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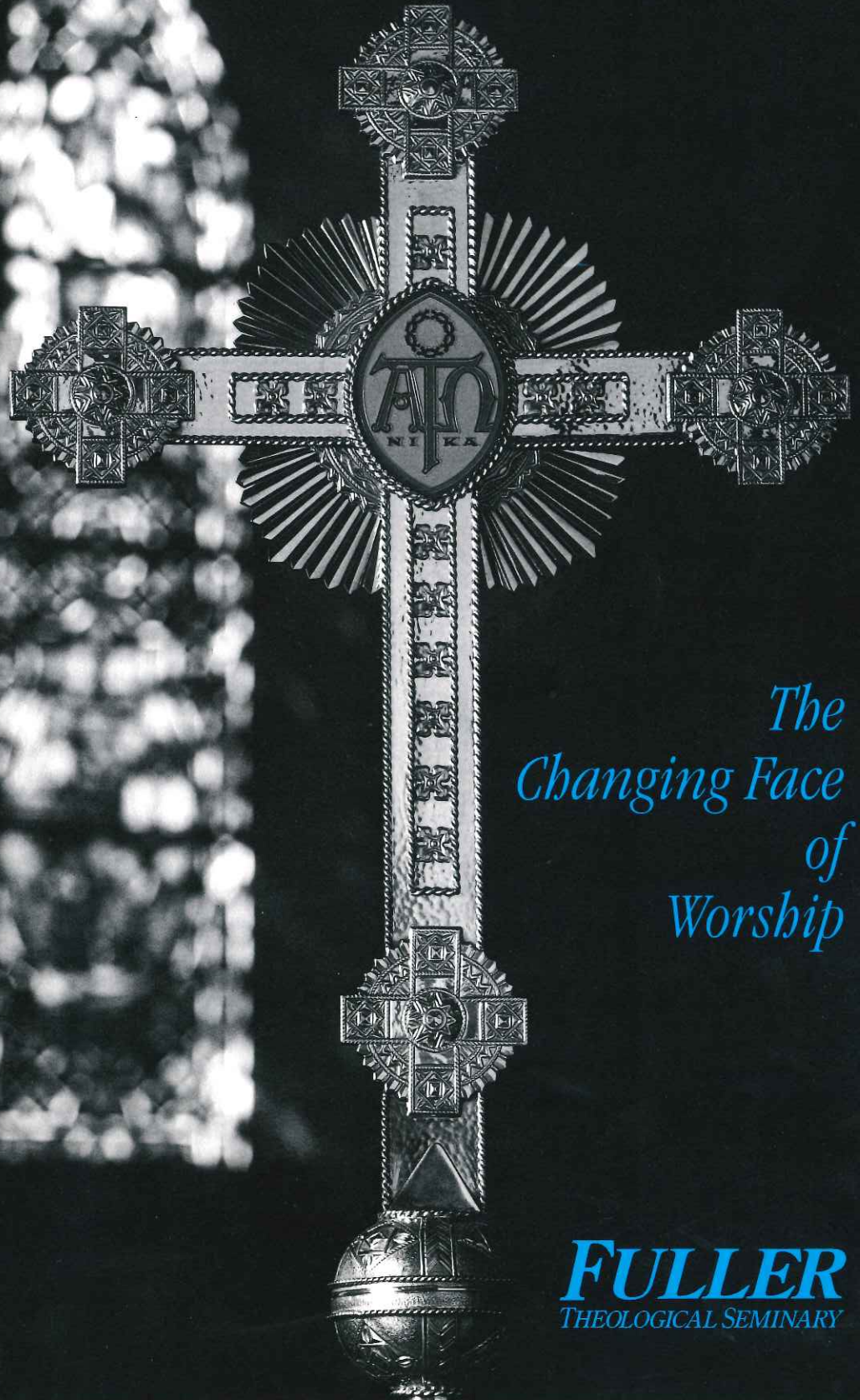
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# THEOLOGY, NEWS AND NOTES

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MARCH 1991



*The  
Changing Face  
of  
Worship*

**FULLER**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

DAVID LUECKE • Page 3

### You Make the Difference in Worship

ROBERT N. SCHAPER • Page 4

### The Changing Face of Pentecostal Worship

WAYNE AND BARBARA KRAISS • Page 7

### A Brief Look at Worship in Lutheran Churches Today

ROWLAND F. BLACKLEY, Jr. • Page 12

### Reflections on Worship in the Traditional Black Church

ELLIOTT MASON, Sr. • Page 14

### Raised Hands, Raised Eyebrows—Adventists Learn to Celebrate

DEANNA DAVIS • Page 17

### 9 Proposals for Worship Renewal

ROBERT E. WEBBER • Page 22

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## Introduction

BY DAVID S. LUECKE, INTEGRATOR

Planning for worship at Fuller Theological Seminary is a challenge. So many denominations, traditions and special groupings need to be recognized and affirmed. But that diversity is one of the main reasons Fuller Seminary can be so exciting.

Partial versions of the Fuller challenge regularly confront hundreds of thousands of worship planners of Christian congregations in North America (and perhaps more here than on other continents). This is a time of considerable ferment and cross-fertilization in worship life. Worshipers and their leaders seem more aware of and open to new options for their hour on Sunday morning, than in previous decades.

Why? What are the outcomes so far? These are the questions that prompt this issue on "The Changing Face of Worship." Naturally the explanations and answers are diverse. To a great extent they depend on the inherited starting points of churches and on the situation to which they are trying to be responsive. Yet there may be a broad, central tendency emerging.

One explanation for greater openness is an increasing loss of self-confidence to be found among many church leaders in the mainline denominations whose membership continues to erode. As cause, effect or both, denominational loyalties in general are fading in this country and along with that goes commitment to inherited worship traditions. Many Reformed, Episcopalian, Lutheran and Methodist ministers can be found looking for something more effective at holding and attracting participants on Sunday morning.

Meanwhile other denominations continue to grow. Generally

they carry a heritage formed in the American experience of the last century or so, usually among people who had not yet progressed to middle and upper levels of the socioeconomic spectrum. Now that progression has happened for many in these churches, and their expectations have changed and become more refined in the process.

The Pentecostal and charismatic movements have been a growing edge in Protestant church life. Pentecostal denominations, like the Assemblies of God, have maintained the fastest rate of growth in recent decades. Around the world, much of the very rapid growth of Christianity has hap-

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*Perhaps the unifying themes in American Protestant worship today are pragmatism and cross-fertilization.*

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pened among churches with strong Pentecostal flavor.

But the impact of this movement goes beyond sheer numbers. Leaders from other traditions have observed and been impressed enough to adapt some of what they see. One knowledgeable observer concludes that in worship more seems to have been borrowed from Pentecostals than by them in recent years.

That observer is James F. White, whose book, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Westminster/Knox 1989) is an excellent guide for a survey of trends. In addition to various heritages carried on in mainline denominations, he highlights Anabaptist, Frontier and Pentecostal traditions.

Perhaps the unifying themes in American Protestant worship today are pragmatism and cross-fertilization. Worship leaders are inclined to try to repeat "what

works" in holding the interest of their participants and in attracting new people. Their access to alternatives is considerably increased by much greater availability of extra-denominational seminars, publications, videos and TV presentations that no longer fit conventional labels.

The following articles suggest what these changes look like from inside a specific tradition. It is appropriate to have a Pentecostal perspective. This is offered by Wayne and Barbara Kraiss of Southern California College. Both lifelong in the Assemblies of God, they report significant changes over the years that make sense but leave many churches appearing to structure their experience much like other Protestant congregations.

An appropriate counterpoint is a Lutheran perspective from a well experienced and trained professional church musician. Rowland F. Blakely, Jr., recognizes the pressures to "go contemporary" in style with less emphasis on formal liturgy. He reflects the ambivalence of many from liturgical churches as they see what can be gained but what also might be lost.

Veteran pastor, The Rev. Dr. Elliott Mason, Sr., writes on worship in the traditional Black Church. Developments in worship life are for him part of the larger issue of renewal of the Black Church, and they need to be evaluated from that perspective. He highlights especially the neo-Pentecostal movement in the primarily middle-class African Methodist Episcopal Church led by highly trained black clergy-persons.

The cycle of change is of interest to Deanna Davis, who reflects on the history of Seventh-day Adventists, a frontier tradition. Many congregations that

were eager to leave those roots behind are now reconsidering and working to recapture some of the experiential emphases of the early days.

How should worship practices and traditions be evaluated? It is fitting to turn to Robert Schaper for an overall perspective on how to approach the rich variety of worship today and what basic components to look for. In addition to teaching worship, he has long been the Dean of the Chapel at Fuller Theological Seminary and has had to struggle week by week, year by year with planning that reflects the diversity of the Fuller community. He suggests ways forward in renewal for those who seek to lead in a responsible manner the people of God.

Additional guidelines for worship renewal are offered by Robert E. Webber, Th.D., professor of worship at Wheaton College and author of *Worship Old and New* (Zondervan, 1982).

My own interest in this topic springs from the opportunities I had during my years at Fuller to experience evangelical worship and church life at the seminary and in many area churches. I enjoyed a receptive audience for the observations and suggestions I have reported back to my Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in a book on evangelical style and Lutheran substance. ■

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## You Make the Difference in Worship

BY ROBERT N. SCHAPER

When is there ever a time that a perceptive Christian, especially one called of God to exercise leadership in the community of faith, is satisfied with the worship of the Church? This is not to say that the worship is unworthy or ineffective, but it is to admit that anything of such profound spiritual significance, both in our individual and corporate life, is always in need of renewal and reform. It is my purpose to look at the paradoxical realities of worship once more, and to suggest ways forward in renewal for the Christian of any tradition, and especially for those who seek to lead in a responsible manner the people of God.

### DEFINITION

I am always intrigued by the fact that Scripture does not seek to define worship, and even less does it attempt to standardize or restrict it. There are certainly clear indications of what Christians did in their worship, but there is no canonization of form to go with it. Theologians have gleaned the best from Hebrew Scripture and from the New Testament on the subject, but it must be admitted that it is still left to Christians of every age to determine what best expresses the mystery of worship.

