twist in all directions.

Sometimes it bounds up and down with crossed legs, or creeps about, snake-like, on the floor... **Some speak in tongues...** [the body] may shake and tremble and become limp, or turn as rigid as stone. From all these signs, one may know that Kundalini Sakti has become active. Not everyone will experience all or even most of these signs".⁷³ [emphasis added]

Thus, we can see that the 'serpent power' unleashed through Kundalini Yoga is startlingly similar to the 'Spirit-power' which is 'hyped-up' in Charismatic meetings and which is sought out in a secondary 'Spirit-baptism' or other antics, resulting in the same manifestations. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement peddles Kundalini energy and this is what is being served up in their 'worship' meetings. These facts should be opened up when witnessing to Charismatics as they are most afraid of the occult and it may spur them on to relinquish themselves of their delusions. An undergirding characteristic of the Charismatic Movement is flight from fear through superstitious ritual and the effecting of mass-hypnosis through suggestion and hysteria (otherwise known as 'psychogenic disorder').

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

This is not coincidental. We are now on the threshold of a global deception of unparalleled proportions, involving delusions, deceptions and lies at a so far unheard of level. In the preparation for this, it will be seen that the peculiar antics of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement will have as much a part to play as theosophy, Hinduism, Buddhism, LSD, Cannabis, Hypnosis, Shamanism, New Ageism, and the worldwide reporting of UFOs and ETs. These are not popular or comfortable truths. But having

⁷³ Ajit Mookerjee, *"Kundalini: The Arousal of the Inner Energy"*, Destiny Books, 1982, pp.71-72.

first realised all this when I was saved by grace in 1985, I have seen nothing since to persuade me otherwise. On the contrary.

The reason that I “realised all this” when I came to Christ was because I was already researching for a large book which I was then writing on the occult. When I was overcome by Christ, all that research had come in handy as I switched to “state’s evidence” and changed it all to be coming from a Christian standpoint. That book eventually became “The Serpent and the Cross” (published 1994, available from Amazon), which was an encyclopaedic examination of the way that the church and the world have been assaulted by the occult throughout this age, from classic Gnosticism in the early centuries AD leading to the neo-Gnosticism of the New Spirituality and New Age Movement of the present time, all leading to a global government under the sorcerous, self-deified Antichrist.

In 1985, as soon as I encountered the Charismatic Movement, which was just getting started bigtime through John Wimber’s “Power Evangelism” — what Wimber called “*Doin’ the Stuff*”,⁷⁴ which meant engendering the phony ‘signs and wonders’ so common in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles — and seeing firsthand all the tendentious Charismatic songwriters infecting the churches and preparing the ground for all that “stuff”, I realised that it was all simply New Age occultism with a Christian gloss (as I recorded at the time in copious detail in “The Serpent and the Cross”), and that I would be going from the frying pan into the fire if I got into all that. It was a huge wake-up call for a brand new disciple of Christ.

What I have witnessed during the thirty-eight years since then has only strengthened this belief. If only it was otherwise! It would be wonderful to see peace and truth in all the churches. But that is not to be. For the devastation of truth which we are witnessing in the churches today will surely increase as this age winds down to its close, until the time that the breath of Christ’s mouth and the brightness of His coming cleans it all away (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

⁷⁴ See [*John Wimber: Doin’ the Stuff*](#), on John Piper’s “Desiring God” website in the Internet Archive.

CONCLUSION

Whilst identifying all the above strategies as being satanic in origin, I am not suggesting that the perpetrators are knowingly acting on the devil's behalf. Neither am I saying that God is not at work in His own way in the midst of those situations. But if people are saved and fed in any sense in those circles, it is not *because* of the situations but *in spite* of them!

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

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

This Has Nothing to Do with Ethnic Differences

Some people may object that this paper has ignored the fact that there will be differences in styles of worship from one culture to another, and that the present thesis is written solely from the standpoint of the Western Classical tradition. Obviously, I am an English-speaking worshipper specifically addressing the church situation regarding English-speaking worship and songs, because that is my milieu. Of course there will be ethnic differences in worship music depending on which part of the world one is in. But that should not present a problem in itself.

For example, Oriental music is based on a pentatonic scale, which usually has no harmony at all, and I would initially find it strange to engage in regular worship which utilises that style. But I would certainly not disapprove of worship music which is based on a pentatonic scale. And neither would the Lord! The pentatonic scale of Oriental music is not inferior to the diatonic scale of Western music. **If one is travelling across the world and**

worshipping with local Christians, one should adapt to the local custom of Christians — provided it is God-honouring, rooted in reverence and awe and not chaotic or entrenched in a false spirit. The *apologia* in the present paper is not about local ethnic differences. In fact, whether music is Oriental or Occidental is entirely incidental to the entire thesis of this paper!

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

The Scripture says that at the Last Supper, just after Jesus had described the New Covenant in His blood, "*when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*" (Matthew 26:30). Whatever "ethnic style" was involved when that psalm was sung, I find it hard to believe that if I had been present at that Last Supper I would have felt a feeling of repugnance and that the name of God was being blasphemed, as I do at so many of the "*New Style of Worship*" services today.

