

WORSHIP AND CULTURE: MIRROR OR BEACON?

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IN DECEMBER 1973 a number of us had the good fortune to hear the address by Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., printed as a part of this issue. The occasion was the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. In his address, Fr. Burghardt touched on some of the key issues of liturgical reform since Vatican II in a provocative and highly original fashion. I would like what follows to be considered as an extended footnote to his remarks, with the hope of documenting some of the problems and clarifying the nature of others.

Since Vatican II, the word "indigenization" has been a popular term for those concerned about worship. Yet the perspective of ten years has shown us how elusive a goal this is. I hope to use some historical examples to raise questions about indigenization. Basically the issues seem to be: How far do you go in worship in reflecting a culture without simply being a mirror of it? How much is it desirable to shed light on a culture by being a beacon shining from the distance? Those of us who live in the South have frequent opportunity to observe just how much Southern folk religion reflects in its worship all the limitations and glories of local culture. It is sometimes difficult to tell a naturalization ceremony in the courthouse from a service at a Southern Baptist church. But for those who remember the Middle Ages in Catholic worship (before December 1963), worship disjoined from culture may not be a very happy memory.

One of the most helpful discussions of the relation between Christianity and culture appears in a series of lectures H. Richard Niebuhr gave in 1949 and published two years later as *Christ and Culture*.¹ Defining culture as "that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity,"² Niebuhr goes on to distinguish and illustrate five typologies of the relation of Christ to culture: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture. Most of my readers are familiar with his brilliant exposition of these concepts. I cannot possibly do justice to them here. But I would like to give a few examples as to how some of these typologies might be applied to looking critically at the problem of indigenization in worship. Most of the application of Protestant theological thinking to the life of the Church in the twentieth century has gone

¹ New York, 1951

² *Ibid*, p 32

into ethical studies rather than liturgical. So we might do well to appropriate some of the categories the ethicists have developed, especially since we both deal with activities of the Body of Christ. I shall take only two of Niebuhr's categories, Christ against culture and the Christ of culture, and try to exemplify some of the merits and disadvantages of each. One soon realizes that nothing fits these very neatly, yet they do provide useful bins into which to toss our descriptions.

I

A good example of the Christ-against-culture approach may be seen in an extraordinary chapter in Anglican worship during the nineteenth century in England, when an effort was made to return to as much as possible of the visible forms of medieval worship. The amazing thing is that it could happen in England and then be transported to America, where it ran against all the main cultural currents of the time. Yet such is the story of the Cambridge Movement of the 1840's.

In 1839 a small group of students at Cambridge University founded the Cambridge Camden Society (afterwards named the Ecclesiological Society) "to promote the study of Ecclesiastical Architecture and Antiquities and the restoration of mutilated Architectural remains."³ This may have sounded innocent enough. The pursuit of their newly-discovered science of ecclesiology, which the Cambridge men defined as the inductive study of church building and church arrangement, appeared to many to be only a pleasant pastime. But these followers were mistaken. Ecclesiology soon turned out to be an attempt to make a change in the whole ethos of Anglican worship, beginning with church architecture and ending up with tremendous impact on church music, vestments, ceremonial, and the mentality underlying worship itself. The journal of the Society, the *Ecclesiologist*, soon decided it could deal with "the general science of Ecclesiology, under which they [the Society] consider that Ritualism is legitimately included."⁴ The scope of the Cambridge Camden Society's activities is indicated in one of its publications, *Hierugia Anglicana*: "Let us endeavour to restore everywhere amongst us Daily Prayers, and (at the least) weekly Communion; the proper Eucharistick vestments, lighted and vested altars, the ancient tones of Prayer and Praise, frequent Offertories, the meet celebration of Fasts and Festivals."⁵

This may sound presumptuous for a small body of undergraduates and their adherents, a group that never numbered more than nine hundred

³ *Report of the Cambridge Camden Society for MDCCC XLII* (Cambridge, 1842) p. 44.

⁴ "Eighth Anniversary Meeting," *Ecclesiologist* 7 (1847) 234.