This has been my definition of worship: "It is the expression of a relationship in which God the Father reveals himself and his love in Christ, and by his Holy Spirit administers grace, to which we respond in faith, gratitude and obedience." This suffers in a certain limitation both on the work of the Triune God in worship and on the various aspects of our response. However, the fuller statement would only add items which flow from the realities

already given. We will look in more detail at our responses to God in worship.

The important thing is to note that God's self-revelation in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit is first. Worship is only possible because God has made it so. God speaks first, and without this, there is no meaningful response. That word to us is love, and it is fully articulated in Jesus, in whom the fullness of God dwells bodily.

Our part in worship is, therefore, best understood in terms of response. It is God, and everything about God, to which we respond. It must be humbly admitted that this is a mystery and is limited by our own finitude. God remains hidden from us in that it is still human-kind that is mediating who God is and what God is about in the world. We believe we hear the Word of the Lord, but it is given to us by a human being in a human language. This is not to deny the reality of God's speaking to us directly in silence, but it is a human word that first tells us to expect God so to speak. So the fact is that we believe that our worship will participate in this ongoing divine encounter, and that the revelation of God in Christ will now come to us in various times and manners. That is ultimately an act of faith.

### LITURGICAL BAGGAGE

Yet all this talk about worship in the basic theological sense is layered over with tons of tradition. We do not start from scratch in our worship forms anymore than we do with our theology or our biblical interpretations. We are the heirs of a lengthy history, and we are bound by the dimensions of our time and place. This includes

the stereotypes and prejudices that have been given to us in subtle and blatant ways. We have in our genes (which are not yet fully redeemed?) a certain fear of the strange and the stranger. We polarize on a spectrum from one to ten, with ten being good and one, bad, and our choices we usually rate rather close to ten. I am impressed that I often seem to end up with those who claim to be in the middle, who then make a new scale of one to ten, with those who are in the middle being ten and those who are not, one.

This polarization is most apparent in the separation of formal and informal, liturgical and free, ritual and spontaneity. These are particularly fragile terms, and close to becoming useless. However, there are no quick replacements, and perhaps we do know approximately what they mean. I have chosen to term the broad families of worship as traditional, directed, open or charismatic. Within these families there can emerge almost any of the descriptions listed above (formal, informal, liturgical, etc.). There are certainly churches that worship in a very structured and carefully planned way. You might not experience that service as formal, but chances are good that you would. Structure does have a way of becoming ordered and virtually impregnable. On the other hand, some churches studiously avoid structure, and you would discover a commitment to spontaneity that rejects any inkling of a prepared liturgy. Yet spontaneity itself has been "formalized."

Without making defense for any point of the spectrum, I can observe that the great problem for worship in our churches is balance. We so quickly make absolute choices between Word and Sacrament, structure and freedom, high and low, priestly and prophetic, edification and evange-

lism, traditional and contemporary, impression and expression.

Everything I have listed has a noble tradition to support it. The question that must be asked is whether we consider these traditions that exist in the church worldwide to be a perversion or authentic, a help or a hindrance. I am very sure that each worship form is both. Perhaps I should say that each has the potential for both, because no form by its form alone guarantees its own purity or usefulness.

When one thinks about it carefully, it is easy to see that our traditions are often largely cultural expressions, which have been shaped by factors of language, custom, art, education, ethnic characteristics or other significant influences. It is no

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*"...the great problem for worship in our churches is balance."*

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accident that Anglican liturgy, emerging from the Elizabethan age, puts a premium on the appropriate and well-turned phrase, and sought to preserve such expression in a book of common prayer. Music, also a cultural expression, continues to influence the shape and tone of liturgy. The way in which such factors condition the responses of the people in a given place and time cannot be denied. The point is that such considerations do not decide the effectiveness of a tradition.

Our worship traditions, even those young enough barely to qualify as traditions, always contain influences from the sources of their formation. When certain churches are vehicles of a new community of faith, they inevitably institute worship forms that are uniquely theirs, and to that extent, authentic. The forming rationale includes

theological identity, and often this is a patent criticism of existing traditions. The crisis arises, and it does so frequently, when the forms of worship for whatever reason are not user-friendly. The situation is rather complex, because the worshiper is urged to loyalty to a tradition that is not being experienced as vital, and this forces the conclusion that the worshiper is at fault. The leadership complicates matters by agreeing that it is the worshiper's fault, and determines to hold the line for the tradition that is considered divinely authorized and therefore effective. The other crisis, not so readily perceived, is when the worship becomes effective for all the wrong reasons, and the success blinds leaders and people to the underlying flaws.

### SHARED WORSHIP REALITIES

One way to renew our worship is to see clearly the basic components of corporate worship that are shared to a greater or lesser degree by all our traditions. There is an underlying commonality to the activities of worship, and this means the possibility of shared experience and shared respect.

■ **Prayer.** Since we are thinking of worship as an expression of a relationship, largely from our standpoint as response to God, then a large and indispensable category of worship is prayer. Prayer is our end of the conversation with God, but it takes many forms.

1. In perhaps the best sense, prayer includes the adoration, thanksgivings, petitions and intercessions of the people. This may be uttered by one person, but if so, it is offered on behalf of all the people. We are not to listen in on the private devotion of one person, nor should pastoral prayer be "a sermon with the preacher's eyes closed." Prayer by a congregation can take many forms, but the form is secondary to the objective of this act of worship. Prayer can be identified by subject,

so that the congregation might be directed in a prayer of confession of sin, or in a prayer of praise, which certainly can include thanksgiving, or in exalting God for who God is as well as for God's wonderful works. I have noticed recently a restriction of the word "worship" to the task of adoration. "Worship" songs are supposedly confined to praise, and we are called on to worship God in prayer by exalting God and nothing else. I love the sentiment, but I do not want to feel that I do not worship God when I am interceding for others, or hearing the Word proclaimed, or participating at the table of the Lord. It's a semantic matter, but I feel it is important.

2. Some music. Some, because music in worship has a specific purpose. Hymns are songs addressed to God, and that comes under the rubric of prayer. I feel that instrumental music in worship is a kind of prayer, in that the instrument is an extension of the person, and this artistic personal expression is being offered to God. This understanding has helped me greatly in participating in worship when music without a text is played. When there is a text, that identifies the purpose of the song in worship. Many leaders seem to ignore this.

■ **Offering.** In one sense, all our participation in worship is offering, either to God or to each other. More narrowly defined, it is our gift to God of our substance. In the early church this included food for the poor and the elements for the Eucharist. Tradition has dictated this to be a part of corporate worship, but it is not necessarily confined to this event. Romans 12:1,2, makes clear that our spiritual worship of God is the constant offering of our body as a living sacrifice.

■ **Proclamation.** Worship normally includes the element of teaching, instruction, exhortation or admonition. This is the opportunity for the worshiper to be addressed by God, either through the preacher or through fellow-worshippers. This can be either said

or sung. There is obviously a wide range of possibilities in these forms.

■ **Ritual action.** Prayer and proclamation are Word-centered. A common part of worship is deliberate bodily action that has significance and value.

1. Sacraments. Though word is a part of the ritual, the event is an act and not just a word. Baptism and Eucharist are essentially "physical."

2. Silence. Deliberate non-speaking is a kind of bodily response. This becomes not only opportunity for inward personal participation, but it is itself a response to God. It is not that I think rather than speak; I am silent. This requires the instruction of a congregation and persistence in the exercise that few have

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*"The great need for our worshiping communities is meaningful, spiritual, whole-hearted participation in our worship."*

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ventured. Our silence is usually about a twenty-second time-out.

3. Bodily action. Actions such as standing, kneeling, liturgical dance and procession are all capable of carrying significance.

■ **Profession.** The statement of belief or commitment is a time-honored form that needs its own category in worship. It has not been a universal practice, but it is ancient and widespread.

There are creative possibilities beyond these, but most of what everyone does when worship goes on is included. To say this is to say that the essence of worship, what makes it authentic, is accessible if one considers the form that is used. To some degree all forms

include prayer, offering, proclamation, ritual acts, profession. Authenticity could not be denied on the basis of content to any form that included such items. But the dynamic, the vitality, the genuineness of a divine confrontation is elusive indeed. This is to say again that worship is a mystery, and cannot ultimately be fully defined or controlled.

#### PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP

This has been a brief argument to convince us that the great need for our worshiping communities is meaningful, spiritual, whole-hearted participation in our worship. It is not the form alone that prevents this, but there are genuine problems, both in the congregation and in the liturgical leadership. Congregational problems are formidable. Our culture, and especially TV, creates consumerism and passivity on a grand scale. We are used to being entertained without the need of our participation. It is not that I am against our people enjoying worship. The question is what is necessary to produce that enjoyment. Many congregations suffer from biblical illiteracy and/or a kind of spiritual lukewarmness. A spiritual endeavor such as worship, with response the key ingredient, is amazingly enriched when the participants speak the language and appreciate the meaning and subtlety of the event. One may also add the problem of repetition. This is both a source of comfort that comes from the familiar and boredom that comes from the predictable.

Leadership problems come from the assumption that the truly important participation is that of the leaders. Personality cults develop when the preacher becomes the major focus of the gathering. It is also sad that many who are liturgical leaders are not dedicated to the effective participation of the congregation, either by discovering what would enhance it or ferreting out what hinders it.

A recent book by Craig Erickson (*Participating in Worship*, WJKP,

1989) suggests six types of participation in worship. Some are more significant in our common worship than others. But they challenge the worship leader to think seriously of the ways in which those who gather are being led into a vital experience of encounter with God. The place for spontaneity, silence, lay leadership, deliberate multisensate experience (kneeling, standing, upraised arms or hands, procession, sight and sound), "interiorized verbal" (especially memorized responses, canticles, music), and the creative construction of liturgy that is "catholic" and inclusive are major areas of discussion.

Participation seems to me to be the dominant need. I have often wondered at the hesitancy in most of our evangelical churches to use the time-honored practice of saying aloud the Amen at the end of our prayers. It is in the Bible and it has been the practice of the church from the beginning. Such hesitancy is a quiet testimony to the barriers to participation. My hope is that our pastoral leaders will examine our worship forms and objectively evaluate every aspect as it helps or hinders participation, and then carefully instruct the congregation in the art of response to God. Every Christian has the right to participate in worship that is worthy, and to echo, "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord." *Psalms 122:1* ■

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## The Changing Face of Pentecostal Worship

BY WAYNE AND BARBARA KRAISS

As children in the 1940s we worshiped God in large established Pentecostal congregations of fervent believers of all ages. We met several times weekly to praise God through singing, praying, testifying, preaching and reveling in the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the intensity of the blessings caused responses of shouting or dancing in the Spirit which we observed with awe.

