

This paper was presented as an assignment by Dr Dave M Rankin in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Worship Course being taught at the Scottish Baptist College in 2006 and was considered worthy of a wider readership.

It is provided here with his permission.

Dave was undertaking the Graduate Diploma in Applied Theology Through Work Based Learning which he completed with distinction.

The question which this paper addressed was:

‘Identify and defend your choice of what you consider to be four essential ‘features’ that should under-gird the preparation and practice of corporate public worship. Explain how these features would shape the worship in practice’.

## The identification, defence, and influence of four essential features of worship.

*“Let us not give up meeting together.....let us encourage one another.”*

Heb. 10:25

### Introduction.

A cursory review of the website of the Baptist Union of Scotland reveals a variety of descriptions of the various Church services - a contemporary worship service; reflective; lively; energetic; dynamic; Bible-centred; inspiring; laid-back; casual style; vibrant; relaxed and friendly; designed to relate to today's culture; informal; traditional; and a *blended* worship format (is this the right spirit?!). So there is obviously a range of views of that which constitutes a Church service. Some recent publications - *Worship Wars*;<sup>1</sup> *The Subversion of Christianity*;<sup>2</sup> and *Beyond the Worship Wars*<sup>3</sup> - would almost suggest that it is more than just simply singing from different hymn-sheets,<sup>4</sup> but rather that there is almost a chance of spilt blood on the pews!<sup>5</sup>

As we consider these essential features, it is important to realise that the Church should function as a haven and a hospital for saints and for sinners. This leads us to our first feature.

### 1. The Edification of the Saints (and Potential Saints).

We consider this feature first because it represents an absolutely integral reason for the gathering of the Church.<sup>6</sup> Many would argue that the primary *raison d'être* for meeting is to worship. Christians speak of a worship service or a service of worship.<sup>7</sup> However the question must be asked, “Was this reflected in the practice of the first Christians?”

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<sup>1</sup> T. Peters, *dialog* 33, No 3 (Summer 1994) 166-73.

<sup>2</sup> J. Ellul, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> T. G. Long, Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For a recent, interesting study on hymnology, see R. Brown *How Hymns Shape Our Lives*. Grove Books S 78. Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd., 2001.

<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps a salutary warning that the first murder (Gen. 4) revolved around the right and wrong attitudes to worship! Thus opening up the very real possibility of false worship which walked hand in hand with true worship throughout the Scriptural record.

<sup>6</sup> For much of this section I am very indebted to Marshall (1985). I have been acquainted with the contents of this article for many years. However, another article has just come to my attention (unfortunately too late for this essay) by I. H. Marshall, ‘Worshipping Biblically,’ *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 20/2 (2002) 146-61. But I am assuming that he reiterates much of what he argued in his earlier publication.

<sup>7</sup> This is strictly a tautology because service = worship.

Our initial step to answer this question is to consider the vocabulary of worship in the New Testament.<sup>8</sup> A surprising fact emerges – this vocabulary is used very rarely in the context of the early Church gatherings:

a) *leitourgeo* and cognates meaning “duties performed to God” occurs fifteen times in the NT. But it is only used once in the context of the activity within a church meeting - in Acts 13:2. However this is really only a leaders’ meeting to make a decision concerning Barnabas and Paul’s future missionary endeavours. The implication is that this “service” was simply one part of the meeting rather than a generic term.

b) *sebomai* and cognates meaning “respect and reverence that people show towards God.” This word group is found quite frequently in the NT but again it is only used once in the description of what happens when Christians assembled. However the term is not found on the lips of Christians, but rather, by the Jews criticising Paul for convincing people to *worship* in ways that were contrary to the Law (Acts 18:13).

c) *lateuo* (verb) and *latreia* (noun) meaning “service to God.” These terms are again used frequently in the NT (especially in Hebrews) and they are used in connection with the Christian lifestyle (2Tim. 1:3; Heb. 3:3; 9:14; 12:28). Nevertheless these words are not used specifically to describe the praxis of the early Church.

d) *proskyneō* which is used of “rendering homage” and “offering worship.” This term is used to describe various forms of worship and cultic activity (especially in Revelation). The word is used only once in association with the gathered Church. However, ironically, it does not describe the action of the Christians, themselves, but rather it is the reaction of an outsider!<sup>9</sup>

Howard Marshall is not the only one to diagnose this lack of correlation between worship and the assembled faithful. Thus Robert Banks who is involved with the house fellowships in Australia observes this enigma: “One of the most puzzling features of Paul's understanding of *ekklesia* from his contemporaries, whether Jews or Gentiles, must have been his failure to say that a person went to church primarily to ‘worship.’ Not once in all his writings does he suggest this is the case. Indeed it could not be, for he held a view of ‘worship’ that prevented him from doing so.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, so far, in conclusion, it is inappropriate to use the “blanket term” of ‘worship’ to universally define the praxis of the gathered Church. It is without New Testament precedent.

