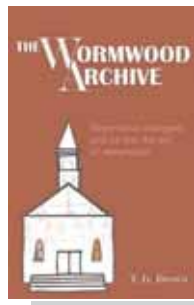


Reviews of Note



T. G. Brown, *The Wormwood Archive*
(Doorlight Publications, 2009).
Paperback, \$9.95 (available on Amazon.com)
ISBN-978-0-9778372-3-6



For those who have read C. S. Lewis' book, *The Screwtape Letters*, you will recall the correspondence of the junior demon, Wormwood with his uncle Screwtape. The dialogue was particularly unique as everything was viewed from a demonic perspective, and thus the goals of Wormwood were to thwart everything that the Enemy (God) might want. *The Wormwood Archive* could be considered a modern take off from C. S. Lewis' book, and is focused on a church that hires a new pastor whose goal is to follow the example of several mega-churches in leadership and worship style in order to attract new attendees.

Wormwood (the under-demon) writes to his professor, Slubgob, in order to gain advice as to how to influence the church staff and membership and bring about anarchy and collapse of the church. The parallels between Easthampton Community Church and several churches that we know today are remarkable. For any church leader who is considering jumping on the cultural mega-church bandwagon, or for those who are terrified of it, I heartily recommend this book. It is fictional, but based on a true situation and painfully enlightening. (*Vince Treadway*)

(continued from page 3.)

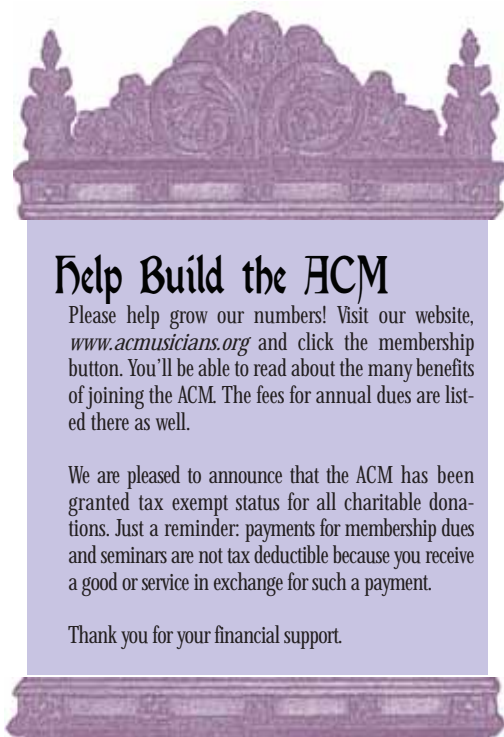
The church has often demonstrated this commitment in previous days and in doing so she regularly carried the culture with her. There is precious little danger of that happening in our time and that is not only an abrogation of duty on the church's part but a high tragedy both for Christian people and for the unbelieving culture.

People aren't different now than they have always been. Christians can be taught to sing well and sing deep and powerful texts that are intellectually satisfying and musically appropriate. They have sung such hymns for thousands of years. The church's singing can become again a powerful weapon in the spiritual warfare.

But those of us who believe this must adorn our position. We must raise a testimony to better things. Our churches need to be well-known for the quality of their worship and the engaging character of it and especially the congregation's singing. That is why, I take it, that we are here: to encourage one another in this important work.



Author, preacher, and teacher, Dr. Rayburn earned his master's degree from Covenant Theological Seminary and his doctorate in New Testament from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Published in the *Evangelical Commentary of the Bible* is Rayburn's commentary on **Hebrews**. He also leads sermons at Faith Presbyterian Church in Tacoma, Washington.



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Speaking the Truth from Your Heart



Vince Treadway, ACM Executive Director

Every few years I reread Dr. James Boice's commentary on the Psalms, and I find I learn new things each time I read it. I recently read the chapter on Psalm 15 and was struck with these words:

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue . . .

Just these few sentences seem like an impossibility, and yet we are called to strive for holiness because God is holy.

I was challenged particularly by the bolded words, because it seems easy to speak the truth, but often they are spewed in anger and in sharp tones, intending to hurt the victim. How much better (and how much more difficult) to speak the truth absolutely free of any slanderous or hurtful tone or adjectives, with an intent to cast no slur on (your) fellowman.

I have spoken with many pastors and music directors and have heard many stories about conversations that ended up being divisive, hurtful, and caused rifts in relationships that were very difficult if not impossible to repair. I must confess in my own life to saying things in anger that I later regretted. A dear friend of mine once gave me excellent advice: "Never say anything in anger because you can never take back the words that have left your lips." That advice has saved me on many occasions!