We grew up in vastly different geographical locations (Chicago, Illinois; and Ft. Smith, Arkansas) but our experiences were virtually the same. Our fathers were lay leaders and our mothers also took active parts in the church life. There were few paid staff. Gifted song leaders and musicians rose from the ranks of worshippers. Our pastors were patriarchal pioneers of the momentous early twentieth-century revival, which restored to the church the wonders of the Book of Acts. The places of worship were substantial rectangular brick buildings that housed the main sanctuary, Sunday School facilities, and a youth auditorium.

Youth rallies and conventions brought us together with other Pentecostals, who shared our feeling that we were somewhat different from other Christian youth. Occasionally we were called "Holy Rollers," a term that caused us embarrassment.

Today over a thousand gather to worship in our home church for Saturday evening and multiple Sunday services. The sanctuary is yet to be built. As we enter, we are handed a bulletin of a dozen or more pages in which we will find an order of worship along with lists of special activities and opportunities to participate in the

life of the congregation. These activities will be categorized by age and interest groups.

We will still praise the Lord through singing, praying, and preaching in a distinctive Pentecostal context punctuated by an occasional manifestation of a gift of the Spirit. In a Pentecostal worship service, the gifts of the Spirit can be manifested at any point, prayer time and the end of the sermon being the most probable. If the altar call is prolonged because of the prompting of the Spirit, gifts often accompany.

While only a few Pentecostal churches venture to actually print the order of service, giving tacit consent to the interruption of any part of the service to anyone manifesting a gift of the Spirit, it is commonly held among worship leaders and clergy with no printed order that at least a loosely organized plan of procedure is in effect. A personal testimony may be shared from the platform, but rarely would someone rise and speak informally from the pew.

The major trend in Pentecostal worship is toward more structure. Pentecostal worship in the classical tradition (before 1960) is described by James F. White in *Protestant Worship, Traditions in Transition* as an "unstructured approach to worship in which the Holy Spirit is trusted to prompt not only the contents of the service but also its sequence."<sup>1</sup> While we concur that this phenomenon is present in special moves of Pentecostal renewal, we have not seen it prevail in its pure form through the years, but only strongly affect the general patterns of worship that have become

known as the Pentecostal style, described as more spontaneous, casual, simple and emotional than the usual Protestant worship service. A comparison of the past and present orders of worship demonstrates the trend toward a more structured service.

#### PAST

Singing and praise  
Prayer (requests, testimonials)  
Offering  
Informal testimonies  
Special music (choir, specials)  
Sermon  
Altar call, tarrying  
Communion (once a month)

#### PRESENT

Call to worship (choir)  
Invocation and welcome  
Congregational singing  
Scripture reading  
Pastoral prayer  
Choir selection  
Offering—Offertory  
Special music  
Sermon  
Altar call  
Communion (once a month)

The impromptu service seems to be either out of vogue or unmanageable in congregations of any size. To overrule this tendency would take an obvious move of the Holy Spirit sweeping over the congregation or a specially designed service for waiting on the Lord and the cultivation of the gifts.

It must be pointed out that there are still many Pentecostal churches with little or no formal structure to their services and only a few with as formalized a structure as the one presented here. Most probably fall somewhere in the middle, but churches with more formal aspects are numerous enough to notice as a trend.

The trend toward more structure is evident in the organization and responsibilities of the pastoral staff as well. Our present pastor is a devout, gifted servant of God with a graduate degree. Surrounding him in the ministry is a large staff with designated portfolios. A minister of music backed by a

large choir and instrumentalists will lead the singing and may have planned the order of worship. Themes are often apparent in the selection for congregational singing, Scripture readings, and special music; these most often complement the pastor's sermons, which are frequently developed in a series.

The minister of education has carefully implemented a full curriculum for all ages. Ministers of youth, singles, seniors, and missions attempt to develop balanced programs to meet the

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*"The impromptu service seems either out of vogue or unmanageable in congregations of any size."*

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spiritual, social and physical needs of the congregation.

When we were growing up, revival meetings were scheduled several times a year and often lasted for several weeks with meetings every night. Evangelists preached to the unconverted whom members had urged to attend or who had come out of curiosity, having seen announcements of the meetings on large banners hung outside the church. Some of these evangelists specialized in topics such as prophecy, the gifts of the Spirit, or healing. The churches were often filled to capacity during these meetings. The protracted meeting is a rarity now. Weekend retreats, special missions emphases, or seminars reflect the changing times.

The young people of today's Pentecostal churches are several generations removed from the original revival. Disquieting studies show that evangelical young people (this would include

Pentecostal young people) encounter and succumb to the temptations that beset our society almost to the same degree as all others.

Such disturbing trends are causing soul-searching among Pentecostals. There is alarm in the ranks that future generations will not be impacted with the powerful challenge of the gospel as well as keeping Pentecostal fire burning brightly.

Youth camps in the summer and snow camps in the winter along with a fall youth conference are designed to present the challenge of commitment to the gospel and renewal that took place in the youth rallies and revival meetings of yesteryear.

Our congregation is struggling to accommodate worshipers who come from all the backgrounds that make up a complex urban setting where the only consistent factor is change. Many of the members would not be able to relate to the historic Pentecostal revival, but are comfortable in the more recent neo-Pentecostal movements occurring since the 1960s, blending denominational backgrounds. The church is seeking new ways under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring the worshipers to a total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

One innovation we have observed is the centering of the Lord's Supper in the service so that a longer time can be focused upon it. Those versed in church history may detect a fledgling Eucharistic trend.

The ability of the classical Pentecostal movement to embrace varying formats can be largely accounted for by its amazing adaptability to cultural differences. Many factors of change and developing trends can be traced to this versatility. There are adaptations due to region, locale, rural or urban setting, educational and social status, cultural taste and size of congregation.

The segment of Pentecostalism of which we are a part is congregationally driven. Each congrega-

tion is autonomous, calling its own pastor, electing its own lay leadership. We have observed that each church has a personality and definite preferences in worship, which soon solidify into patterns and mini-traditions under the umbrella of an overarching Pentecostal style. It is virtually impossible to track this widespread diversity.

The trends we are seeing today seem to fall away from the "typical" Pentecostal church of the 1940s in two directions—either to a more formalizing trend, which involves some borrowing from other Protestant traditions or to a much more free worship trend with special emphasis on what is termed "body ministry." The latter would highlight long sessions of prayer and praise with congregations or portions of them standing with arms raised and prophetic or deliverance ministries amid great informality.

We must call attention to one major development in service organization that seems to hold true in both formal and informal settings. The Sunday evening service was once widely known to be evangelistic in nature. It was planned especially with the unbeliever in mind. Sunday evening was considered to be the time when guests would be brought. The lively singing as well as the sermon topic or title attracted the curious seeker. An altar call was the climax of the service. Today, in many, if not all quarters, this custom has been completely reversed. Guests are more apt to appear on Sunday morning, causing the dilemma of either making this service evangelistic in tone or taking an eclectic approach to minister both to the saint and the sinner.

In a recent study called "Born Again: A Look at Christians in America" by Barna Research Group of Glendale, California,<sup>2</sup> from 70 to 84 percent of adult church attenders in various

Pentecostal denominations have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We know of no study that charts what percentage of the above have experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but we would guess less than 50 percent. Many believers sitting in the pews

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*"Regretably, we have observed a growing tendency toward the actor-audience syndrome."*

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of Pentecostal churches enjoy the distinctive worship style but do not actively seek to fully participate in the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit.

The original revival swept around the world without racial, sexual or social bias. The gifts of the Spirit were liberally outpoured on old and young, rich and poor, illiterate or educated. Women were accepted as missionaries, evangelists and pastors from the earliest days. Wayne's great-grandmother was ordained in 1914.

Many early Pentecostals were on the lowest rungs of the economic and social ladder, but there were also those from mainline churches who were educated and more influential. These persons chose to identify with the new movement because of the spiritual realities and benefits they derived and in some cases because they were no longer welcome in their former denominations. Many of these provided later leadership. The early resistant stance of many denominations to Pentecostalism made the neo-Pentecostal revival, which began in the 1960s in the mainline churches, most astonishing. Even before this, however, the Pentecostal churches were making steady economic and social progress.

White is still able to observe that "Pentecostals seem to have

more contact with the entry level of American society than other groups. ..." <sup>3</sup> but comments on the inclusiveness of Pentecostal worship:

*From the very start, it has been clear that the Spirit is no respecter of persons. One of the most marked characteristics of Pentecostal worship is its ability to cut across social distinctions. People are valued not for themselves but for the gifts they contribute to worship: speaking in tongues, interpretation, prophecy, testimonies and healing. And these gifts are distributed quite regardless of sex or race.<sup>4</sup>*

It is expected that there will be a wide range of active participation in Pentecostal services and a democratization of diverse elements that would otherwise tend to produce schism in the body. This more objective viewpoint of the Pentecostal movement is heartening.

A visible evidence of upward economic and social mobility is the housing of Pentecostal worship today. From storefronts, to used denominational churches, to several distinct architectural designs of their own, Pentecostal churches have gained a respectable place in the Protestant and evangelical worlds.

One of the more common recent architectural arrangements is the sanctuary in the round, which brings the congregation close to a large platform that provides space for a large choir and instrumentalists as well as a large central pulpit and communion table. There is usually a well-defined space between congregation and platform where seekers can be called forward for laying on of hands or prayer counseling—even when kneeling benches are not present. Often, in a large structure, a prayer room will be built to the side of the platform for extended times of prayer. Regrettably, we have observed a growing tendency toward the actor-audience syndrome. Large

sanctuaries, elaborate sound systems and professional gifting of participants in a service have contributed to this trend.

