

Room for God? A Worship Challenge for a Church-Growth and Marketing Era by Robert Wenz, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids: 1994) (49 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Consensus or Disciples?

We lament the fact that public education has been reduced to relativism and subjectivism (the study of math being replaced with the student's feeling about math), but we seem less concerned—or perhaps less aware—of the same influences in our own churches. Doctrine is replaced with “feel-good” or “do-good” sermons; a God-ward focus is replaced with human-ward and even self-centered orientation. We seem to believe these days that coming to church is a matter of getting in touch with ourselves or picking up a few tips to make our lives happier and more successful. God gets in the way. The cross is still a stumbling block. We would rather be consumers than disciples. [Page 9]

2. Transformation of the Believer

Even evangelism and outreach take on the goal not of merely making converts, nor even disciples, but worshipers— those who will worship God in spirit and in truth. Being saved by grace alone liberates us from our deepest doubts, fears, and anxieties and makes us a congregation of grateful worshipers who, in turn, are changed in that very activity of worship. Instead of coming to church to be entertained, the believer is called to settle for nothing less than transformation; and this comes not through our own independent spiritual odyssey, but in our corporate relationship to and worship of the living Christ. [Pages 10-11]

3. Which God Do We Worship?

Although most anthropology textbooks acknowledge religion as universal,² we Christians understand the questions are critical because we believe that the question of which god we worship is of eternal, not just societal, significance. Moreover, as Christians we understand that the universal propensity to worship is part of how God created us: “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men” (Eccles. 3:1 1).

If worship of a god is a universal phenomenon, then two questions confront each of us:

Do I worship the right God? Do I worship the right God the right way?

²A noted Christian scientist, Hugh Ross, seeking to integrate the biblical account of creation with scientific data, cites the appearance on the anthropological stage of a distinct new species. Concurrent with the appearance of this new species is the appearance of evidence of worship and religion. See “The Search for Adam and Eve,” Newsweek, 11 January 1988.

Thomas Maugh II writes that the recent reclassifications of Neanderthals into the human family tree has caused many scientists to rethink the “African Eve Theory.” The debate could seemingly continue without in any way changing Ross’s approach. See “Study Boosts Neanderthal,” Los Angeles Times, 9 February 1992, A-I, A-12. [Pages 15-16]

4. Which Sort?

For the sort of people who like this sort of thing,
this is the sort of thing that sort of people will like.

—Abraham Lincoln

[Page 19]

5. Pragmatic Approach to Church Growth

I have become increasingly concerned, however, with a number of the manifestations of what John MacArthur calls the “pragmatic approach” to church growth—“seeker” and “seeker-sensitive services” or user-friendly churches.”² I can easily agree with much of what MacArthur has written about the error of pragmatism—that it is prone to value methodologies above biblical truth.

However, I will also argue that Paul instructed the church in the basics of seeker-sensitive worship. After all, Paul was being sensitive to the unbeliever by seeking to be all things to all people to win them to Christ. What balanced Paul’s pragmatism was his commitment to please God rather than people (2 Cor. 5:9) and his renunciation of “secret and shameful ways” that are deceptive and “distort the word of God” (2 Cor. 4:2). [Page 20]

² John MacArthur and the editors of Leadership, “Our Sufficiency for Outreach,” Leadership (Fall 1991): 138.

6. Creating a Church that God Wants

It may be valuable for a church to study the demographics of its community and even to know that unchurched people are concerned about well-kept facilities, adequate parking, good child care, and remaining anonymous in the church. We must remove the human stumbling blocks that keep the unchurched away. We must not try to remove the spiritual stumbling blocks that are inherent in a gospel that confronts sinful humanity with its real need. Striving to create a church that people want may produce a church that is not at all what God wants. [Page 22]

7. Does Success Equate with Truth?

Paradoxically, one of the greatest dangers of the market-driven church may be that it is often successful. The success orientation of our culture has seeped into the church, bringing with it the dangerous assumption that success equates with truth. If numeric growth, buildings, television ratings, and millions of dollars raised are all criteria for

success, then we have adopted our yardsticks from our culture and not from God's Word. One of the pioneers of marketing the church, Robert Schuller, responded to my questions about a theological statement that he made on his "Hour of Power" broadcast by saying that his "new theology" is proven correct by the success of his ministry.⁴ Yet such reasoning is clearly false. To equate success with truth is analogous to saying that because a fast-food chain is successful, its food is nutritious. [Page 23]

⁴Robert H. Schuller, in *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation* (Waco: Word, 1982), clearly sought to write a new orthodoxy and to abandon the Reformation. His statement that "sin is thinking that you are not worthy of God's grace" embraces enough unbiblical theology to have risked burning at the stake in earlier eras of the church. Chapter 4 will deal with this more fully.