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<sup>8</sup> See Marshall (1985) pp. 217-220.

<sup>9</sup> 1Cor 14:25.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Griffith (1989) pg. 111.

### ***Christian Group Activity.***

So if the designation ‘worship’ is inadequate to describe fully their practices, what did these early Christians get up to in their meetings?<sup>11</sup>

a) They communicated with God:

- i) By praise [nevertheless it is surprising the scarcity of the used of the verb *aineo*].
- ii) By expressing thanks to God – a very common and important act especially in relation to the Lord’s Supper.
- iii) By prayer – again a very frequent, corporate activity.

b) God speaks to Christians.

The two basic modes are prophecy and teaching<sup>12</sup> which are closely linked. Prophecy or ‘forth-telling’ was a fresh revelation from God, while teaching was the exposition of the Scriptures.<sup>13</sup> Thus, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these practices were mediated through members of the Church.

c) Mutual service and edification.

The primary emphasis in Church gatherings “lay upon what the members did for one another in virtue of their charismatic endowment from God.”<sup>14</sup> Two words sum up this feature:

i) The concept of ministry.

The term *diakonos* is used for many different types of service within the Church. Christians, of course, serve God<sup>15</sup> and Christ.<sup>16</sup> They can provide the service of the gospel<sup>17</sup> and of the new covenant.<sup>18</sup> However the recipients of this service is very frequently the members, themselves – they served each other, their fellow-believers.<sup>19</sup> Thus this principal element was not focused on God, but rather on the members of the congregation.

ii) The idea of edification.

The term *oikodome* describes the action of edification, which is the purpose of all the charismata in 1Cor. 14:5,12, & 26 (See also Eph. 4:12,16 & 1Thess 5:11). So again the

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<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that wider community thought they got up to all sorts of clandestine activities within their meetings. Not least because of the association of blood in Christ’s sacrifice.

<sup>12</sup> In the Pastoral Epistles it is teaching that has the major emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> It also appears that ‘sign and wonders’ took place, with healing and other manifestations of the Spirit (eg Gal. 3:5).

<sup>14</sup> Marshall (1985) pg. 222.

<sup>15</sup> 2Cor. 6:4.

<sup>16</sup> 2Cor. 11:23; Col. 1:7.

<sup>17</sup> Eph 3:7; Col. 1:23.

<sup>18</sup> 2Cor 3:6.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 19:22; Rom. 15:25; 2Tim. 1:18; Phm. 13; Heb. 6:10; 1Pet. 1:12.

focus is directed towards the Church members, but only indirectly to God. “These meetings of worship had precisely the dominating purpose of building up the Body of Christ. The assemblies were edifying, not in our colourless sense of the word, but in the strict and literal sense of building up.”<sup>20</sup>

#### d) Breaking of Bread

This sacrament celebrates the gift of salvation.<sup>21</sup> It is primarily a recognition of the death and resurrection of Christ and the grace of God, rather than one of worshipping God. The notion of sharing one with another is also seen in the symbol of the ‘one loaf.’<sup>22</sup> – so there is also the horizontal dimension.

#### **Conclusion.**<sup>23</sup>

“The symbol of the church, therefore, is not simply an upward arrow from man to God, nor simply a downward arrow from God to man, but rather a triangle representing the lines of grace coming down from God to his people, the flow of grace from person to person, and the response of thanks and petition to God.”<sup>24</sup>

## **2. A Holistic Relevance to an Heterogeneous Audience.**

A few generations ago – with the emphasis on wearing our Sunday best - the view from the pulpit might well have suggested a gathering of clones. However the truth is that our weekly attendees constitute a diverse grouping. There is only space to consider three categories, briefly:

#### **a. The Stranger.**<sup>25</sup>

We refer to public worship, so by definition our gatherings have a public character. It is not a private affair, but there is the integration of various people-groups. Christians worship the God who created *all* things<sup>26</sup> – so the diversity of humanity is welcome in the “house of God.” In one sense God is the host of the gathering and we are dependent on his hospitality. However God is often present in the presence of a stranger. In the narrative of Gen. 18:1-15 God appears in the

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<sup>20</sup> Emil Brunner quoted in Griffith (1989) pp. 113-114.