The type of architecture Pentecostals are prone to employ does not call forth awe from the worshiper but creates a feeling of comfort as in one's family room. The result is a loss of reverence for the house of prayer. Animated conversation and prayer occur together in the same space. The use of the sanctuary for large musicals and skits further diminishes the sense of reverence. White's use of the statement referring to church architecture, "the building will always win," may be particularly applicable to Pentecostals.<sup>5</sup>

Pentecostal people are known to be sociable. Large foyers encourage sociability, but a practice of socializing in the sanctuary before a service starts often creates a "buzz" rather than a quiet reverent atmosphere for prayer and meditation. Some churches have tried to counteract this persistent tendency by printing a suggested Scripture passage in the bulletin that is to be read before the service begins, or playing taped worship choruses. Because the close of the Pentecostal service is usually an altar call, occasionally the congregation is reminded to fellowship in the foyer and not in the sanctuary while people remain for prayer.

Prayer and praise customs in Pentecostal public worship are so distinctive that changes may reveal possible trends. Some churches arrange for an intercessory prayer time one-half hour before the Sunday evening service. Extended prayer often characterizes a midweek service or a men's early morning gathering; women usually gather for such events at mid-morning. Special quarterly prayer services that often emphasize healing are appearing in some church calendars.

There is still ample demonstration of extemporaneous offerings of praise after congregational singing or after encouragement from a leader to offer a concert of

praise. Of more recent incorporation is praise in the form of applause to or for God, a "clap offering." Further, applause is being substituted in many churches for the voluntary "Amen" or "Praise the Lord" often offered after a musical offering or a proclamation from the sermon to which the congregation wishes to assert its agreement. White calls the latter "a dialogic relationship between preacher and people."<sup>6</sup>

Recent indications are that contemporary congregations or those peopled by increasing contingents of generations

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*"...contemporary congregations feel less inhibited to use their hands than their voices."*

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removed from the original revival feel less inhibited to use their hands than their voices in a spontaneous fashion. Controversy has arisen in Pentecostal ranks regarding applause being a worthy expression of praise and thanksgiving, many contending it to be the introduction of a practice in the entertainment world. It is our observation that applause short circuits any cultivation of a further impromptu moving of the Spirit at times when the former practice of "waiting on the Lord" in attitudes of prayer or praise seems more appropriate.

Attempts by leaders to "loosen up" the congregation to further vocal participation when the service seems too quiet or inhibited has also brought controversy. The earlier practice of audible congregational prayer and praise prompted by the Holy Spirit was much different from the pep-squad approach. Chanting phrases, repeating dictated declarations to other worshipers, to the Lord, or back to the leader/preacher often

causes self-conscious wooden obedience, which leaves the worshiper without a sense of spontaneous worship. Emotional "rousements" can also threaten authentic worship.

Barbara confesses she remembers little of the preaching of her childhood, but the lively music captivated her. Although leading the congregational singing or singing "specials" seemed to require a special gift the choir was open to all on an each-service basis. She timidly answered the call to come and be part of the choir. Even as an elementary schoolgirl she begged her parents to allow her to join the frequent Sunday afternoon sings. The "Southern" style of church music was the soil and soul of her early musical impressions. The Stamps-Baxter paperback songbooks were used. The pianist played "evangelistically" with her hands flying all over the keyboard.

The gospel song, which originated in the nineteenth century in the frontier tradition, dominated Pentecostal music until the 1960s, supplemented by some Wesley, Crosby and Watts hymns. The Pentecostals added a few songs relating to the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the Day of Pentecost—"Old Time Power" and "Lord, Send the Power" being two examples.

The monumental changes that culminated in the adoption of contemporary secular musical idioms in the 1970s were sparked by musicians with roots in the Pentecostal and Baptist traditions. Gradually, although often accompanied by much struggle and controversy, most churches adopted the new styles.

Choirs no longer are assembled "on the spot," but in many cases have become very professional. Selections usually center on a praise song, testimonial, or a special arrangement of a hymn. Few anthems are sung and choirs who employ them are apt to be labeled as high church. Huge seasonal spectaculars involving the choir, children's choirs, orchestras, and drama constitute major community outreaches in

large churches. Even smaller churches occasionally will attempt such a production aided by professionally produced accompaniment tapes.

Care is given in many churches to have a graded choir program, starting with the very young and going through the entire age spectrum—even to seniors. Where the familiar gospel song has been largely replaced by more contemporary expressions, there may be a yearly gospel sing. This truly nostalgic event is usually held on a Sunday evening and is immensely popular with the congregation.

While it is true that most American Protestant churches prefer the popular expression in church music, the Pentecostal churches have adopted it almost solely and have brought to it their own distinctive flavor. Drums and guitars have long been respected parts of any instrumental grouping used in worship. Many arrangers of widely used choir and ensemble music have roots in the Pentecostal tradition.

Traveling gospel teams employed musicians from the very beginning of the tradition. Now, musicians form groups and choirs and travel widely, giving concerts outside the church as well as taking part in regularly scheduled church services. The gospel music industry has expanded to such proportions that many within the church fear that it has become an alternative entertainment world, complete with celebrity trappings and the fees that go with it. This situation has certainly spilled over into many church music programs. It has become an ordinary practice for many soloists to sing with professionally recorded accompaniment tapes and the renditions to be acknowledged by applause.

Since musical expression is so dependent upon the tastes of the worshiper and so fluid, it is hard to recognize or chart all the variations of musical practice in congregational hymnody or

worship leading. However, two fairly recent developments must be noted.

First is the addition of worship leading teams composed of talented singers and instrumentalists from the congregation. Many times no hymns at all are incorporated and the words of the songs or choruses are flashed on the wall by a projector, effectually rendering the hymnal obsolete.

Second, the words of contempo-

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*"Today, many of the larger Pentecostal churches have pastors with graduate degrees and favor expository preaching."*

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rary worship songs and choruses are taken from the Psalms or other portions of Scripture. Often, the melodies are taught by rote and the congregation never sees the actual music. Contemporary musical idioms or Jewish melodies often are employed, sometimes with rather complicated rhythms. We have observed that many worshipers have difficulty learning these songs or do not wholeheartedly join in singing them. In some quarters, there is an overt trend to try to reinstitute what is termed "Davidic" worship from the Old Testament.

The preaching of our childhood experience was usually topical with an occasional textual sermon but rarely expository. Sermons of visiting evangelists often focused on a dramatic story or a "catchy" title. Series that chronologically exegeted a major segment of Scripture were usually only attempted during a mid-week Bible study.

Higher education, seminaries, advanced degrees and scholarship were often ridiculed to the delight and loud amens of the congregation. Many of the pastors were

zealous for the Lord, fervent in spirit, but without significant theological education.

Today, many of the larger Pentecostal churches have pastors with graduate degrees and favor expository preaching. Because most Pentecostal churches are congregationally governed, pulpit committees select candidates whose style and education match the norms of the congregation.

It has been our observation that early Pentecostal preaching reflected a strong Arminian viewpoint. Neo-Pentecostals are more comfortable in a blend of Arminian/Calvinistic/Reformed preaching, often without intentionally developing such theological structures.

This cursory overview of changes and trends in Pentecostal worship is somewhat like the proverbial blind man trying to describe an elephant. We can only "touch" what is happening in our small part of Pentecostalism, while the movement is worldwide and multid denominational in scope. Since Pentecostal worship is dynamic, changes will continue to occur within its diverse contours. ■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>James F. White, *Protestant Worship, Traditions in Transition*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989) p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>*Advance*, March 1991, Vol. 27 No. 3.

<sup>3</sup>White, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>White, pp. 197-98.

<sup>5</sup>White, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>White, p. 203.

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# A Brief Look at Worship in Lutheran Churches Today

BY ROWLAND F. BLACKLEY, JR.

Historically, the Lutheran Church's principal service of worship has been a variant of the Roman Catholic mass, but with a stronger emphasis on congregational participation. Lutheranism's special musical contribution to hymnody, the chorale, represents the voice of the people responding to the Word of God. Luther's stress on the preaching of the Word (particularly the proper distinction of the law and gospel) is complemented by an equally strong sacramental tradition. These factors all combine in the liturgical worship of the Church.

To discuss selected worship trends in many Lutheran churches today, we must first examine the underlying philosophical differences between exclusive and inclusive worship styles. Exclusive worship utilizes the forms and words of the historical church—common in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican/Episcopal and Lutheran denominations. The mass is the primary (though not only) avenue of corporate worship here. Those familiar with this mode of worship know that the basic order of service is much the same each week. In contrast, "inclusive worship" is characterized by non-liturgical, or free-form services. These can be totally different from week to week, have Scriptural, though not ecclesiastical roots, and not indicate any particular denominational tradition.

Congregations that choose the inclusive approach want visitors to feel at home right away, and be full participants, while those who use the exclusive approach are not as concerned for immediately

integrating the first-time worshiper. Inclusive services involve more contemporary Christian music with short, simple texts and highly repetitive tunes, typically accompanied by piano, guitar and other instruments. In the exclusive service style, one typically finds an organ in use (an instrument designed specifically to accompany singing). The hymns and liturgical settings have melodies that are usually older and somewhat more complex than those in the free-form approach. Worship in the liturgical tradition is concerned with the edification of the believer, while in the free-form service worship is a means to an end: to evangelize and create more disciples.

Songs in free-form services tend to be direct quotations of Scripture (largely KJV) and short, simple, repeated acclamations. They are generally praise-oriented and emotion- or mood-promoting, with little theological substance. Hymn texts in the liturgical tradition contain more indirect biblical quotations and Christian poetry, and can be praise-oriented, reflective, or didactic in character. They generally contain more substantive theology.

The inclusive service is usually more relaxed than the formal liturgical service. The latter appears more objective. Indeed, it has been said that the liturgy is a guard against bad preaching. The free-form service is highly dependent upon the personalities of the leaders and their moment-to-moment inspiration. Liturgical services tend to reinforce the cultural aspects of Lutheranism, while an inclusive format tends to negate this cultural bias.