8. Human-Centered Worship

The most subtle danger of the market-driven church is that a consumer orientation can then move through the church like a computer virus infecting program after program. Over time, preaching may focus almost entirely on our human needs and the problems we face (e.g., time management, self-esteem, anxiety, compulsive behavior, successful marriage and parenting). Our doctrine may focus on ourselves and our felt needs rather than on God. Sin, for example, becomes "not thinking we are worthy of God's love," and grace becomes a general principle of God's love. The result is that many evangelicals no longer believe and proclaim a God who could ever really send someone to hell. (And even if He were going to send some monstrously evil people to hell, it is best not mention something as confrontational as the judgment of God in polite society.) Finally, we evolve into people who worship God not for who He is but for how abundantly He has blessed us—especially with health and wealth. We have arrived at the front steps of the "Church of What Have You Done for Me Lately?"

When everything in the church is geared to humanity and perceived human needs, this attitude will invade our sanctuaries and our worship. Using practical creative approaches to reach the unchurched is not wrong, but a pragmatic, market-driven church will ultimately have market-driven and human-centered worship. [Page 27]

9. Marketing or Making Disciples

If marketing the church has replaced making disciples as the primary strategy for fulfilling the Great Commission, then we have abandoned the truth of God's Word and are doomed to fail. Discipleship is always a costly process. It is a call to the cross, where we must give up our agenda and embrace the agenda of our Savior. [Page 27]

10. True Worshiper of God

It will suffice here to note that becoming a true worshiper of the true God is to become a disciple, one who lays down his or her own baggage and by faith takes up the cross of the Lord Jesus. [Page 29]

11. Providing Homes and Families

“Our agency is not in the business of providing children for couples who desire them. The agency is here to provide homes and families for children who need them.” [Page 30]

12. U.S. Adoption Statistic

...in the United States, one infant is placed for every forty couples who have expressed a desire to adopt. [Page 31]

13. Worship for His Pleasure & Glory

God has no need of worship or of the adopted children who might worship Him. He is complete without us or our worship. His desire for worship is no indictment against His perfection—the triune God exists in the perfect eternal fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, acting on His desire, God created all things for His pleasure and for the purpose of glorifying Him. We are part of that creation for His pleasure and His glory. [Page 32]

14. God-Centered Worship

As wonderful as it may be for us to be adopted into God’s eternal family of worshipers, worship is and must be God-centered because it begins with God’s proper desire to be glorified, not with our need. Page 32

15. True Worship

Worship should never be human-centered and must always be God-centered. True worshipers understand this and view worship from this perspective. They approach God because God is worthy of worship, even if he had not redeemed or adopted us. At the end of the age, even those who have scorned him will acknowledge His Lordship, not because they have received the blessing of adoption (they have not) but because He is Lord! [Page 33]

16. Purpose of Worship

Stephen Charnock cuts to the core of the issue: “When we believe that we should be satisfied rather than God glorified in our worship then we put God below ourselves as though He had been made for us rather than that we had been made for Him.” Charnock’s choice of the word *satisfied* is important. Many people in our evangelical churches seem more concerned with their satisfaction in worship than with God’s glorification. The popularity of some churches or ministries seems to derive from their emphasis on making worship rewarding or satisfying. It even seems that we have passively trained people (by repeated reinforcement) that worship is principally a

process or an exercise whose purpose is to secure the rewards God offers to those who seek Him. [Page 34]

17. Human-Centered Christianity

Francis Schaeffer feared that evangelicalism was being reduced to only two central values, personal peace and affluence. Evangelicals, he said, aspire only for their own personal world to be stable and at peace and to have enough money to enjoy that peaceful personal world. Kenneth S. Kantzer, a senior editor of Christianity Today, recently reiterated that evangelicals have forgotten the privilege of “sharing in [Jesus’] sufferings” and are preoccupied with wealth and health.⁸ Human-centered Christianity focuses on the blessing of God. [Page 36]

⁸Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelical Roots* (Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and InterVarsity, 1992) videotape lectures, part 4.

18. Making God God

In addition to the otherness of God, there are four distinct qualities that, for lack of a better phrase, “make God God.” Theologians have traditionally classified the attributes of God into two categories. Communicable attributes are those attributes God shares to some degree with his creation: love, truthfulness, goodness, righteousness, justice, to list a few. God’s noncommunicable attributes include his omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and changelessness, attributes God does not share with his creation. [Page 43]

19. Attributes of God

Illustration 2.1
The Attributes of God

Holy, Holy, Holy

Eternal
Self-Existing
Sovereign
Creator
God’s Essence

Noncommunicable Attributes

Omnipresent
Omnipotent
Omniscient
Unchanging

Communicable Attributes

Spirituality
Relationships
Love
Justice
Mercy

20. Worthy of Worship

As the eternal sovereign God, He is the creator of all things: “for You created all things, and by Your will they were created” (Rev. 4:11). God, the Sovereign, Eternal, Self-existing One, willed everything else into being.