<sup>21</sup> There are, of course, the past, present, and future aspects of this cosmic redemption.

<sup>22</sup> 1Cor. 10:16.

<sup>23</sup> This conclusion could be further corroborated by the terms used to describe the Church: a) ‘Assembly’ – emphasising the importance of coming together (*synago, synerchomai, homothymadon*) following its closest analogy – the synagogue, where the primary activity was the teaching of the Torah. b) ‘Body’ (1Cor 12; Rom. 12) – the emphasise being on mutual help and assistance. So, spiritual gifts were for the support of the individual and the group. c) ‘Household or family of God’ – the focus being on brotherhood, sharing and loving relationship.

<sup>24</sup> Marshall (1985) pg 227.

<sup>25</sup> Most space has been afforded to this group, because the concept of “stranger” covers most of the marginalised sections within our churches. See J. Koenig *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

<sup>26</sup> I have never quite got my head - or theology - around the idea of “pet-blessing ceremonies,” but I am sure that they will be in heaven!!

form of three strangers to Abraham and Sarah to receive hospitality. In Solomon's prayer of dedication, he highlights the foreigners who have come "because of the LORD's name." They should be treated well, so that all may know and fear God's name.<sup>27</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus and his disciples are often portrayed as strangers seeking hospitality. The fellowship after that journey to Emmaus revealed that the stranger was none other than the risen Christ.<sup>28</sup> It takes effort to make the stranger welcome – "while most of us can find it stimulating or at least interesting to meet a stranger for a short while, it is a very different thing to truly open up and allow a stranger to become a friend."<sup>29</sup>

### ***b. Those with Learning Disabilities.***

With the concept of "care in the community" well underway Churches have now much more of an opportunity to find ways to make those with learning disabilities welcome within their current services, as much as possible, and, perhaps also, to offer other specific ministries.

"The most precious gift in community is rooted in weakness. It is when we are frail and poor that we need others, that we call them to love and use all their gifts ....At the heart of everything beautiful in a community, there is always the sacrificial lamb, united to the Lamb of God."<sup>30</sup>

### ***c. Men (or the lack of).***

Men are far outnumbered by women in most western Churches - the "feminisation of the church" has been a big problem for years.<sup>31</sup> It is, of course, not that I am against feminine expression in the Church – in fact, it is very, very necessary. The point is that we need to allow an integrated balance of masculine and feminine, expression and spirit, within the Church.<sup>32</sup> There are many issues and problems, I believe, that need to be addressed or the Church is virtually going to disappear in the West.

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<sup>27</sup> 1Kgs. 8:41-43.

<sup>28</sup> Luke 24:26.

<sup>29</sup> J. Vanier *Becoming Human*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., 2003. pg. 76.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* pg. 263.

<sup>31</sup> 20 years ago I was reading books like: J. Smith, *Manhunt. Reaching Men for God*. Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1985; and D. Cook, *Men! What's Missing in Today's Church*. London: Marshall Pickering, 1992. And far more recently; S. Sonderman, *How to Build a Life-changing Men's Ministry. Bringing the Fire Home to Your Church*. Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1996 [far too "American"]; D. Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*. USA: Nelson Books, 2005 [a far more helpful and practical book]; L. J. Podles *The Church Impotent. The Feminization of the Church* Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999 [This is an excellent dissertation by a Roman Catholic scholar that highlights many very worrying issues].