Here, then, are four main arguments a liturgist might use in

favor of exclusive worship:

- Worship is primarily for the believer; the nonbeliever cannot worship as the believer. The service of divine worship should not be a means to an end: it is itself the end—the process of receiving God's Word and sacraments, praising, thanking and petitioning him, and edifying our brothers and sisters in Christ.
  - There is considerable doctrine contained in the wording of the liturgical settings. As we believe, so should we worship. Basic Christian beliefs will remain with the Church, even when different pastors may place special emphasis on peripheral issues.
  - The Church ought to be a place for stability in a constantly changing world, and the historical means of worship assist in this goal. Since much "old" material is used, an important connection is made between twentieth-century Christians and the saints of all ages. We share the same unchanging God and his Word and sacraments as did believers from previous centuries.
  - While some liturgical melodies may be more difficult to learn at first than the music of more free-form services, they are generally of more enduring quality. That which is gained easily is more quickly forgotten and valued less than that which requires some effort. It is also possible that the lack of theological substance in many contemporary songs will bore people rather quickly.
- Some arguments in favor of the non-liturgical, inclusive service might include:
- A less rigid, more relaxed and informal style of worship is seen by many to be a clear advantage.
  - Nonmembers who walk in the door are more quickly assimilated, and therefore, might be more inclined to return.
  - People today want something meaningful and relevant to their lives. Using more contemporary

musical sounds is a step in this direction.

- The German Lutheran culture takes a back seat.

In Lutheran churches today, both the exclusive and inclusive styles described above are readily available to the worshiper. There are also a number of variants and combinations of features. It is my perception that the current Lutheran thought on the matter of corporate worship includes a strong desire to remove inhibiting cultural factors while retaining the all-important focus of salvation by grace through faith, coupled with a recognition of the importance of the sacraments. How is this accomplished? There seem to be a number of workable options, depending upon the taste, preference and stubbornness of the individual congregation.

Alternative musical settings of the divine services are provided by recent hymnals: *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) and *Lutheran Worship* (1982). While these hymnals are not new, quite a number of parishes still use the older books, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) and *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958). A switch to the newer hymnals would reflect significant changes, both in musical style (more upbeat, celebrative) and in modernization of texts.

Remember that the mass form itself is not indicative of any one culture. It is a product of the catholic (universal) Church. If one still desires to retain the mass form, it is possible to find, either all together or piece by piece, musical settings in a more contemporary style. Curiously, many of these sound like they were written in the sixties; some were. Maybe it's time to resurrect some of the work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship that didn't make it into the hymnals. Perhaps contemporary

composers also need some encouragement to write additional settings.

Finally, the mass form is sometimes retained without music. For most worshipers, this is the least desirable option, since much inspiration comes from the music, and the music also assists in the verbal message of the texts.

Many congregations have departed from the mass to create an original order of worship. I have been involved in this process, and have seen a desire to make the new order as different as possible from the more traditional forms used by the church. The assumption is made that unchurched folk and even young people within the congregation are not receptive to the existing

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*"As Christians we should not be putting roadblocks in the way of the unsaved, nor in the way of further edification of the saved."*

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formats. I believe two things need to be said in this regard. First of all, it seems that as Christians we should not be putting roadblocks in the way of the unsaved, nor in the way of further edification of the saved. If traditions not mandated by Scripture are inhibiting some people, they probably ought to be removed. On the other hand, is not the real power, both to convict the sinner and to reassure the redeemed, in the very Word of God, regardless of outer trappings? In other words, are we doubting God's ability to communicate in spite of our puny efforts to "improve" the situation?

In designing a new worship format, the two prime areas of concern are theology and music. The integrity of Lutheran doctrine

is primary. Items of worship pertaining to our sinful nature, God's free forgiveness, the power of the Word of God, the efficacy of prayer, baptism, and the Eucharist, and receiving the blessing of the Lord are essential. A formal statement of faith, perhaps an historic creed, is also "required," as would be inclusion of Scripture readings, preaching, and praise.

Musical selections run the gamut from traditional hymns to the latest hits on Christian radio stations. By far the most obvious feature to the newcomer, the music serves to set the mood(s) of worship. Therefore, songs are chosen and placed within the service based largely on their tempo and overall effect. Congregations initiating the use of contemporary Christian music would be wise to choose more "mellow," less highly rhythmical music at first, in order not to alienate their own more traditional members. Musical accompaniment may include any or all of these: piano, guitar, bass, drums, flute, trumpet, other wind instruments, possibly strings, and even organ occasionally. A "worship leader," frequently not the preacher, and often not an ordained minister, leads the

—please turn to page 23

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# Reflections on Worship in the Traditional Black Church

BY ELLIOTT MASON, SR.

The invitation to write this article on the style of worship in the traditional black church is indeed an honor. However, I must confess that the issue that has been of major concern to me for years is the renewal of the Black Church in every dimension of its life, of which worship, is certainly an integral part.

I decided to begin my discussion of worship and renewal by sharing a part of my spiritual odyssey as a Christian worshipping in the Black Church in America, reflecting upon what the black style of worship has meant to me—especially in my childhood and youth—as the foundation of my life's journey was being laid. Then I'll look at new directions in worship style taking place in some traditional black churches and ask, "Are these new directions a part of the needed renewal of the Black Church?"

It is my hope that my meditation upon my own life's journey might serve as at least one source of renewal. My overwhelming concern for renewal in the Black Church was given a cataclysmic impetus by a powerful, awesome and life-changing encounter with God, which can be termed a private worship experience. It occurred in 1975 in a dream/vision of God, and it absorbed all of my physical, intellectual and spiritual energies for the following three years as I sought to share this supernatural experience in countless ways with the patient, precious members of my parish at Trinity Baptist Church, Los Angeles.

In this encounter, which came to me when I thought that everything in my Christian life was in order, God revealed to me

that I was a Christian but a *carnal* Christian, not the *spiritual* Christian about whom Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 3:1-7. It was as if the light from God's countenance penetrated my being revealing the motive behind every thought and action, showing me my total destitution. It was marvelous for I felt that my Heavenly Father who loved me unconditionally was doing something wonderful with me. Yet it was painful and demanding as the Hand of God was gently pressing me to submit myself to a cleansing and purifying judgment.

The Lord showed me that I was to submit for his cleansing not simply my sinful carnal Christian life, but my "good" carnal Christian life—my preaching, my praying, my singing, my adoration of him, etc. God was giving me an opportunity to repent of every desire, good and bad, that was not motivated by his Spirit. He told me that he would show me, over a period of time, how to discern between the good *I* desired to do and the good *he* desired to do through me.

I discovered that what God had revealed to me was set forth clearly in his Word in Paul's teaching on the carnal Christian and the spiritual Christian in 1 Corinthians 2 and 3. For the next ten years at Trinity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and using Lewis Sperry Chafer's book, *He That is Spiritual* (Revised edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), we explored this biblical doctrine of spirituality which now governed my preaching and teaching and all of my life.

Also, the Lord revealed to me that the worship life of the church of which I was leader should be freed from any carnal preaching, carnal praying, carnal singing,

etc., as we waited upon the Holy Spirit to inspire us to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, KJV). This necessitated an attempt at deepening our relationship to God so that our lives were fully under his control. As we saw these truths in God's Word, there was deep repentance, open confession and renewal in my own life first, and in the lives of many in the congregation.

The years since have been marvelous, yet often painful, as God cuts away all that is not of himself that he alone might be in full control. Now I understand as never before that only in my total weakness and absolute dependence upon Jesus am I made strong. God wants us to live and thus worship in a spirit in which no flesh is lifted up but only God himself is glorified.

This life-changing encounter with God was, in one sense, a high peak in a journey with Jesus Christ which began long before 1975 in the worship life of a black church in the South. As a child and teenager growing up in New Orleans, Louisiana, I lived in the midst of two worlds—the friendly world of black people and the hostile world of white people, who controlled the major institutions of our society and who were resolved to oppress blacks and keep them "in their place." Feelings of resentment arose in my consciousness against whites who I felt were immoral because they were silent partners in a system that perpetrated injustice. I was deterred by my family and, above all, the church, from allowing my resentment to turn into a bitterness that would lead me to inevitable conflict with whites and possibly my death. My greatest spiritual mentor was my mother who often took me as a child to the early morning prayer service. At eight years of age, during a revival at which Evangelist C.S. Hunter had preached the gospel, I rose from the Mourners' Bench and con-

fessed my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior.

The worship services of the First Free Mission Baptist Church in New Orleans, part of the largest traditional black denomination in America, the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Incorporated, were times of celebration where emotions were freely expressed. We could abandon ourselves to the Lord. There seemed to be no particular effort to *make* things happen in worship, but there was a readiness to let the Holy Spirit flow freely in our midst if it pleased him to do so. I recall how deeply moving it was to me in my teens when a mother of the church would "line" a long meter hymn at the top of her voice, "Father, I stretch my hand to thee, no other help I know ..." and the congregation would respond in slow mournful sound, "Father, I stretch my hand to thee ..." I did not "shout" and "rejoice in the Spirit" as did some when the Spirit fell upon them. However, I fully identified with "the shouter." I sensed joy in my soul and often wept as I felt the Spirit's power move through the congregation.

There was an order of service, and our choir sang hymns, anthems and spirituals. Yet we always knew that the Holy Spirit might surprise us and "change" the order of service. As my seminary-trained pastor, the Reverend J. C. Nicholas preached thought-provoking yet deeply moving sermons, the congregation responded with "Amen. Preach the Word," etc. There were worshipers who said nothing, sitting quietly nodding their heads in agreement with what was taking place.

My own strength and identity as an individual were rooted in the knowledge that I was part of a community which God loved and visited with his presence. I was taught that no one, not even a hostile white person, was barred from entering this community; it was open to all who wanted to

enter—universal in its outlook. We were not permitted to attend white churches, but whites could come to our church. I often wondered if whites realized what they were missing by not being a part of such an enriching fellowship.

In these worship services, I felt that I was being undergirded by my extended family which affirmed my personhood. As a teenager I recall that after having been in Sunday School and 11 o'clock worship on Sunday morning, while in the midst of final examinations in school, I left my studies at home and returned to church on Sunday night to receive strength from God for what I would face in my exams.

When I was presented to the

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*"I often wondered if whites realized what they were missing in not being a part of such an enriching fellowship."*

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Lord as a baby by our pastor, the Reverend C.C. Smith, he told my parents that one day I would preach the gospel. Long before my parents told me of the prophecy, I felt the call of God and began to tell my teachers in school that my goal in life was to be a minister. The one thing that caused me some apprehension was the thought of standing in the pulpit before so many and preaching. I remember thinking, "Maybe they'll teach me how to preach in seminary." Then one Thursday night, following an evening worship service in the fall of 1938, the Reverend Nicholas simply said, "Well son, you'll preach your first sermon two weeks from tonight!" I was sixteen years of age, in my first semester at Dillard University and stricken with a fear I had never known.

