

Worship in the Melting Pot

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Three Battles for the Soul of Evangelicalism

THIS BOOK BEGAN with the assertion that worship is the most important issue confronting Bible churches today. Some years ago a group of influential church leaders launched an attempt to bring Catholics and evangelicals closer together, proposing cooperation in mission. The cost would be heavy — the blurring of vital salvation doctrines that stood between them. Many evangelicals succumbed, but many stood, particularly when a number of prominent leaders sprang to the defence of the Gospel, insisting that justification by faith alone is the exclusive way for the salvation of lost souls.

At the same time charismatic practices were spreading rapidly through both Catholic and evangelical churches, leading many weaker evangelicals to believe that Catholics must be equally 'saved' because they experienced the same charismatic phenomena. Salvation distinctives suffered a severe setback, but large numbers of evangelical churches remained unaffected, never having accepted charismatic practices as biblical.

But then the new worship revolution accelerated its influence, proving far more dangerous than either of the previous trends. Churches that had defended justification by faith alone and kept clear of charismatic ideas came under immense pressure to adopt worldly-idiom and charismatic-style worship. Those that did so began to be shaped by the new songs they were singing and the music they were playing. Soon they could see no great difference between themselves and those who produced the new songs. Those churches are now being gradually but inevitably absorbed into the world of charismatic and ecumenical evangelicalism. Having formerly refused to forfeit their evangelical distinctives by the fudging of doctrine, or by acceptance of charismatic phenomena, they are now being overpowered by the euphoric drug of contemporary-style worship. Sometimes the preaching remains sound — but for how long once the ethos of the church has changed?

¹ Read the original at http://www.the-highway.com/worship1_Masters.html

Whether its advocates realise it or not, the contemporary worship movement is the instrument of the hour to pull down the doctrinal walls of Zion. How the arch-enemy of the churches of Christ and of human souls must be straining to bring about such a catastrophe! The new worship scene is undoubtedly our enemy, not our friend.

If we give new worship the smallest foothold it will ruin the highest activity entrusted to us — the reverent, intelligent and joyful offering of spiritual praise. Those who begin by singing one new worship song at every service, will soon be singing two, then three, then adding the band, and so on. It is very noticeable that wherever new worship has been embraced by evangelicals, a perceptible loss of reverence, coupled with worldliness and shallowness, has set in. It is obvious from the experience of many churches that new worship brings in wood, hay and stubble, and steals away the power and glory of true praise.

In this closing respectful appeal to spiritual under-shepherds and all other believers, may I urge the consideration of three fearful possibilities. First, the adoption of new worship — with all its compromises of principle — could be an act of great pastoral insensitivity and cruelty, destroying in the young all sense of separation from the world, and delivering them as spiritual cripples into the power of secular culture. How can they be expected to keep their personal lives clear of sinful, worldly culture, if this is incorporated in the worship of their church? Never, before the present era, have evangelical churches considered adopting anything quite like this.

Secondly, the adoption of new worship may prove to be the most divisive force for many decades, because countless believers will feel compelled to stand apart from fellowships that surrender to it. We are already seeing this occurring on a very wide scale.

Finally, with the adoption of new worship, individual churches may dramatically change character in the months and years ahead. Where will your church be ten or twenty years from now? Will it be a lightweight, frothy, entertainment-based community, drinking from this world's fountains, and stripped of all the strengths of truly biblical Christianity? Will it have become a charismatic church, with worshippers either dancing or falling in the aisles? Will it be unrecognisable as a once conservative, Bible-loving fellowship? Or will it still be standing for the Truth by the power of God?

How many churches will be lost to the old biblical ways through worldly worship? The great tragedy is already taking place with significant fellowships becoming 'new evangelical' and charismatic in towns and cities everywhere. May God help us to cherish and guard the great principles of worship expressed in His Word, rediscovered at the Reformation, and kept by millions over so many generations. May we prove the Lord in loyalty to them! May we be faithful to our charge as pastors and church officers!

Scripture matters. Principles count. The Lord must be loved and obeyed in all things. Never let anyone take away your biblical worship. Whatever the cost, hold on to God-focused worship, untainted by fleshly inventions, until the Great Day dawns, and the shadows flee away, and we look with rapture on our King, Whose all-surpassing glory will be unobscured by the things of the world for all eternity.