⁵ *Hierugia Anglicana* (London, 1848) p. v.

people. But modesty was never their shortcoming. They accomplished two extraordinary things: they changed the outward appearance of Anglican worship for a hundred years, and they did it in defiance of many of the strongest cultural trends of England and America. We need to reflect briefly on these accomplishments.

To turn Anglican worship around, to reverse its post-Reformation development by leapfrogging back into the medieval past, was a high order for anyone. But not for the zealous Cambridge men. It is rarely realized today how "low church" Anglican worship was in the 1830's. Since Communion was infrequent, the altar often served as a place for the clergy to put their hats, congregational hymnody was unknown, chancels were considered a useless expense in new church buildings and often boarded off in old ones, candles and crosses on the altar were regarded as dangerous badges of popery which could cause riots, and Eucharistic vestments were unheard of. In 1874 the Public Worship Regulation Act was passed to end what Disraeli called "mass in masquerade" and under it four clergymen went to jail for such extravagances as the use of vestments and Communion wafers.

The Cambridge men, or ecclesiologists as I prefer to call them, launched a fervent attack via dozens of pamphlets and books. They began by popularizing their "science" of ecclesiology. But it soon became apparent that they were not interested in just studying all old churches; Sir Christopher Wren's churches and their successors were not considered worthy of study. No, it was medieval churches that were alone worth consideration. Thousands of people were persuaded to fill out detailed church schemes based on observation of a medieval church building. To do so, they were often induced to read *A Few Hints on the Practical Study of Ecclesiastical Antiquities*⁶ or the *Hand-Book of English Ecclesiology*,⁷ both publications of the Society. This we would today call a process of consciousness-raising. It is amazing how many were intrigued by such a pastime.

Various other publications followed, but the most important was a translation of a thirteenth-century work published under the title *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, Written by William Durandus, Sometime Bishop of Mende*.⁸ This book materially changed the course of ecclesiology both by its contents and by the 121-page "Introductory Essay, Sacramentality: A Principle of Ecclesiastical Design." The translators of Durandus and authors of this essay were two of the key

⁶ Cambridge, 1839.

⁷ London, 1848.

⁸ Leeds, 1843.

leaders of the Cambridge Movement, John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb. They attempted to give a philosophical basis to the movement and, though they showed to any critical reader that philosophy was not "their thing," they convinced many that churches ought to be cruciform, that church architects ought to be holy men, and that everything in a church reeked of symbolism. And so to this day building committees still want three windows "for the Trinity."

The ecclesiologists were convinced that only Gothic is true Christian architecture, but it was far from that simple: "The Decorated or Edwardian style, that employed, we mean, between the years 1260 and 1360, is that to which only, except for some very peculiar circumstances, we ought to return."⁹ It was conceded that "second-rate architects may, for a few years yet, employ Romanesque or revived Pagan, those who are at the head of their profession will be guilty of such serious errors no longer."¹⁰ This was not merely a matter of aesthetics; the period, they felt, had been one of great piety. A decline in piety and the growth of Erastianism had led to less glorious church architecture.

Medieval churches, then, were to be the model for nineteenth-century Anglican worship, despite the evolution of distinctive building types for prayer-book worship during the intervening centuries. It was proclaimed that "ancient churches should . . . be exactly copied as models for new ones."¹¹ The highest praise the ecclesiologists could accord a new church building was that it might be mistaken for an old one.

The most important single feature of these buildings was that they have a "distinct Chancel, *at least* one-third of the length of the Nave" and separated from it by a chancel arch, a screen, or raised floor. This led to a further and rather basic problem: what to do with such additional space as a chancel provided, space Anglicans had lived quite happily without for several centuries. Of course, there were no communities of religious, no minor clerics, to fill up these vast chancels. But an answer was at hand, that of filling the chancel up with a choir of lay people, of dressing them in surplices, and treating them as pseudo clerics. It was a curious case of function following form, of a form being imposed and then a purpose devised for it. And Anglican churches until very recently have reflected this same twofold space, a nave for people and a chancel for clergy and choir.