Word of my trial sermon spread. I was on my knees before

the Lord praying as I had never prayed before. On that night when I stood up to preach—still filled with tremendous apprehension—I was caught up in the Spirit and experienced an ecstasy in which I seemed to "observe" myself and "hear" myself preaching without paying any attention to the notes I had so carefully written. When I came to myself, I had completed my sermon. I was warmly embraced by the Christian community and by the Black community at large.

As a university student from 1938 through 1942, I was allowed to assist my pastor in the worship services. I taught Sunday School, served as church clerk for a time, sang in the choir and was allowed by my pastor to do some of the biblical research he needed done to prepare for classes he was teaching at a Bible School. Unable, because of my color, to attend a standard theological seminary in the South, I was given a farewell at a Sunday evening worship service and sent off to the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology, Oberlin, Ohio. The direction of my life was firmly charted.

More than thirty years of meaningful ministry had taken place when, in the divine encounter of 1975, the Lord seemed to lift me to a new level of awareness which compelled me to ask the question as I looked at each thought and each act, "Is this motivated by my carnal life (self-life) as a Christian, or is it truly inspired by the Holy Spirit who lives in the depth of my being?" The Lord had me look back upon my total Christian life, causing me to repent deeply of all that he showed me that was not inspired by his Spirit.

Children and youth of today are facing many of the problems I faced in my childhood and youth. In my judgment, the problems are exacerbated. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya look at the community concerns challenging

the Black Church and observe that:

*Today's Black Church is struggling for relevance in the resolution of today's black problems: racism; drug abuse; child care; health and welfare; housing; counseling; unemployment; teenage pregnancy; the false securities of conspicuous consumption; and the whole tragic malaise with which society in general is burdened. It must address all of these social challenges without abandoning its distinctive mandate to assist all human beings in their efforts to find conciliation and comfort with their Creator. There is no moratorium on the human need for spiritual and moral nurture.*<sup>3</sup>

Faced with crises of such enormous proportions, black leaders are seeking to meet these challenges in various ways. The new forms of worship in some traditional black churches seem to be attempts to respond to the needs of persons whom churches are desiring to reach with the gospel.

As an illustration of these attempts by churches to reach out to their communities, we take note of some churches in the AME denomination that are a part of a neo-Pentecostal movement. These churches have moved away from the order and decorum of traditional AME worship and developed a Pentecostal worship style.<sup>4</sup>

The neo-Pentecostal movement in the primarily middle-class African Methodist Episcopal Church is led by highly trained black clergypersons with deep commitments to minister to the total black community. Lincoln and Mamiya describe the movement in this manner:

*The neo-Pentecostal movement that is influencing some black denominations has combined the deep spirituality of traditional black Pentecostalism with a highly educated clergy and sophisticated social ministries.*<sup>5</sup>

Many AME churches are a part of this movement, but it seems to be agreed upon that:

*The nerve center of black neo-Pentecostalism is Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, which presents an invigorating blend of rollicking music and old time religion. The church had 500 members in 1974; today it boasts*

*more than 7,000. The average age of members is 35, and nearly half are men. Bethel is proudly Afrocentric—a bright mural of African faces is painted over the altar—and has traded in its pipe organ for a jazz band. Pastor Frank Reid, 39, holds degrees from Yale and Harvard Divinity School. Reid's sermons are interspersed with traditional Pentecostal dancing and singing, while at one point in the Sunday Service worshippers break up into cozy prayer circles.*<sup>6</sup>

Blacks, because of our African origin, are generally more expressive in our emotional life than whites, and it is believed that the new black economic underclass—hard-core urban poor—are attracted to these churches because of their "informal, less structured, and highly spirited worship services."<sup>7</sup>

This neo-Pentecostal movement has touched some traditional

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*"I know how easy it is for Satan to pervert God's gift of black emotion..."*

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middle-class Baptist churches.<sup>8</sup> In my personal observations, I see some black Baptist churches, which do not hold necessarily to the Pentecostal doctrine of "a second blessing of the Holy Spirit," influenced in various degrees by the Pentecostal worship style. Black gospel music seems to play an important role in these services, and musical instruments such as the drum, the guitar, etc., are used in addition to the piano and organ. These Baptist churches attract very large numbers of youth and young adults.

The extraordinary numerical growth being experienced by the neo-Pentecostal churches, and by those simply influenced by the

Pentecostal worship style, is seen by many as signs of renewal. Yet there are pastors with whom I have spoken, who question whether this numerical growth represents true renewal that will affect permanently the Black Church and enable it to be the redemptive instrument with which God is pleased.

Critics of the new directions in worship in traditional black churches ask questions like these: "Is the worship more carnal ('fleshly' and self-inspired) than spiritual (Holy Spirit-inspired)?" "Are we seeing manifested in such worship the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) in addition to the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12)?" "Are those involved in such worship being truly empowered by the Holy Spirit in their ministry to their communities as they deal with the various social problems?" "Does the worship contribute to the building up or edifying of the Body of Christ, as Paul emphasized throughout his letters?"

As a person reared inside black culture churches, I can identify with and seriously appreciate the joyous freedom of black worshippers whatever may be the worship style. However, I too, ask all the above questions. I know how easy it is for Satan to pervert God's gift of black emotion to make us feel that we have been inspired only by man's manipulation of the things of God. In prayer, I ask God to search me and try me to help me see if my daily life and my worship life are in line with his Word and his will. It is my conviction that whatever the style of worship, God desires to cleanse our worship life of all carnality so that we can worship the Father through the Son inspired only by the Holy Spirit. ■

#### NOTES

1. The term traditional black church refers to the seven historic black churches mentioned by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya in *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 1: The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.)

Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church; the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Incorporated (NBC); the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

2. It ought to be made clear that while there is an Afro-Christian religious world view of black sacred cosmos that is shared by all black Christians, the Black Church is not monolithic and there are many variations on what one might call the black worship style. See, for a discussion of "the black sacred cosmos," *Ibid.*, pp. 2-7. Also, I use the term "the Black Church" as "a shorthand reference to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States." *Ibid.*, p. 1.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 398.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 388.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 397.

6. Richard N. Ostling, "Strains on the Heart," *Time*, November 19, 1990, p. 90.

7. Lincoln and Mamiya, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

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## Raised Hands, Raised Eyebrows—Adventists Learn to Celebrate

BY DEANNA DAVIS

Auntie Ethel loved me unconditionally and invested time in me. Her visits to my home were especially happy times. She had a few peculiar habits, not the least of which was going to church every week—on Saturday. Once when I was six, I went with her. Song service was just beginning in the Primary Department when we arrived. I loved to sing and could read well. Supplied with a copy of *Happy Songs for Boys and Girls*, I tried my best to sing along. Then the nice lady at the front of the room asked, "Does anyone have a favorite song they would like to sing?" My hand shot into the air. "Our visitor has a favorite song. What is it, dear?" she asked. "Little Brown Jug!" I quickly replied.

Frantic glances were exchanged by the song leader and the pianist. An older child gasped and some of the younger ones giggled. I became confused and uncomfortable. Evidently "Little Brown Jug" was not a frequent request in the Primary Department of the Tabernacle Seventh-day Adventist Church. The leader regained her composure and said that we had to sing the songs in the book so everyone would have the words and the pianist would have the music. I chose a song from the book and the remainder of the service progressed smoothly.

Today, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is my own. But I find that the passing of years has done little to solve the issue raised in the Primary Department long ago. What is appropriate to Adventist worship and what is not? As an adult, I find that the choices are not always as obvious

as the choice between "Little Brown Jug" and "Heavenly Sunshine."

At the present time, the Adventist Church in North America is having to rethink its historical patterns of worship. As Myron Widmer, associate editor of *Adventist Review*, notes, "With the birth and rapid growth of several large 'celebration-style' Adventist churches in Oregon and California, and with hundreds of congregations adding celebrative elements to their worship services, the church has been, and is being forced to restudy the entire concept of worship to see how much innovation it will allow."<sup>1</sup>

Of the more than 5,600 SDA congregations in North America, no more than a dozen are "celebration" churches. However some of them have become megachurches and are attracting hundreds of former-Adventist Baby Boomers back to the denomination. Defining a celebration church is not easy; no two are exactly alike. However aspects of worship style that diverge dramatically from traditional Adventist worship can be used as identifying characteristics.

In celebration churches lively, joyful congregational singing is accompanied by a variety of musical instruments including synthesizers, drums and electric guitars. Words to the songs are projected onto a large screen at the front of the sanctuary. Most of the songs are praise choruses, although some more meditative songs and a few traditional hymns may also be used. Such singing

plays a major part in the service, often continuing for 20 or 30 minutes. Applause to show appreciation for something said or done is not discouraged, nor is clapping in time to the music during the song service. A "Garden" or "Altar" of Prayer is a part of most celebration worship services. During the pastoral prayer people are invited to come and kneel in front of the platform. At the largest celebration church, Colton, California's Celebration Center, lay pastors move among those bowed in prayer, and lay their hands on their shoulders as a sign of caring. Dramatizations may also be a part of the service. And sporadically, some members raise their hands during the singing.