<sup>32</sup> Someone has noted: *It is NOT that it's time to call men back to the Church, BUT rather it is time to call the Church back to men.*"

What will be the result if each believer stands shoulder-to-shoulder alongside other believers, and also shoulder-to-shoulder alongside the forgotten? Answer: “[We will be] on the way to allowing the action of God to make itself manifest...that is the entire point of spiritual discipline...the renewal of the world by God, a transformation of all conditions of human speaking and relating.”<sup>33</sup>

### **3. God as Subject and Object – the Infinite Centre – of our Worship.**<sup>34</sup>

*“The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save,  
He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing.”*

Zephaniah 3:17

God is the focus of our worship-full lives, and so we should “find countless possibilities, endless resources, innumerable ways to encounter and express God’s infinite presence.”<sup>35</sup> With these thoughts in mind we will look at three aspects of the Divine in the context of worship:

#### ***a. Trinitarian Worship.***<sup>36</sup>

Our devotions must reflect that the Godhead is made up of the three members. Worship is also, not just rendered *to* the Trinity but *in* the Trinity. Thus Trinitarian worship “must take into account the horizontal relationships amongst believers, as much as the vertical relationships between the congregation and God.”<sup>37</sup> In the final vision<sup>38</sup> - that symbolic representation within the Garden-city - we have the empyreal scene of the saints serving around the throne of God and the Lamb with the life-giving river flowing from it - representing the Holy Spirit.

#### ***b. Transcendence and Immanence.***

*“Instead of putting off our shoes because the place whereon we stand is holy ground,  
we like to take nice photographs of the burning bush from suitable angles.”*<sup>39</sup>

The quote certainly serves as a timely warning. Often the glory, the majesty, the transcendence of God is overlooked, or devalued in much contemporary worship and culture. However there is

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<sup>33</sup> From a speech by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the opening of the International Bonhoeffer Congress, University of Wroclaw, Poland on the occasion of the centenary anniversary of Bonhoeffer’s birth.

<sup>34</sup> I borrow this heading from Dawn (1999) pg. 8. One could write a book on this topic, but my space is very limited because of “word count” restraints. However, on the other hand, it is also very obvious that this must be central to all our worship considerations and praxis.

<sup>35</sup> Dawn (1999) pg 9.

<sup>36</sup> See Matt. 28:19; 2Thes. 2:13-14; & 1Cor 12:4-6.

<sup>37</sup> Due (2005) pg 234.

<sup>38</sup> Rev. 22:1-5.

<sup>39</sup> J. S. Whale.

also that immanent and intimate aspect of the character of God. This mutual coexistence of God's transcendence and immanence is so succinctly and poetically expressed in Isaiah 57:15:

*For this is what the high and lofty One says -  
he who lives for ever, whose name is Holy;  
I live in a high and holy place,  
but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the lowly  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

***c. Loving God with all our hearts, our souls, our strength, and our minds.***

The fundamental calling for Christian worship revolves around the “greatest commandment” - loving God with all our hearts, our souls, our strength, and our minds.<sup>40</sup> Sadly, in the past, some Christian groups have been accused (perhaps with some basis) of “leaving their brains at the church door.” If Christians do not attempt to engage their thinking process to a higher level – along with their hearts, souls, and strength - then they, not only disobey this command, but they also devalue the corporate act of worship, and even more worryingly, they diminish the perception of the God that they attempt to worship.<sup>41</sup>

*“God does not just want to be worshipped as a distant, wonderful, admirable God.*

*God wants to reveal love; love that is communion,  
love that is personal, love that is a heart-to-heart relationship,  
love that is communication and friendship,  
love which implies a certain equality, love that is life and light.*

*Is this not the very nature of God?*

*God is three persons in love with each other,  
equal to each other in every way,  
giving themselves to one another in love and in communion,  
resting in one another.*

*God is ecstasy and glory in love.”<sup>42</sup>*

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<sup>40</sup> Lk. 10:27; Mk. 12:30; Matt. 22:37. The Apostle Paul also puts an emphasis on the function of the mind: Rom.12:2; 1Cor. 1:10; 2:16.

<sup>41</sup> It is very interesting that in that sometimes-controversial passage of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul clearly states that we must pray with the *mind* and the spirit, and sing praises with the *mind* and the spirit.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Vanier in F. Young (ed), *Encounter with Mystery. Reflections on L'Arche and living with disability*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997. pg. 13.