It was, in short, a reversal of just about everything worship in the post-Reformation Church of England meant. Clericalism was highlighted in separating the clergy from the laity by placing them in two

⁹ *A Few Words to Church Builders* (3rd ed.; Cambridge, 1844) p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ "Ancient Models," *Ecclesiologist* 3 (1843) 134.

separate and not very equal spaces. The common prayer was more and more performed by clergy and choir for the benefit of a reverent audience. Choral music was made a part of worship in even the smallest parish church. And all manner of carved, glazed, and painted art proliferated throughout the building.

Neale himself initiated a major change in Anglican worship, congregational hymn singing, despite the charge that it was "Methodistical snuffling." A master of twenty languages, Neale translated scores of medieval hymns, many of which are still found in modern hymnals. Church choirs were welcomed, too, now that there was a need to fill the chancel, though Neale had once referred to them as "the pest of the parish." Neale, despite his brilliance, was far from judicious, and Webb's contribution of tolerant and moderate judgment was a necessary balance.

Eucharistic vestments were virtually unknown in Anglicanism at the time. Neale began wearing a chasuble in 1850 and because of this (and other such outrageous practices) his bishop refused to allow him to minister in the diocese. He was also in the forefront in founding religious orders, establishing the Sisters of St. Margaret in 1855. Such extremism led to riots and an attempt to burn the home for aged where he ministered.

These changes were not accomplished without violent resistance. The chief charge, of course, was that medievalism was popery. While heresy does not particularly trouble Englishmen, popery does. So the ecclesiologists were fair game for anyone who wanted to decry popery, and many people did. A stone altar the ecclesiologists had placed in a church in Cambridge became the focus of court suits until it was replaced by a wooden table. And a tract entitled *The Restoration of Churches Is the Restoration of Popery*,¹² a November 5th sermon by Francis Close, a minister in Cheltenham, caused great furor. In four editions Close rang the alarm against "incipient, insidious, but unquestionable Popery."

1845, the year of Newman's exodus from Anglicanism, proved to be a climactic year for the ecclesiologists. It climaxed in May with a battle that culminated in the renaming of the Society and its removal from Cambridge to London, many of the leaders having already "gone down" from Cambridge. The leaders managed to secure a tighter grip on control of the organization as a result of this battle.

The mark of their effectiveness soon became apparent as more and more churches were remodeled and new ones built. Unfortunately, they were not above correcting medieval buildings when they did not live up to their ideal. They also "restored" many buildings only recently built by

¹² London, 1844.

adding chancels and even encouraged the "recasting" of Wren churches into Gothic forms. It would be interesting to know whether the ecclesiologists stimulated as much destruction of medieval art and architecture as did their *bête noire*, William Dowsing, the Puritan iconoclast.

Architects quailed at their power. One of the ecclesiologists' least subtle devices was reviewing new churches in the *Ecclesiologist*. As could be expected, they had few kind words for those who built anything but correct early English or decorated Gothic buildings with long chancels. But such bullying paid off. Building committees are notoriously insecure; they like simple answers that have the ring of authority. Few questioned the authority of the ecclesiologists. If such tactics were successful in England, they were even more successful abroad at a time when the British flag was something on which the sun never set. Whether it is on Via Nazionale in Rome, in Copenhagen, in India, in Tasmania, one can still spot an English church of the period. Fastidiously correct in its early English arches, steep pitched roof, and broach spire, it tells the power of a small group of vehement believers far off in the English drizzle.

The question before us is, how could such a small group so successfully defy the culture of the time by fleeing to the outward apparel of another age? Victorian England was filled with robust self-confidence as prosperity and affluence shone on the upper classes. It was easy to believe in automatic and continual progress, a smugness that showed its worst side in social Darwinism. World trade and military exploitation brought the wealth of the world to England. Science and engineering provided marvels in health, transportation, and manufactured goods. Reforms in government progressively extended the franchise and terminated such age-old plagues as slavery. There was good reason for self-confidence and trust in progress.

Yet the ecclesiologists distrusted all this and chose an age when piety abounded as its ideal. It was easy, as Chesterton remarked, to see the Middle Ages "by moonlight." But to propose seriously to reject the culture of one's time and to prefer that of another age demanded a real negativism about one's own time, a deep distrust of the very air one breathed. This was what the ecclesiologists did, though, and their success affected Anglican worship for a hundred years. Not until the building of St. Clement's Church, Alexandria, Virginia in 1949 was their iron sway successfully defied and, in the last quarter century, finally overthrown.

