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Christian worship: unity in cultural diversity

Donald C. Nevile

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Worship and Culture in Dialogue: Reports of International Consultations, Cartigny, Switzerland, 1993, and Hong Kong, 1994

Edited by Anita Stauffer

Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994

247 pp. \$15.00 US

Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity

Edited by Anita Stauffer

Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996

145 pp. \$20.00 US

These two volumes represent the results in print, so far, of the LWF's study on worship and culture. Begun in 1993, this study will continue into the next millennium. These two books are the "first fruits" of the study. Both are edited by Anita Stauffer, LWF staff person in charge of worship. Both are anthologies of articles by various scholars, and focus on the topic of worship and enculturation.

The first study, *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*, gives a report of the first two consultations of the study. It contains these papers: Christian Worship: Toward Localization and Globalization (Anita Stauffer); Baptism in the New Testament, and its Cultural Setting (Gordon Lathrop); Baptism in the Early Church and its Cultural Settings (Anscar Chupungco); Cultural Settings of Architecture for Baptism in the Early Church (Anita Stauffer); Eucharist in the New Testament and its Cultural Settings (Gordon Lathrop); Eucharist in the Early Church and its Cultural Settings (Anscar Chupungco); Liturgical Music and its Early Cultural Settings (Anscar Chupungco); Worship and Culture in the Lutheran Reformation (Gordon Lathrop); Cartigny Statement on Worship and Culture: Biblical and Historical Foundations; A Contemporary Lutheran Approach to Worship and Culture: Sorting Out the Critical Principles (Gordon Lathrop); Liturgy and the Components of Culture (Anscar Chupungco); Contemporary Questions on Church Architecture and Culture (Anita Stauffer); Dynamics of Liturgy and World Musics: Methodology for Evaluation (Mark Bangert); and Report on Case Studies (Marcus Felde).

This is an important book for those who study worship and inculturation. As with most anthologies, the contents vary in quality. The contributions by Stauffer and Lathrop are solid, and represent the best sort of contemporary Lutheran study on these topics. The most disappointing articles are those by Chupungco, who has been saying the same things about worship and culture for the past twenty years: nothing new here. The Cartigny Statement is important: for those who have not seen it elsewhere, here it is! The Case Studies Report is far too brief and condensed to be very helpful, and is a sign to us of how useless this whole study may eventually be. Surely the interplay of worship and culture in any land cannot be effectively summarized, in any meaningful sense, in a page or two!

By far the most creative, helpful, and ground-breaking piece here is the one by Mark Bangert of Chicago. This is the best in the book! He introduces us to the concept of "micromusic", and urges us to protect the remaining micromusic cultures of the world, rather than "mining" them and consuming them, tearing them out of their cultural contexts for our own spiritual gratification.

Bangert opts for the study of music as a "social text", and employs the idea of *cantometrics* conceived by Alan Lomax, Alan Merriam, and Jean-Jacques Nattiez. He devises a set of ten criteria to describe the music of the ideal liturgical assembly, fleshing this out with his own predictions regarding the nature of this sort of song. The strength of Bangert's approach is in freeing us from dependence on aesthetic theories to evaluate our church music. As the old saying goes, this essay is "worth the price of the book".

The second volume, *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, is the shorter of the two, but contains just as broad an offering: Worship: Ecumenical Core and Cultural Context (Anita Stauffer); Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities; Report of Regional Research (Marcus Felde); Worship: Local yet Universal (Gordon Lathrop); The Shape of the Liturgy: A Framework of Contextualization (Gordon Lathrop); Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation (Anscar Chupungco); Case Study: Lutheran Funerals in Japanese Context (Mark Luttio).

This volume is part of the second stage of the LWF study, and is to be a resource for the fourth stage of regional and sub-regional studies. Following the Hong Kong meeting, regional studies were conducted under the guidance of the various participants. Then, in 1996, the participants met in Nairobi. This book contains the statements, papers, and reports of that meeting.

Much that was said of the first book can be said of this one. Most of the studies, with the exception of Chupungco's, present good, solid work. Chupungco continues his rather dated, almost mechanical approach to liturgical inculturation. The Nairobi Statement itself is satisfactory, but turns no new ground. It assimilates Chupungco's concepts of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation, and ends with a call to LWF member churches to embrace these values and foster them.

Felde's report on regional studies and research describes the results of the process in which many of us took part at the grass roots level. It is probably the most disturbing part of the book, because it points to the glaring limitations of this entire study. It is very brief: three pages on Africa, one page on Asia, two pages on Canada, and so on. The Brazilian study is the most interesting; however, it focuses on a single congregation! The Canadian study was done in Quebec (where there are very few Lutherans!). It is probably the easiest for us to pick at, since it comes from the country we know best. Its strident emphasis on Lutheran ethnicity likely reflects the Quebec base of the Canadian reporter, Pr. Eric Dyck: after all, unlike the rest of Canada, everyone in Quebec is by definition ethnic!

The LWF is to be highly commended for initiating this study of worship and culture. The results are fascinating, and well worth reading. The theoretical work is well done, and will be useful for a long time. However, given the cultural diversity of our Lutheran churches worldwide, and seeing the narrow scope of reporting on the regional studies as presented here, one despairs of ever gaining a good grasp of the cultural diversity of Lutheran worship!

Donald C. Nevile
Highwood Lutheran Church
Calgary, Alberta

Foundations of Christian Music: The Music of Pre-Constantinian Christianity

Edward Foley

Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1994

84 pp.

In this short book, Foley brings a critical, post-modern reading to the sources, which is not found in other recent studies of the topic such as Johannes Quastén's *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (1973), Alfred Sendry's *Music in Ancient Israel* (1969), and of course Suzanne Haik-Ventoura's highly speculative *The Music of the Bible Revealed* (1991).

Foley begins by admitting that the sources for his study are fragmentary and slim. Then he devotes his excellent first chapter to the cultural differences between the ancient and modern musical situation. Whereas for us *seeing* is believing, for ancient humanity *hearing* was believing. He draws on the work of Walter Ong to support this suggestion that, in ancient times, relationships between people were governed primarily by acoustics—participatory hearing, spoken narrative, and the audible in ritual.

He documents the transition from oral- to craft/written-culture at the time of Josiah, but recognizes that, even then, there remained a “residual orality” which was still significant long after the Deuteronomic transcription of the Torah.

For the Old Testament person, revelation was auditory. Only later is the Word of God written down. God is first and foremost *heard*, and never really *seen*, even on parchment. The turning point away from this comes with Alexander the Great. With his hellenization of the Mediterranean world, we enter the culture of *sight*. Just the same, the New Testament remains an auditory-based written account.

In his next chapter, Foley outlines the music of the OT in the Temple. He begins with the scanty biblical evidence, and then moves to the implications of this for instruments and song. Aside from the few references