This little treatise is **not** about "ethnic" styles of singing or music. It is about "school of thought" styles. It is not about **ethnic** differences in worship. It is about profound **theological** differences in worship and the wish that "*all things be done properly and with order*" (1 Corinthians 14:40). If worship leads people into a close relationship with the one True God and His Son Jesus Christ, and if it leads to a balanced and Christocentric worldview, and if it has a great teaching function, and if it encourages worshippers to be discerning and to reject false teachers, and if it proves to the unbelieving world that Christians aren't a bunch of empty-headed, mindless, superficial cretins, then it doesn't matter one iota which ethnic style is involved.

The Questions Which Need Asking

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

Content and Style Must Be God-Honouring, Edifying and Reverent

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

This is Spiritual Warfare!

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

Do Not Be Fooled by Similar Terminology

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

- The triumphalist “Kingdom” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as the true “Kingdom of God”, which has come in grace but not yet in all the fullness of glory.
- The false “anointing” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as the genuine “anointing” which we receive from the Holy One when we first believe.
- The knockout Toronto-style “blessing” which the *New Style of Worship* songwriters are offering is not the same as the uplifting blessing from our God which we receive to sustain us — especially in times of suffering and conflict.
- The chummy “Jesus” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as our “Lord of Glory”.
- The wacky, anarchic, attention-grabbing, stupor-inducing “spirit” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as our self-effacing, Christ-glorifying “Holy Spirit”.
- The Altered State of Consciousness-inducing “praise and celebration” of the *New Style of Worship* songwriters is not the same as the worship which we are to bring with all our heart, soul, *mind* and strength in reverence and awe.

This is All Part of a Major Downgrade Caused by the “Tyranny of Novelty”

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

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

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

The “tyranny of novelty”. Precisely. And the “*total breakdown in respect for ministerial leadership*” referred to by Alan Gibson is an important aspect of all this. For the eclipse of true leadership goes hand-in-hand with the *New Style of Worship*. As one of their songwriters, Noel Richards, frankly admitted in his book, “The Worshipping Church”: “*It is the absence of leadership that creates room for the Holy Spirit to move*”.⁷⁵ **Now there is a loaded statement if ever there was one, and it sums up one of the reasons for the great proliferation of the *New Style of Worship*: The failure of leaders to lead and the complete denigration of true leadership in the visible church.** The gatekeepers have fallen and the walls have been breached.

The capitulation of leaders to the democratic whims of the people — with their ignorant ears and hearts always itching for things which they think are best for themselves but which are usually worst for their souls — has led to almost total anarchy in the life of the church. Our God is a God of structure. **In fact, the exact opposite of the above statement of Noel Richards is true: It is**

⁷⁵ Noel Richards, *The Worshipping Church* (Pioneer/Word U.K., 1993), p.46.

the presence of genuine spiritual leadership which encourages the work of the Holy Spirit in a church. It is the *absence* of such leadership in churches which has created room for another “spirit” altogether to move so powerfully today. And that spirit is not a godly one at all, but from the dark side.

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

One of the Most Successful Satanic Plays in Church History

Introducing the *New Style of Worship* into churches *en masse* has been one of the most successful satanic plays in church history. Of this I am convinced. A church which has adjusted to a diet of these songs will be totally unprepared for real preaching. Any truly expository preacher who tries to open up fully the Word of God in a church which has embraced the *New Style of Worship* will be completely incomprehensible. **Singing these songs puts a kind of veil over people’s minds – a hypnotic wet blanket to dampen down spiritual alertness and annul a spirit of genuine enquiry.** I have witnessed this so many times in so many different settings.

Having said all the above, I fully realise the enormous difficulty involved in gently clearing a church of these songs once they have got a grip on the congregation. As I said above, one would have as much difficulty in removing these songs from the worship experience of a church as one has in wrestling a beloved toy away from a stubborn child. I am very aware of the almost insurmountable task of removing the *New Style of Worship* songs from churches where they have already taken hold, for one is dealing with an addiction. **Any pastor who seeks to educate his**

congregation on this issue will either lose 90% of his congregation or 100% of his salary, if he has one!

Solid Songs by Spiritual Giants Are Needed

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

In the final analysis, when considering the hymns of the church, we must always remember that neither the singer nor the writer can create words and music in his or her own strength. It must be the Lord Himself who frames our worship. Anything else is idolatry and vanity. Remember how David says, “*O Lord, open my lips*”. The emphasis has to be on the fact that in our worship, it is indeed the Lord Himself who enables it all. May that same Lord give us strength for the battle ahead, and enable us to be compassionate and gracious as well as uncompromising. Ω

Email: diakrisis-project@outlook.com — Website: <https://diakrisis-project.com>

© Copyright, Alan Morrison, 1997, 2000, 2023

[The copyright on my works is merely to protect them from any wanton plagiarism which could result in undesirable changes. Readers are free to reproduce my work, so long as it is in the same format and with the exact same content and its origin is acknowledged].