That God is the Creator of all things is no abstract truth. If He is Creator of all things, then He is my Creator and I am accountable to my Creator as His creation.

Remember, if there is a God, He must by definition be the eternal, uncaused cause of all things. If there is a God worthy of our worship, then He must be more than even the loftiest mental projections of man. He must be other than us and transcend our ability to comprehend Him. If we understand His holiness as His essential quality that makes Him other than us, we can understand why John’s report of worship from heaven begins: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, God Almighty!”

The God of the Bible is the true God because he fits the definition of a God worthy of worship. He possesses all the defining qualities of God. [Page 45]

21. We Are Not Worthy

... although God is worthy of worship, we are not worthy to be worshipers. It is, therefore, all the more fitting for us to worship Him because He has made it possible through the person and work of His Son. We worship Him because He is the qualifier of human worshipers. [Page 47]

22. Reason for Worship

When a whole generation fails to grasp the truth that the real reward for those who seek God diligently is to find God Himself, the result is self-centered religion. In one of the first statements God made to Abram, God declared “I am your great reward” (Gen. 15:1). We must see the subtle difference between “you will seek me and find me” and “you will seek me and find a reward.” God, not His reward, is the reason for worship. We worship God not for tangible reward, whether satisfaction or prosperity. God Himself is our reward. [Page 53]

23. Worship God in the Right Way

In every generation the church must look beyond traditions and seek instruction from God’s Word: What does it mean in this generation to worship God in the right way? the Bible warns against false worship (worship of the wrong God; Exod. 20:3-5; Isa.

44:6-17; 46:5-9) but it also warns against vain worship (worship of the right God in the wrong way; Amos 5:21-22; Mark 7:6-8). [Page 57]

24. How We Feel About Worship

The degree to which this rampant existentialism has affected our culture was exposed recently by former Secretary of Education William Bennett in an interview on public television. When the interviewer asked why Japanese students perform so much better than American students in math, Bennett said tersely: “Japanese students go to math class and talk about math. American students go to math class and talk about how they feel about math.” To paraphrase Bennett: We used to go to church to worship; now we go to church and talk about how we feel about worship. [Page 59]

25. Seeking an Experience in Worship

The existentialism of our contemporary culture has flooded the church and is spilling out all over. Our focus on how satisfied we feel about worship rather than on the quality of our offering to God may be the most obvious manifestation. Michael Wiebe wrote: “Disappointment because of the absence of a particular feeling reveals an attitude bordering on idolatry. Seeking an experience in worship elevates man above God; it diverts our attention from His majesty to our internal response.” [Page 59]

¹Michael Wiebe, “Quiet Time and the Sunday Service,” HIS Magazine, June 1979, 13.

26. Wrong Goal of a Church

“Growth is the bottom line of a superchurch, and this puts enormous pressure on the church to measure itself with a different measuring stick than God has.”⁵

In such an environment, the building-oriented church can be tempted to shift its focus from reaching the community and proclaiming the gospel to filling the seats and keeping the donors happy. The building-oriented church runs the danger of shifting from being a market-sensitive church to being a consumer-driven church where worship becomes human-centered and the prophetic voice of the church is silenced by an intimidating mortgage. In the building-oriented church it is easy to forget that the goal of the church is to equip and send the saints into the world, not to see how many people can be attracted to a meeting on Sunday morning. [Page 66]

⁵Quoted in David Gates, “The Super Churches of Houston,” Newsweek, 24 October 1983, 117. One church costs more than the Astrodome.

27. Worship in Spirit and in Truth

The worshiper that God desires worships in both spirit and truth. Jesus instructed us that right worship must include both heartfelt involvement and sound knowledge— it engages both left brain and right brain. Worship in spirit engages the whole being: our

minds, our senses, and our feelings. Worship in truth engages our mind, our intellect, and our reasoning. Proper worship is cognitive and objective, but it also embraces the abstract, the artistic, and the subjective part of our lives. The Lord's call to worship in spirit and truth recognizes that we are whole people with two distinct capacities. [Page 67]

28. Worship is . . .

Worship is
active communion with God
in which believers by grace
and through faith
focus their hearts' affection
and minds' attention
on humbly glorifying God
in response to His character,
His acts~
and His Word.⁶

⁶I am deeply indebted to Dr. Bruce Leafblad of Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth for far more than this definition of worship. In a doctoral seminar on worship, Bruce revolutionized my thinking about worship and, as a result, my life. [Page 69]