Our challenge from God's Word is to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to speak the truth from our hearts with no slander on our tongues.

I believe that our ministries of music will benefit from following these commands from Psalm 15, in part because our flock will feel more safe if they know they can trust us to treat them with kindness and love.

I pray that God will strengthen us all to grow together in Him as we continue to follow His Word in the ministries He has given us.

Yours in Christ's Service,
Vince Treadway



COMING EVENTS

Saturday, January 23, 2010
(PNW) Singing 101 for Worship at Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, WA from 9:30 am to noon.

Saturday, January 30, 2010
Young Church Musician's Recital at Proclamation Presbyterian Church at 8:00 pm.

Thursday, February 11, 2010
Luncheon Discussion
Location and Topic TBA

Saturday, March 6, 2010
Handbell Festival featuring David Harris of the Raleigh Ringers at Delaware County Christian School, Newtown Square, PA

For more information contact Vince Treadway at 610.520.9500.

Worship in a Higher Register

The following is the keynote address given by Rev. Dr. Robert S. Rayburn on October 17, 2008 at the Pacific Northwest ACM chapter's Church Music Symposium which took place in Tacoma, Washington. Because of its length, the speech has been divided into three parts. This is the third and final part.

The psalms have been sung by the faithful through three thousand years or more and have inspired the best and most influential of the hymns that have been sung over the past two thousand years. There is that in those hymns that only with understanding and appreciation can be turned into sincere address to God.

The 20th century British Congregationalist, P.T. Forsyth has stated:

“There are few dangers threatening the religious future more serious than the slow shallowing of the religious mind. . . . Our safety is in the deep. The lazy cry for simplicity is a great danger. It indicates a frame of mind which is only appalled at the great things of God, and a senility of faith which fears that which is high. Men complain that they are jaded and cannot rise to such matters. That may mean that the matters of the world absorb all the energies of the great side of the soul, that divine things are no more than a comfort. And, if so, it means much for the future of religion, and much which is ominous. And the poverty of our worship amid its very refinements, its lack of solemnity. . . . is the fatal index of the peril.” [Cited in Wells, *God in the Wasteland*, 118]

The practical consequence of the departure from worship in the higher register is precisely that the church has begun treating her adults as if they were children. In other words, the Church has capitulated to a powerful movement in the culture, signaled in Diana West's recent book, *The Death of the Grownup*. When I was in high school I sang the very sort of songs that are now referred to as praise songs and are sung in the worship of the church of a Lord's Day morning. There really is very little difference if any between what I sang then and what Christians in vast numbers are singing in church today. The sole difference between that music and the music now sung by congregations in worship is that in my youth we never supposed we would sing our songs in a church service. We understood that as we grew up and became adults we would sing differently, know more, and that our maturity would be expressed in our participation in the church's worship. It was music for young people. It was simple, primarily affective, with little theological depth, generally simple ideas repeated several times to catchy pop-40 types of tunes. But the average teenager today and, alas, the average adult views himself not as a student in need of knowledge and a person needing further to mature, to grow up, but as a person who has gone as far as he or she needs to go.

What has happened, to put it simply, is that adults are now singing children's songs in the church's high worship. We might, in my view, very fairly refer to this music as the McSong and this worship as the McWorship. It partakes of the youth orientation of so much of modern culture. But it is a recipe for perpetual adolescence in the church. Hymns are a very important instrument of discipleship and the Lord's Day wor-

By Rev. Dr. Robert S. Rayburn

ship of the church is the great engine of discipleship. If the sung praise of the church is juvenile, the church is consigned to developing juveniles, not adults.

Let me explore the changes in respect to four features of the modern worship singing of the evangelical church.

1. First, there is the loss of the congregation's voice. I'm not sure if you have noticed this and, to be sure, it occurs by degrees in various churches, but a congregation filling a sanctuary with the sound of praise is becoming an increasingly rare thing. Part of the reason for this is that the new model for congregational singing is to have one or more singers on the stage sing into a microphone. The amplified voices are much louder than the unamplified voices of the congregation. The congregation's inability to hear itself sing further depresses its interest in singing. Little attention is given to this by the church's leadership because the congregation's voice is immaterial to the sound in the room. (My experience at Grace). Once again, the congregation is replaced in worship and becomes a virtual spectator.

Others have commented especially on the decreasing participation of men in the singing of the church. Since reading this, I have made my own observations from place to place and find it so. This is unspeakably sad and very dangerous. When Christians, and Christian men in particular, cease to sing and cease to have a sense of singing together, an important feature and instrument of the Christian life itself has been lost. It is one of the great differences between Christianity and other religions of the world, for example, that our faith is sung and sung by all its practitioners. Al-Qaeda, for example, does not sing its faith!