#### 4. Contextualisation without Compromise.

*“We’re amusing ourselves to death  
We’re giggling as we go,  
We’re the dance band on the Titanic  
And nobody wants to know.  
Anything to stop us thinking  
Anything to give us a thrill,  
We chosen the path of pleasure  
Even if it kills.”<sup>43</sup>*

One of the modern trends in worship has been to rely heavily on an entertainment format.<sup>44</sup> There is no denying that crowds may well be drawn in, but does this approach really equip the saints for the work of ministry? Willow Creek Community Church was the forerunner of contemporary presentational-type worship. Their intention was that the attendees would find this demonstration of Christian faith and worship attractive and interesting enough to pursue it further.<sup>45</sup> On the other side of this “stage-type approach,” there was the ultra-traditional, stern, “Knoxian” style of worship which some have suggested was the Protestant attempt to get purgatory out of the way on earth, before entering the next world!<sup>46</sup> The normal support of this position was the claim to ‘proper reverence.’<sup>47</sup> However, “when Christians imply that reverence is essentially a matter of one’s demeanour in church services, this shows little understanding of the Bible’s teaching on the subject.”<sup>48</sup> “Reverence” – as normally understood – is not the issue.

Rather both approaches have the similarity of being presentational rather than being participatory.<sup>49</sup> This contemporary production, ironically, can prompt people to fall into the old Sabbatarian trap, but with a modern twist. One comes to the church on Sunday (or any other day) to enjoy a great show, and then for the rest of the week, life goes on as a separate existence.

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<sup>43</sup> Garth Hewitt, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

<sup>44</sup> Some of the “seeker-centred” mega-churches in the United States have within their church premises – Christian tattoo, acupuncture, and liposuction facilities available on site. Actual church services have been recorded as featuring among other things: wrestling matches between Church employees; using an half-million dollars, special-effects system in the sanctuary – based on the system used at Bally’s Casino in Las Vegas – which can produce smoke, fire, sparks, and laser lights to accentuate the key points in the pastor’s message; visual aids which entail cutting down a tree with a chainsaw to make a point; and the pastor ending one service by ascending to ‘heaven’ via invisible wires that drew him up out of sight while the choir and orchestra added a musical accompaniment to smoke, fire, and light show.

<sup>45</sup> Labelling this type of approach “entertainment evangelism” was somewhat unfortunate – W. Kallestad *Entertainment Evangelism. Taking the Church Public*. Nashville: Abington Press, 1996.

<sup>46</sup> Although being of a completely difference ambience, this style was very much a “one man show.”

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that it is quite possible to show reverence to a false deity – Acts 19:27.

<sup>48</sup> Patterson (1992) pg 73.

<sup>49</sup> Following my discussion in the section above I find this a great weakness.

There is also the problem of the focus shifting from the worship of God to those on stage<sup>50</sup> – the worship-leader<sup>51</sup> becomes the worship-performer.<sup>52</sup>

There has been, in recent years, a move away from this performance format.<sup>53</sup> So, for example, T. G. Long<sup>54</sup> has suggested a “third way”<sup>55</sup> instead of “boring traditional worship” and “shallow pool” seekers services. He puts forward nine key features of worship which: allow for mystery; show hospitality; make drama visible; emphasise excellent and eclectic music; adapt space and environment; forge a connection between worship and local mission; maintain a stable order and a significant repertoire of worship elements; and move to a joyous festival experience with charismatic pastors as their leaders.<sup>56</sup> In recent years the Emergent Church<sup>57</sup> has been the latest innovation to arrive on the scene. It was a protest movement originating in conservative (even fundamentalist), traditional, evangelical churches. It is a discontentment with: “spiritual McCarthyism” – a style of leadership that belongs to a linear, analytical world; “spiritual isolationism” – typified by churches moving from the city to the suburbs; and “spiritual Darwinism”- climbing up the ladder on the assumption that bigger is better.<sup>58</sup> It is a protest against modernism – thus in a post-modern world they are “post-conquest, post-mechanistic, post-analytical, post-secular, post-objective, post-critical, post-organizational, post individualistic, post-Protestant, and post-consumerist.”<sup>59</sup> D. A. Carson suggests two dangers: a) A church that submerges itself so much in culture risks hopeless compromise; and b) An (unwitting) drift from Scripture. He suggests that this movement feels like an exercise in

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<sup>50</sup> On a lighter note, Marcia and I were recently at a “service designed to relate to today’s culture” that involved the worship “leader” - with a “Garth Brooks-type head microphone” - gyrating around on the stage, and singing, “It’s your glory and your fame, it’s not about me.” In response to her opinion about him, Marcia suggested that he should be shot. This induced the reply, “I thought he already had been - in the behind.”