It is all the more remarkable to note the effect the same movement had on nineteenth-century America. It should be remembered that during the nineteenth century the Episcopal Church moved from being the

dominant church in colonial America to a relatively small enclave. In many ways it became a counterculture church in itself. This was accentuated by the gradual inroads of ecclesiology in the Protestant Episcopal Church, first under the auspices of the first bishop of Vermont, John Henry Hopkins, then under the New York Ecclesiological Society (1846-58). What could have been more contrary to Jacksonian democracy than a return to thirteenth-century medievalism? What could be more out of keeping with the spirit of the age of the common man than neomedievalism? Yet the Episcopal Church gradually moved in this direction and accentuated further its differences from other American denominations.

II

If mid-nineteenth-century Anglican worship adopted a Christ-against-culture attitude, it is time now to look at the opposite: worship in the mainstream Protestant churches in America. Here the picture we get is not that of opposing culture but of accommodating to it. Here we see not Christ against culture but the Christ of culture. What we see is a series of shifts in the form and understanding of worship as shifts occurred in the culture.

We shall be discussing the worship of central Protestantism, by which I mean Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Disciples of Christ primarily. These are sometimes referred to as the liberal-dominated churches. We cannot trace it here, but it is interesting to note that the more conservative churches such as the Southern Baptists or the Church of Christ have also tended to mimic the culture of conservative regions and segments of American culture. So Americanism and Christian worship sometimes become hard to distinguish, especially with flag processions and patriotic songs. The more liberal churches seem equally sensitive to local culture and all too readily become mirrors of the culture they reflect. Thus both theological and political liberals and conservatives seem to be prone to mirror culture rather than to shed light on it from a distance.

I would like to illustrate this with a quick survey of worship and culture in the central Protestant churches during the past hundred years. I am convinced that four quite distinct cultural eras are reflected by four distinct eras in worship.

For the first half of the past century, the period from 1870 to 1920, the dominant pattern in worship in central Protestantism showed the strong impact of revivalism. Worship tended to become a means to an end, the making of converts and the nourishing of those already converted. With such a purpose in mind, it became possible to shape worship to a

practical and purposeful end, i.e., it worked. Whatever criticisms we may have of the effects of nineteenth-century revivalism upon worship, we cannot overlook its pragmatic character. A century earlier, Jonathan Edwards had written his *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737). Almost exactly a hundred years later appeared Charles G. Finney's *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835). Edwards chronicles with amazement; Finney's book is a how-to-do manual, with the results almost guaranteed if one follows the proper techniques. Plant the proper grain and the wheat will appear.

Finney's book could well stand as the prime example of this period in worship. Bold, brusque, and vigorous, he traces changes in worship, only to show that nothing has abided long and therefore the preacher is free to ignore history and to introduce "new measures" that will be effective. Behind all this is the pragmatic optimism of the time. America had been liberated from the dead hand of the past, and the future was dazzling. Call it manifest destiny, the age of reform, the frontier spirit, Horatio Alger, it had one thrust: use the right techniques and there was no limit to what could be accomplished.

Let us not be negative about the degree to which it worked. It Christianized a nation whose founding fathers had hardly been godly, righteous, or sober, despite myths to the contrary. And it gave vigor to dozens of reform movements, including abolition. But it did have its faults, though today, after reacting against revivalism for half a century, we can see some of its virtues as well.

Its chief fault was that theologically it was weak. Dividing humanity into the saved and the lost does simplify things considerably. But there are contradictions in the phrase "bringing souls to Christ." And trying to snatch them from outer darkness into the bright radiance of salvation by an instantaneous occurrence caused problems. It was easy to neglect children until they were ripe for conversion, and the passion for recruiting the outsider tended to overwhelm the care and discipline of those within the fold. The traditional means of grace were too easily replaced by more sensational new measures.