There are still everywhere congregations that sing beautifully. They fill the sanctuary with their praise and the sound of the congregation's voice is a matter of great blessing to the people. It is a powerful, though subtle, verification of the faith. The Lord sits enthroned on those praises! And, says Alice Parker, there is a reason why a congregation sings well. Someone expects it to! (Luther prepared his congregation, unaccustomed to singing in church as it was, in practices held on Thursday nights.) It is a retrograde step, a step in the direction of the juvenile, for a congregation not to be able to hear its own voice in song. Nowhere else in our culture do large groups sing with any regularity. Fewer and fewer are even singing the national anthem at baseball games. The church should continue to be the place where a great congregation is heard to sing.

2. There is further the loss of singing in harmony. The replacement of a hymnbook with an overhead projector has meant that the congregation now regularly never sees the music. For generations the church was the place where people learned to read music. Harmony is a great witness to

to the nature of reality in the kingdom of God: a beautiful unity created out of diversity. Male and female voices, adults and children, sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses together forming a single sound. [It is one of the pleasures of being a minister that I hear that unified sound so clearly.]

3. Third, there is the loss of the serious, the melancholy, the darker sort of singing. Everything is happy, upbeat, light. Nothing is ever sung any longer in the minor key. But the Christian faith has a minor key because life has a minor key and our faith engages life and reality at every point. There are psalms that have a minor key and the music with which some of them should be sung should reflect that fact. A faith that trades in sin, in the bloody sacrifice of the cross, in the reality of final judgment and hell, and the spiritual warfare cannot always sing light and peppy songs or soon its worship will be so far removed from its message that one or the other will inevitably lose its place. It does not take a prophet to predict that it will be the message that will be accommodated to the worship, not vice versa. My great fear regarding contemporary Christian worship is precisely that it will eventually no longer bear the weight of a fully orthodox Christian faith. Fed on the simplicities of a worship designed for the young, adults will find the transcendent aspects of the Christian faith alien and eventually unbelievable.

4. And, finally, there is the tragic loss of a universal language of song uniting the church across the divisions that otherwise separate her people into various denominations and congregations. The music of the modern evangelical worship service is increasingly disposable, like the top-40 tunes that it emulates. Trinity Hymnal's "contemporary" music is now passé. Mega-churches are writing their own continually and replacing one generation with another. Which is what happened with the songs of my youth. They were sung for a few years and replaced by new ones. But the hymnody of the church has never been so disposable. Christians have long sung the hymns of the ages as Jesus did in his own day even while adding to the church's hymnody with their own creations. It is one of the most important means by which Christians are given a sense of belonging to the church triumphant, a piece of their self-identity of great importance in this age of the temporary, the ephemeral, and the disposable. It gives them the great blessing of experiencing the élan that attaches to many hymns from the circumstances of their creation: "O Light that Knew No Dawn," (an assertion of Christ's full deity from the 4th century) "A Mighty Fortress is our God," (a battle hymn from the era of the Reformation) "And Can it Be that I Should Gain," (a hymn from the Great Awakening on the transforming power of God's grace and Spirit) etc.

Moreover music unified the church in a given time. (My experience at Bronwyn's bed at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis.) This too is coming to an end. The church of the Lord Jesus has met in the hymnal. If it doesn't meet there, it will meet less and less!

The great importance of these issues, of which sung praise is admittedly but one among many, is that it remains a fundamental truth of Holy Scripture that people become like whatever or whomever we worship. If we worship man – and much of contemporary worship is explicitly an effort to appeal to men – we will become more and more like human beings in our time and less and less like God. It is also true that the way of worship shapes the sort of people we will become. Juvenile worship will keep us thinking and acting like young people not least because of worship's role as the first and foremost engine of Christian discipleship.

Our worship should pay appropriate honor to the High Majesty into whose presence we are invited to come of a Lord's Day. It should be intellectually and artistically the finest that we can make it. It should be a stretch for the new believer and still a challenge for the most mature. It should call every participant upward. It should be such activity as can only be done rightly with a hard-working mind and an engaged heart. It ought to exploit the gifts that God has given mankind and which are seen being bent to liturgical use in Holy Scripture: architecture, poetry, music, and oratory.
(continued on page 4.)



The Alliance of Christian Musicians

The ACM exists to promote excellence in the ministries and performance of music in the church by providing education, fellowship, and support for those musicians whose first priority and obligation is obedience and service to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 6:33)

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