While such neo-Pentecostal innovations have been adopted by many denominations, they have raised quite a few eyebrows and questions among Adventists. J. David Newman, editor of *Ministry* magazine, writes, "The word 'celebration' has become a naughty word in Adventist circles. It constitutes, for many, the new buzzword for expressing displeasure with almost any change in church worship practice. ... I find it fascinating to observe that we condemn what the Bible expressly commands as part of worship."<sup>2</sup>

The divisiveness caused by the celebration churches underscores a long-standing problem in North American Adventism—cultural fundamentalism. Adventism provides its members with an entire lifestyle and sub-culture. Unfortunately some third, fourth and fifth generation members are unable to discern between the cultural and theological aspects of their belief and practice. Carl George, of the Fuller Institute of Church Growth has worked with Adventists for more than a decade. He points out that cultural fundamentalists, face a dilemma. "How can you know what encourages a saving relationship with

Jesus? How can you know what is kernel and what is chaff?" he asks. "The disappointing answer is that you can't. Cultural fundamentalists think that every element of their lifeway is that which keeps them in favor with God."<sup>3</sup>

An example of this surfaced at a recent constituency meeting of the Northern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. A motion was submitted calling for the conference to make "decided moves to stop this misleading, divisive and unholy movement in our churches [celebrationism] which is a glorification of man and self instead of holy reverence

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*"The divisiveness caused by the celebration churches underscores a long-standing problem in North American Adventism—cultural fundamentalism."*

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for God and his sanctuary." The author of the motion explained to the delegates that he realized celebration was upheld in Scripture, but as used in his motion referred to "changes being made in traditional worship by the introduction of unholy presentations (i.e. plays, skits, entertainment); clapping in recognition of man; vacated platforms; and music—extensive use, changes in types, frequently loud, minor chord music and projection of songs so that hands are free to wave."<sup>4</sup>

The motion set off a spirited debate. A pastor offered an alternate motion that was voted. The new motion basically acknowledged the impossibility of the assembled delegates "dictating to another body what cultural variations are acceptable or not in methods of worship" and moved

to reaffirm the importance of corporate worship.<sup>5</sup>

The "traditional" Adventist worship service reflects the tripartite "hymn sandwich" which now characterizes most of American Protestant worship. While the denomination does not prescribe a set form or order for public worship, the orders of worship suggested in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* have become nearly universal. The "Shorter Order of Service" includes: Announcements  
Hymn  
Prayer  
Offering  
Hymn, anthem or special song  
Sermon  
Hymn  
Benediction

Congregation standing or seated for silent prayer.

Such worship is, however, a far cry from the lively convocations held on the American Frontier more than 150 years ago. Seventh-day Adventists are spiritual descendants of the Millerite movement, named for William Miller, of Low Hampton, New York, who became convinced in the 1830s that the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, would culminate in the second coming of Christ on October 22, 1844. His followers held lively camp meetings that attracted thousands. Second Advent camp meetings of the 1840s were no models of decorum. As the set date for the return of Christ drew near, emotions reached a feverish pitch. In one tent, groups of campers might sing while others shouted, danced, prayed, played musical instruments or experienced "bodily manifestations" such as "the barking exercise." Sojourner Truth, who occasionally visited these camp meetings, often chided the Adventists by saying, "the Lord might come, move all through the camp, and go away again, and

they never know it" for all the bedlam and noise.<sup>6</sup>

James S. White, who along with Joseph Bates later became a founder of the SDA Church, recalls in his autobiography a camp meeting where a leader attempted to deal with "fanaticism."

*He stated in the most solemn manner, that he had no objection to shouts of praise to God, on victories won in His name. But when persons had shouted "Glory to God!" nine hundred and ninety-nine times, with no evidence of one victory gained, and had blistered their hands in striking them together with violence, he thought it was time for them to stop.*

White went on to say that "these remarks helped the people generally, but not those who were wild with fanaticism."<sup>7</sup>

Revivalist worship was pragmatic in its orientation. The worship service at camp meetings was specifically designed to make converts, to bring people to baptism. The music was simple, often set to popular tunes of the day or choruses from the hymns of Isaac Watts. The words of the songs were repetitive and easy to learn. Many songs were sung at the beginning of each service to "warm up" the crowd. There was a special place, the Mourners' Bench, where seekers could come and be prayed for. Converts walked a sawdust trail to the altar.

While some revivalists of the period encouraged bizarre physical expressions as signs of conversion, others, including many Sabbatarian Adventists opposed such manifestations but agreed that to move converts spiritually, it was often necessary to move them physically.

The members of the Millerite movement came mainly from the Methodist Church, the largest denomination in America at the time, followed by the Baptist, Congregational, Christian and Presbyterian Churches. Seventh-day Adventist theology and worship forms established at the denomination's founding in 1863 reflect a blending of beliefs and practices from the interchurch movement. From the Presbyterian-

ans, came quarterly pew communion, from the Baptists, believer's baptism by immersion; from the Christian Church, an insistence upon no creeds; from the Seventh-day Baptists, Sabbatarianism. From the Methodists, the Adventists inherited a passion for making converts through evange-

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*"A hundred biblical references to exuberant worship were passed over in favor of Habakkuk 2:20."*

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listic preaching and an emphasis on congregational singing. The most charismatic founder of the denomination, Ellen White had been raised in a devout Methodist family.

The fear of the bedlam and noise which had accompanied earlier camp meetings led Adventists to be hesitant to conduct their own. In 1868 they held their first such meeting in a maple grove in Wright, Michigan. A report of the event is given in the children's book, *Pioneer Stories of the Second Advent Message*, written by Arthur W. Spalding and published in 1922. Spalding says, "There was the greatest order at this first camp meeting. ... While camp meetings of other people before this time had often been disorderly and had a bad influence, this one was very quiet and well conducted."<sup>9</sup>

Second-generation Adventists distanced themselves from their Millerite forebears. Those disorderly camp meetings had been held by "other people." This first camp meeting of theirs was not just quiet, it was "very quiet, and

well conducted," with the "greatest order." Decency and order were the watchwords of the twenties. A hundred biblical references to exuberant worship were passed over in favor of Habakkuk 2:20, "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

As Frank C. Senn notes, "The problem for revivalism was that the same fervor could not be passed on to the next generation; so it was followed by a period of religious respectability." American Protestants of the 1920s and 1930s Senn points out valued "sobriety over the ecstatic, refinement over the primitive, restraint over the boisterous and intelligibility over the emotional." The increasing availability of education contributed to this trend.<sup>9</sup>

Succeeding decades saw this trend solidified into a tradition in Adventist churches and carried around the world to 190 nations. Dr. Graeme Loftus, pastor of the Thornleigh SDA Church in Sydney, Australia, notes, "Until recently, [Adventist] visitors from any part of the world could generally predict with great accuracy the order of service and the forms of worship wherever they went."<sup>10</sup>

But today, not only are nationalism, ethnic pride and better missiological principles bringing more indigenous elements into Adventist worship abroad, but migrations of Adventists from other areas are impacting North American worship as well. For example, in recent years applause during church services was thought by many to have been a product of "Southern California" Adventists, i.e., those tainted by Hollywood and the entertainment industry. Many people were surprised to discover at the General Conference Session held in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1990 that applause was a common practice of delegates from the Inter-American Division, a territory including Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, West Indies and the

northernmost countries of South America. Perhaps the reason applause was first noticed in Southern California churches, is because of the large number of immigrants from Latin America who make up not only the Spanish-speaking congregations, but also large segments of the multiethnic congregations in the area.

Black and Hispanic congregations have much to teach us all about celebrative worship. Recently an entire worship service in my church was devoted to a concert of spirituals sung by our choir and soloists. After the first number, I heard a Hispanic woman behind me ask the woman sitting next to her, "You people don't clap?" "No," her Anglo friend replied piously, "we applaud in our hearts." After a few more numbers the "Amen's" from the congregation were getting louder. About two-thirds of the way through the service, the congregation was not only applauding after each selection but clapping in time to the music and singing along. This spontaneous participation on the part of the members was a joy to behold. Following the service I saw elderly members as well as Baby Boomers lined up to express their appreciation to the choir director. "Our church came alive, today! Our church came alive!" one octogenarian repeated over and over with delight as well as amazement. A reserved, highly educated, predominately white congregation had rediscovered what the Black Church and Hispanic Church never forgot—that emotions are a part of worship, too.

In the past few decades Seventh-day Adventists have learned that carried to extreme, our highly cognitive, decent and orderly services can lead to a silent

wasteland of dullness and passivity as devoid of genuine worship as fanaticism. Too often such an atmosphere has put us in touch not with the "still, small voice of God," but merely with the sound of a woman unwrapping a breath mint five pews away.

The celebration movement has been a great blessing to the Church in that it has caused SDAs around the world to study anew the concept of worship. The most recent major study of worship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church was conducted by the South Pacific Division. This division represents Adventists in Australia, New

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*"Black and Hispanic congregations have much to teach us all about celebrative worship."*

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Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the islands of the South Pacific. In 1986 the division's Department of Church Ministries organized a Worship Focus Group that was given the task of thinking laterally about the many needs of congregations as they worship. They published their report in a 72-page magazine format in 1988. They defined worship as "the adoring response to God of sinners saved by grace" and concluded that "the Holy Spirit tunes the heart of the worshiper, evoking adoration, celebration, devotion and renewal."<sup>11</sup>

In the report, Phil Brown, pastor of the Glenhantly church in Melbourne, Australia addresses "Reverence in Worship: Between Transcendence and Intimacy" he notes,

*People today are searching for warmth, encouragement, joy, a sense of belonging and being cared about. It*

*would be a tragedy if "reverence" and our culturally ingrained expression of it as "silence in the sanctuary" denied people what they most need in the place where they should be most able to find it.*

*It is not church buildings and their silence that concerns God as much as communities of believers that function as the Body of Christ—people who worship "in spirit and in truth."<sup>12</sup>*

Supporters of the more affective and participatory celebration-style worship service often attribute to H.M.S. Richards, Sr., founder, and for many years, speaker of the "Voice of Prophecy" radiobroadcast, the saying, "Some of our churches are so cold and formal a person could ice-skate down the center aisle." True, he did say something like that, but he acknowledged its original source, revivalist, Billy Sunday.<sup>13</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists in little more than 100 years distanced themselves so successfully from the excesses of revivalism, they became in some instances the type of people they as revivalists once reacted against and warned others about. Will celebrationism eventually result in an excess of emotionalism that will be counteracted in later generations by a return to decency and order? I wouldn't be surprised.

Keeping things balanced is never easy for the human race. I remember a frequent guest on the "Ed Sullivan Show" of the 1950s whose entire act consisted of balancing spinning dinner plates on top of vertical poles at three-foot intervals across the stage. He would set up a pole and spin a plate, and then another and by the time he was setting up number three, the first plate would be slowing down and he would dash back and give it another spin to keep it from falling. Then he would run across the stage to set up number four, but by that time

plate number two needed some attention, and so it went. He never gave a perfect performance. Many plates fell to the stage and smashed to pieces. Yet he was never alone on the stage. Behind him stood a helper who occasionally called his attention to a plate that was becoming unbalanced. If the plate fell before the man reached it, the helper didn't scold him, she just tossed him another plate and he tried again.