<sup>51</sup> Although one has to be extremely cautious when ‘arguing from silence’ it is interesting to note that there is no specific role of ‘worship leader’ mentioned in the NT.

<sup>52</sup> Morgethaler (1999) contrasts a helpful list of the characteristics of both. This book has a *few* helpful thoughts, but is very patronising in style – there is a mind-numbingly, detailed description of how to make contact with “Shopper Bruce” and “Seeker Bob.” Her four basic elements for corporate worship are: nearness (a sense of God’s presence); knowledge (a worship centred on Christ); vulnerability (opening up to God); and interaction (participating in a relationship with God and others), pp. 96-97.

<sup>53</sup> For instance, Clive Marsh [*Christianity in a Post-Atheist Age*, London: SCM Press, 2002] is arguing from a liberal traditional viewpoint, but there are helpful insights. The book takes the form of 95 theses that are propositions for a new ‘liberal Protestantism.’ His last thesis - which is a summary - states that “Christianity will only reveal itself to be a viable form of religion in contemporary Britain if it begins to work again for people as a source of personal, social and political transformation.”

<sup>54</sup> Long (2001).

<sup>55</sup> I have an innate suspicion of anything called “third way” in light of recent political usage.

<sup>56</sup> Long makes the claim that this third way is NOT a blending of modern and traditional, but does not fully convince.

<sup>57</sup> I have just come across an article by D. A. Carson, ‘The Emerging Church,’ *Modern Reformation Magazine*, “Faith a La Carte?” July/Aug. Vol. 14.4, (2005). This article is adapted from his new book *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*. Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2005., which I think would be well worth a read.

<sup>58</sup> Carson cites these three reasons given by Spencer Burke who was once the pastor of a “bona fide mega-church with a 25-acre property and a \$7.8 million budget.”

<sup>59</sup> So says Brian McLaren, probably the most articulate speaker in this movement.

pendulum swinging, where the law of unintended consequences can do a lot of damage before the pendulum comes to rest.

### **Some Closing Thoughts on the Way Ahead.**

Will the emerging church, quickly submerge; will the labyrinth<sup>60</sup> lead up a dead-end alley; will alternative worship simply change polarity; or will the liquid church disappear down the drain? Only time will tell.

I think that the recent TV coverage of the Snooker World Championship is a good analogy for a Church that will survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Firstly, the game of snooker that they were covering is readily recognisable with its roots in 1875 - so there is a clear continuity. However there have also been many changes: the rules of the game (although none that is absolutely fundamental); snooker balls are no longer made of ivory; modern cues and tables as used; and the players' haircuts.

Thus the Church must remain firmly within the trajectory of the historic Christian worship, but it must be genuinely interactive with the present cultural environment.<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, the TV programmes always included relevant, contemporary "filler" slots – competitions, the background of players; and demonstrations with a live participating audience. Thus the Church must encourage member-participation, and include various worship "slots"<sup>62</sup> which can constantly vary with a plethora of contents.<sup>63</sup>

We must always strive to contextualise the Church and its message, but we must never compromise, nor "soft sell" the world on truth. The Church has to be very careful in its response to contemporary culture and thinking. It cannot exist as a legalistic private clique, nor must it simply be a liberal social club. Either extreme is the wrong end of the stick. We must try to reach a balance by holding the stick somewhere near its middle. To achieve this we must seek the guidance, not of the 'spirit of the age,' but rather, of the 'eternal Spirit of the Ages.'

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<sup>60</sup> See [www.labyrinth.org.uk](http://www.labyrinth.org.uk).

<sup>61</sup> Postmodernism is very difficult to define, and it also includes many different kinds of people. So I think that there is still much value in observing Paul's approach: a) Acts 9:19ff, Jews in the synagogue – he appeals to Scripture. b) Acts 13:14ff, Jews and perhaps Gentile "God-fearers" – Jewish history. c) Acts 14:15ff, Gentiles – knowledge of the natural world. d) Acts 17:22ff, intellectual elite on a hill – natural world and intellectual interests of the audience.

<sup>62</sup> See Peterson (1992) pp. 289-293. In his epilogue he envisages a Church meeting with lots of different segments.

<sup>63</sup> We need to rediscover the rich seams of worship treasure - that are the heritage of the whole Church spectrum – liturgy, symbolism, gesture, ceremony, sacrament, music, doxology, and celebration. This will involve raiding sorties over denominational divides.

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