But theologically weak as it was, revivalism had some elements of keen psychological insight that we have had to relearn in the last five years. For one thing, revivalism knew that in order to move people spiritually you have to move them physically. We have seen a spate of books recently such as *The Body at Liturgy*.¹³ The church music which we told people for years was not good for them (and they still requested) was based on the realization that music is a body art. Even more important

¹³ Joe Wise (Cincinnati, 1972)

was the element of spontaneity, the unexpected possibility in worship. When the 1905 *Methodist Hymnal* included an "Order of Worship," there was an outcry against such unfamiliar formality. Is it any wonder that older people in our churches have a curious nostalgia after the worship of this period, no matter how hard seminary-trained clergy discourage such hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt? Revivalism may have been theologically weak, but it understood people and did a fine job of reflecting many of the dominant currents of nineteenth-century American culture.

But cultural currents were changing and the 1920's saw a new era emerging in worship too. I would call this the era of respectability and would divide it into two periods: one a period of aestheticism, the other a period of historicism. The era of respectability in Protestant worship was the half century beginning in the early 1920's. It represents the assertion of sobriety over the ecstatic, of refinement over the primitive, of restraint over the boisterous. It was a reflection of the increased sophistication of Americans as education became available to most. There was a neat correlation between the changes in the educational level of the average Methodist and what was happening to his worship life. The displays of emotion, the freedom and spontaneity, the general folksiness of revivalism were all pushed aside or left behind for those who had not yet ascended the social and educational scale.

The first half of our period of respectability, roughly 1920 to 1945, saw a substitution for worship as a conversion experience (or renewal of such an experience) of worship as an aesthetic experience. The slogan, despite its inherent contradiction, was "enriching our worship." America is dotted with churches, usually Gothic where the budget would allow, that reflect both the wealth and the sophistication of the period. These are examples of the second Gothic revival, not the robust and original Gothic of the 1840's and 1850's but the academically correct Gothic of the 1920's. The buildings contain accurate copies of medieval elements, correct, timid, and in good taste. For good taste had invaded the sanctuary and replaced the pragmatic, functional, though hopelessly unsophisticated Akron plan. Good taste had invaded the choir loft and replaced the folksy quartet or octet with a full-fledged choir singing "good" music by composers all a century safely dead. Good taste had created a formal order of worship, so that Methodists by 1932 had several orders of worship to choose from and by 1944 a whole *Book of Worship*. And with the mimeograph, no one had to worry about saying the right thing. No chances to take, no risks, just read your lines. One could be secure in confidence that nothing unexpected or chancy would happen in worship. It was all very respectable.

I believe that during the first half of this period worship came to be understood as largely an aesthetic experience by many ministers and lay people. Probably the most representative book was Von Ogden Vogt's *Art & Religion*, published in 1921 and subsequently in 1929, 1948, and 1960.¹⁴ The title itself is indicative. Pastor of a Unitarian Church in Chicago for two decades, Vogt was vigorously opposed to creedalism and dogmatism of any kind, and could anticipate many of our contemporaries in defining "worship as the celebration of life," by advocating a "substitute Scripture reading taken from modern sources," and through using a variety of art forms. The experience of beauty and the experience of religion seemed remarkably similar to him. The arts served to help the worshiper "to be reverent and to display to him the larger cause of religion."¹⁵ Vogt advised ministers to select "from the materials of the past those treasures which are least burdened with abandoned concepts."¹⁶

For many, public worship became an art form itself. Tremendous efforts were made in raising the "quality" of church music. A growing concern about church architecture was reflected in the creation of denominational building agencies. The use of classical prayers instead of spontaneous ones increased considerably. Books were written on "the art" of public worship.¹⁷

The warm glow of the conversion experience (or its memory) had been replaced for many by the more refined thrill of aesthetic experience. Here there was no risk of spontaneous emotion, no danger of exposing oneself by outward commitment. It was worship in good form, in which nothing overmuch prevailed. It was, in short, middle-class America with its primary values of security and comfort. Worship could continue to be a meaningful, though highly subjective experience, without the risks of self-disclosure that revivalism demanded. If you could no longer tap your feet to the music, you could no longer do a lot of things in the big city that you did back in small-town America. So once again the worship tended to mirror the values of the prevailing culture.

But the culture did not stand still and neither did the forms of our worship. The years after World War II saw a quite different interest in worship in which the dominant phrase was "recovering our heritage," a phrase not without self-contradictions. I remember how much this era troubled Vogt, how much he regarded it as regression to a dark age of

¹⁴ New Haven, 1921 and 1929; Boston, 1948 and 1960.