I suspect that "God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to

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*"I doubt our imperfect performance worries him as much as it bothers us."*

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come," knows we are incapable of keeping all the plates balanced at once—transcendence and immanence, order and spontaneity, the cognitive and the affective, praise and silence, Word and sacrament. I doubt our imperfect performance worries him as much as it bothers us.

If we, being evil, know how to accept and cherish imperfect gifts from our children—the dandelion bouquets, garish neckties, stick-figure caricatures of ourselves created with crayon—how much more is our Heavenly Father able to accept and cherish our imperfect gift of worship, declaration of our love for him who first loved us. Annie Dillard, sums up the human dilemma in the worship experience well,

*A high school stage play is more polished than this service we have been rehearsing since the year one. In two thousand years, we have not worked out the kinks. We positively glorify them. Week after week we witness the same miracle that God is so mighty he can stifle his own*

*laughter. Week after week, we witness the same miracle: that God, for reasons unfathomable, refrains from blowing our dancing bear act to smithereens. Week after week Christ washes the disciple's dirty feet, handles their very toes, and repeats, It is all right—believe it or not—to be people.*

*Who can believe it?<sup>15</sup> ■*

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Myron Widmer, "Adventist Worship—Celebration-Style" *Adventist Review*, (November 1, 1990) p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>J. David Newman, "'Celebration' is a Naughty Word," *Ministry* (December 1990) p.26.

<sup>3</sup>Carl George, *Empty Pews, Empty Streets*, (Columbia, Maryland: Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988) p.59.

<sup>4</sup>Susan Garza, "Northern California Conference Constituency Delegates Settle Two Controversial Issues," *Pacific Union Recorder* (December 17, 1990) p.5.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Olive Gilbert, ed. *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968) p. 111.

<sup>7</sup>James S. White, *Life Incidents in Connection with the Great Advent Movement as Illustrated by the Three Angels of Revelation XIV*, vol. 1, (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the SDA Publishing Association, 1868) pp.157-158.

<sup>8</sup>Arthur Spalding, *Pioneer Stories of the Second Advent Movement* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1922) p.332.

<sup>9</sup>Frank C. Senn, *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) p.49.

<sup>10</sup>Graeme Loftus, "Winds of Change" *Worship* (Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia: Department of Church Ministries of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1988) p.9.

<sup>11</sup>Alf Birch, "What is Worship?" *Worship* (Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia: Department of Church Ministries of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1988) p.5.

<sup>12</sup>Phil Brown, "Reverence in Worship: Between Transcendence and Intimacy" *Worship* (Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia: Department of Church Ministries of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1988) p.27.

<sup>13</sup>H. M. S. Richards, Sr., *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1958) p.430.

<sup>14</sup>Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, (New York: Harper and Row,

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# 9 Proposals for Worship Renewal

DR. ROBERT E. WEBBER, professor of theology at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, invited his students from his course entitled "The History and Theology of Worship" to work together on worship renewal ideas for evangelical Christians. Representing many different worship traditions, they made a number of suggestions, which he then summarized in the following proposals. This material is taken from *Worship Old & New* by Robert E. Webber, ©1982 by the Zondervan Corporation. Used by permission.

**1. Educate the people.** There was a complete consensus that very little is known about worship in many of our evangelical churches. For this reason, it was regarded as a matter of priority that evangelicals study the biblical, historical, and theological sources of Christian worship. Churches should sponsor lectures and discussions on worship and should bring pastors from other traditions to share their understanding of worship. Christians should visit other congregations from time to time. A genuine renewal of worship cannot proceed out of guess work, but must be accompanied by the labor of study and constant prayer for God's direction.

**2. Acknowledge the distinction between services for worship and services for teaching.** It was agreed that the sermon held the prominent place in evangelical churches and that its thrust was either for teaching or evangelism. Very few students felt that their home church actually experienced the enactment of Christ's work or had a sense of worship as an offering of praise. It was suggested, therefore, that evangelical churches choose one weekly time of meeting to concentrate on worship. Some thought this should be on Sunday morning, others on Sunday night, and a few suggested a week-day evening. Other

meeting times could therefore be set aside especially for teaching or evangelism. This approach has the advantage of achieving balance.

**3. Do not disregard the tradition of your denomination.** The students generally recognized that each denomination retained the most basic elements of ancient worship: Scripture, sermon, prayer, music, and the Lord's Supper. Consequently, most agreed that a satisfactory worship could be attained without doing violence to the currently accepted structures. By understanding worship, each congregation would be free to develop existing forms to a more heightened communal experience of praise.

**4. Orient worship toward God rather than human beings.** Many students felt that the worship of their church was more oriented toward human beings and their experience than toward God. They pointed to the current trend in Christian music that emphasizes a near narcissistic self-interest and to the entertainment approach in worship that attracts the crowds but fails to lead them into the praise of God's person and work. For this reason more care should be given to planning of the service so that a vertical focus may be regained. This could be accomplished by the use of more God-oriented hymns, the singing of the psalms, an acknowledgement of sin, a confession of faith, and the use of the Lord's Prayer.

**5. Restore a sense of awe and reverence, mystery and transcendence.** It was agreed that a frivolous attitude too frequently appears in the social chit-chat before the service, in overextended announcements, and in too casual an atmosphere projected by the minister. The demeanor of his/her voice and body language can

create a sense of the holy. The congregation must then follow his/her lead and act with a sense of hushed silence, a reverential awe, an appropriate fear. The sense of mystery can also be communicated in the design of the worship space, the location of the people, the use of lighting, the sense of time (use of the church year) and the proper use of music.

**6. Recover a christocentric focus through enactment.** Man-centered worship not only fails to focus on God but also fails to reenact the Christ-event as an offering of praise and thanksgiving to the Father. This christocentric focus of worship may be recovered through a recognition that God's work through Christ is proclaimed through recitation (reading of Scripture and preaching) and drama (the Lord's Supper). A focus on Christ may also be made more prominent in the prayers and music. It is important that the worshipers leave worship with a sense of having been confronted again with the work of Christ on their behalf as well as the claim of Christ on their entire life. In this sense worship as an encounter with the person and work of Jesus Christ is accomplished. The most strategic way to accomplish this is through Christ-centered sermons and a more frequent use of the Lord's Supper.

**7. Restore congregational involvement in worship.** It is a matter of concern that worship in many places does not engage the full congregation. Rather, it is something that the pastor and the choir do while the "audience" watches and listens, occasionally standing and singing. If worship is an action done by the entire congregation and is offered to God as a communal act, then more attention must be given to the involvement of the entire congregation in worship. There are a number of ways congregational action can be restored. For example, the leader or the worship committee should consider reintroducing some of the following: the salutation, the use

of lay readers for the Scripture lessons, the congregational response to Scripture, the congregational prayers of intercession, the kiss of peace, the *Sursum corda*, the *Sanctus*, antiphonal singing, and varied ways of serving communion (e.g., have the people walk to the communion table to receive). All of this ought to be done, of course, in the full knowledge that these are signs of congregational action.

**8. Attain spontaneity with the proper balance on form and freedom.** Congregational worship implies a degree of spontaneity rather than a wooden ritualistic response. An overemphasis on form or spontaneity can lead either to the error of ritualism or to chaos. A balance is needed. Form is maintained through a predetermined structure that guides the experience of the worshiper from the invocation to the benediction. Spontaneity is accomplished by allowing for the freedom to offer praise or prayer in the context of the form. Exactly how this is done ought to be left to each congregation and will more than likely depend on the particular tradition of the church. A time for praise, if handled well, can be a lifting experience. A time for brief statements of personal prayer can be easily worked into the congregational prayer. The point that needs to be made as these details are worked out by each congregation is that order ought to be the servant of spontaneity, not its enemy. The worshipers who learn and practice the principle will recover a dynamic sense of worship as an offering of praise and thanksgiving by the community of God's people.

**9. Restore the relationship of worship to all of life.** Worship is not an isolated aspect of the Christian life, but the center from which all of life is understood and experienced. For this reason Evangelicals ought to give careful consideration to the recovery of the church year (i.e., the most basic seasons of the year), to a

more thoughtful use of space (e.g., the location of the pulpit, table, and the arrangement of the people), to a full range of music (i.e., draw from a tradition of the entire church), and to a more concentrated effort to engage the senses of sight, sound, taste, smell, and hearing. They should try to make people more conscious of their social responsibility. In these ways the redemption of creation, the history of God's people, and the role of the church in the world are made more clear in and through worship.

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*"The heart of worship renewal is a recovery of the power of the Holy Spirit."*

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#### Conclusion

Clearly worship renewal does not consist of moving chairs in a circle, rearranging the order of worship, or finding new gimmicks. The heart of worship renewal is a recovery of the power of the Holy Spirit who enables the congregation to offer praise and thanksgiving to God. The value of studying the history and theology of worship is that it provides us with insights into the work of the Holy Spirit in the past and allows us to be open to his work in the present. In this way the Holy Spirit may lead us into ways of worship that are continuous with the historic witness of worship given to the Church throughout its history in the world, and at the same time he may lead us into the discovery of new forms and patterns that meet the needs of people in our day. ■



## A Brief Look at Worship in Lutheran Churches Today

—from page 13

ordained minister, leads the singing from the front using a microphone. She or he may be assisted by a small group of singers.

A contemporary, free-form worship service appears to offer today's nonbelieving public some familiar things, such as the style of music and the generally informal mood, characteristic of current culture. As a church musician who has lived in both "worlds—the liturgical and the free-form—I see positive aspects to each mode of worship. Their shortcomings are also obvious, and must be considered by every congregation that is debating a possible change. Some parishes have offered multiple worship services, each in a different style. Whether this further divides people or allows them necessary freedoms remains to be seen.

In conclusion, it appears that the Lutheran leaders and lay worshipers must begin to closely examine why they do what they do on Sunday mornings. They must agree on the function(s) of the worship service, and decide just how much "traditional Lutheranism" to project. With God's help, this ought to be done without either offending the traditionalists or boring the newcomers. In any event, I feel confident in predicting that the gospel will continue to be preached and the sacraments administered rightly, regardless of the format in which we worship our Triune God. ■