¹⁵ Rev. ed., Boston, 1948, p. 53.

¹⁶ *Modern Worship* (New Haven, 1927) p. 39.

¹⁷ Albert Palmer, *The Art of Conducting Public Worship* (New York, 1939), and Percy Dearmer, *The Art of Public Worship* (London, 1919).

creedalism and dogmatism. It still remained a period of respectability both in worship and in American culture in general. But the thrust in worship was quite different and aestheticism came to be looked at with real suspicion.

It must be remembered that the late forties and fifties were a period of great growth in the American churches, a tendency that lost momentum in the 1960's. Attempts were frequently made, and with some justice, to connect this growth in church membership with the age of anxiety. Americans were learning to live at the center of the stage of world politics, we were learning to live with the atomic bomb, we had to live with sputnik. In theology, neo-orthodoxy emphasized man's sinfulness and offered us in turn a high Christology.

It is not surprising that aestheticism hardly seemed sufficient to those distraught by postwar anxieties. All around there was a search for more secure foundations. The "recovering of our heritage" that flourished for a quarter century in worship now seems to have been a necessary and vital stage, though, I believe, one we have now gone beyond. We should not be surprised that two of the elements in worship that tended to be stressed were confession and creed. The fascination with confession was no accident; no one who lived through World War II could have much doubt about man's sin. Prof. Perry Miller once said he was an Emerson man till he led the tank corps that liberated Buchenwald; from then on he was a Jonathan Edwards man. Certainly we went to some excesses in stressing confession during this period, just as our predecessors had neglected it. And the creeds gave us something firm to stand on, a need we felt greatly.

We turned to the historians for more foundations. Bard Thompson's *Liturgies of the Western Church*¹⁸ may well stand as the representative book of this period. It should be noticed that while he did pay homage to the ancient and medieval church, the great bulk of the book is devoted to Reformation liturgies and no space to the Eastern liturgies. This was characteristic of our interests at that time. We were rediscovering Bucer then, not Hippolytus. Presbyterians were re-examining Calvin and Knox, Methodists were beginning to recognize Wesley, and Lutherans were taking a new look at the early Lutheran agenda. Names such as W. D. Maxwell, J. E. Rattenbury, Luther Reed, and others stood out. Dix's *Shape of the Liturgy*¹⁹ was recognized in some of its aspects, while others had to await a subsequent period. The Reformers were rediscovered with a bit of shock due to the belated realization of how much the nineteenth century had separated us from them.

One could argue that the rediscovery of confession with its emphasis on

¹⁸ Cleveland, 1961.

¹⁹ Westminster, 1945.

man's weakness and the indulgence in creeds with their threat of dogmatism signaled the end of the Enlightenment in worship as much as the age of anxiety did in culture in general. The comfortable pew still remained, but something was rattling the clouds overhead and we had to find a substance in our worship that we had previously neglected.

But something happened in the late 1960's and early 1970's to American culture and we are just beginning to see what it implies for our worship. It may be premature to recognize the significance of these changes, but I think of them as the splintering of society. Whereas a decade ago we had a well-agreed image of what the good life in America consisted of, it would be hard to find any unanimity on that today. The conformity of the past with regard to life styles, morality, proper dress, hair styles, almost anything you can name, was shattered in the 1960's. We have moved into a period of diversity, pluralism, three consciousnesses, or whatever label you use. This has not been without shock and conflicts as the old conformities came toppling down.

The cultural changes have been reflected in worship by the move to a pluralistic approach. I would attribute most of the recent changes in worship to the attempt to find forms that fit the perceptual and expressive patterns natural to a wide variety of people. We have recognized, belatedly perhaps, that those forms that appeal to a middle-class group in their mid-forties may strike their children as unrelieved dullness. Even devout teen-agers tell us that our worship is boring because nothing happens at church. We are realizing that we have, in effect, told children that they must behave as adults in order to worship. It is acceptable to be a child 167 hours a week but never on Sunday at eleven o'clock. That is the time to sit still and listen to someone talking literally and figuratively over one's head. I hope we are now beginning to hear what Dix meant when he said worship is far more than words.

In this pluralistic approach to worship we have rediscovered some of the things that revivalism knew. We need to know and understand people in order to plan Christian worship. We need to take seriously the importance of the whole body and all the senses in worship and to recognize that music is a body art. We need to sense the importance of spontaneity and its advantages over a professionally conducted and controlled service as smooth as butter. It is no wonder that so-called contemporary worship services seem to appeal especially to the long-haired crowd and the grey-haired crowd.

Our society is mixed. In almost every congregation there are folks who want to sing the "old" hymns (i.e., those of revivalism), people who want to sing the "good" hymns (i.e., those which are in good taste), and

persons who want to sing "something that moves" (i.e., those songs which have a "beat"). I would submit that none of these is more Christian or more adequate than any of the others. We must learn to think of our church music in terms of being "good for" whom, not in abstract terms of quality. When I fretted at a small-town congregation for not singing Ralph Vaughn Williams' "Sine nomine," I forgot that what was "good for" a seminarian might not be "good for" California ranchers.

The "in" word in worship these days is indigenization. Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy underscored the need to make "legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands" (no. 38). But suddenly we have found that the real problem of indigenization is right here at home. How do we devise forms of worship in which children can take "that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations *which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy*"?²⁰ Or how can youth fulfill their priesthood best? Or what of us middle-aged folks who want nothing that involves much risk but would like some real substance?

I would say that we see basically three models developing in an effort to develop worship forms natural to the way a variety of people perceive and express what is ultimately real for them. The first of these models I call "eclectic." It is the type of service which is carefully planned to reflect a cross section of the congregation. In the prayers appear the anxieties of both liberals and conservatives, the music varies from gospel song to Bach to folk song or further, and the language ranges from Cranmer to Malcolm Boyd. Purists decry this type of polyglot service but it has advantages. It certainly demands that the pastor and worship committee know the people to whom they are ministering.

The second emerging pattern is the occasional service in which on certain Sundays the whole service is in a style congenial to a particular segment of the congregation. This may mean a youth Sunday once a month. This has some advantage to the purist and also is easier to plan and staff. But it is also easier to disregard if one feels one is not in the group primarily involved—unless, of course, the style of each service is not announced in advance. These first two patterns are possible in churches of any size.

A third pattern seems to be current in many large congregations. This is the multiple-service route. A number of different styles and occasions of worship are offered. Frequently they occur in different spaces and at different hours. One goes where one feels most natural. Such a system is rather difficult to staff and populate except in large congregations but it

²⁰ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minn., 1963) p. 13.

has received favorable responses in a number of these. In effect, it means the development of communities within a larger congregation. I have been part of one such group for over three years now.

Not all attempts at these three models have been successful by any means. But they do seem to be an indication of what is happening in worship in 1974, just as hair styles and parallel moralities are symptoms of the same pluralism in our culture. The fact that the new Lutheran Communion service first appeared with four musical settings, as distinct as chant and folk song, is a sign of the times. The pluralistic approach comes not without difficulties but there is good precedent for being all things to all people in order to serve them well. The slogan of this period may well turn out to be "serving everyone." This reflects, I hope, a broader tolerance, a more open society, a culture that has moved a bit closer to mutual respect.

What can we conclude from this quick survey? Is Christ best served by abandoning the spirit and style of our culture? Or is He better served by mirroring the *Geist* of an age? Is our worship best seen as a mirror reflecting the bright light of its surroundings, or as a beacon shining in darkness? Obviously, we cannot give a clear yes to either alternative. With one we get a sentimental baptizing of the values of small-town America, with the other we have the dark obscurantism of Catholic worship after Trent.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that there is a persistent tension between worship and culture in which worship both affirms and criticizes the culture with which it must live. I am convinced that Christian worship has functions and forms that are distinct from any given culture, yet adaptable to all. If it could survive nearly twenty centuries and exist in nearly all countries of the world, surely it can adapt to many, if not all, cultures, yet be identified with none. There is, then, a constancy in Christian worship which is not culturally contingent, and yet a dependency upon culture in order to minister to people. We do have to speak a language, but what we say with it is for us to determine.