29. Do Not Tamper With God's Word

For the church to be seeker-sensitive is right and proper, but being seeker-sensitive does not extend to the content of our preaching! Paul encouraged the church to make sure worship services were not repelling unbelievers because the services were chaotic, disorderly, or marked by disunity. But the Word of God is not to be tampered with in the name of making our services seeker-sensitive! There is no suggestion from God's Word that prophets should proclaim a more sensitive message, a message that humans have merely not lived up to their potential—a message that avoids making unbelievers feel “convinced by all” that they are sinners. Nor is there instruction to preach only the inclusive message of God's love so that unbelievers will be able to stand tall before God by faith rather than fall down before Him and say, “God is really among you.” Quite the contrary! [Page 80]

30. True Worship Requires Understanding Who God Is

Worship that is not established upon an understanding that a holy God has qualified His sinful created beings to worship him by his grace alone falls short of being worship of the right God in the right way. Worship of God built on any other foundation soon begins to reveal a distinct tilt. Much of what we call worship today reveals such a tilt.

The foundational problem of our present age is that our theology will fail to generate true worship of God if there is no understanding of who God is and who we are in relationship to His Holiness. Without an understanding of holiness of the God who is a “consuming fire”, there is no proper understanding of human sin. Without an understanding of sin, there is no understanding of the totality of our consequential alienation from God. Without an understanding of the consequences of sin, there is no understanding of grace. Without an understanding of grace, there is no proper motivation for worship—and nothing to celebrate. Without a proper motivation for worship, we are left with either dead legalism and ritual or a human-centered substitute for true worship that never takes our focus off of ourselves and elevates it to God. [Page 90]

31. Foundation for Worship

... we must guard the integrity of the drama of redemption—complete with a full disclosure of our sinfulness and God’s holiness—as the only proper foundation for worship. Tampering with that drama to minimize sin results in minimizing God’s grace, minimizing His glory, and minimizing our worship. [Page 93]

32 Great Evangelical Disaster

Francis Schaeffer wrote, “Here is the great evangelical disaster—the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. . . . The evangelical world has accommodated the world spirit of the age.”² Erwin Lutzer at Moody Church observes that “within evangelicalism there is a distressing drift toward accepting a Christianity that does not demand . . . [but makes] a growing accommodation—selecting what we like from the Bible and leaving the rest.”³ [Pages 96-97]

²Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, Ill.:Crossway, 1984).

³Erwin Lutzer, “Religion a la Carte,” *Moody* (July/August 1984): 65.

33. Theology of Worship

A proper theology of worship is established on the foundations of God’s grace and God’s holiness. His grace makes it possible for us sinful people to worship a holy God, and an awareness of his holiness prompts our worship as we understand the infinite nature of His love and grace. [Page 98]

34. Superspiritualism

Our evangelical subculture is rampant with a form of mysticism and superspiritualism, demonstrated by the televangelists who relish “slaying people in the Spirit” by breathing on them or by striking them with a garment. They project a superspirituality to an audience of—by implication—spiritual inferiors in order to maintain their

ministry and cash flow. The distorted teaching that “we are little gods” is a boldfaced claim to spiritual superiority. Spiritual status in some circles is determined by the number of mystical experiences, words of knowledge, visions, prophecies, and victorious encounters with demons we have had. While most evangelicals readily acknowledge that spiritual gifts are all valid because a sovereign God can do as he wills, there is great danger in the theological teaching and activities of some superspiritual figures of the Pentecostal movement. Their doctrine and their practice reveal them to have more in common with modern manifestations of gnosticism than with historic Christianity.

We do not stand before the holy God by means of mystical spiritual experience. Moreover, there is neither a set of concentric circles to navigate into spirituality, nor a ladder of hierarchy to super-Christianity to climb with each new mystical experience. [Pages 111-112]

35. Religion vs. True Christianity

Religion does not square with true Christianity because it fails to confront the biblical assessment of sin, the biblical view of the perfect holiness of God, and the miracle of infinite grace that alone can reconcile sinful humans to a holy God. [Page 113]

36. Dumbing Down

Dumbing down is like a disease. It spreads and takes over and makes us less and less capable as thinking people. Dumbing down makes us easy victims of shortsightedness, targets for manipulation and control. Dumbing down is the opposite of what the Apostle Paul said when he pleaded with believers in Jesus Christ: “do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” It can happen in church when we want to “feel good” rather than come to grips with God and the depths of the scriptures that can anchor us when emotions fail—as they always will in spite of ever more dramatic experiences. —Roger Palms, *Dumbing, Decision* [Page 117]

37. Qualifications for Worship

More importantly, perhaps, should the church so design its ministries as to accommodate the attention disorders of the average American shaped by a lifetime of watching thirty- and sixty minute television programs (with commercial interruptions)? Only a firm understanding of what the grace of God has accomplished in qualifying us to worship Him—He brought the spiritually dead to life—will forever transform us as worshipers. Can people ever be qualified as, or ever want to be, worshipers of God if we never tell them of grace and the need for it? [Page 128]

38. Worship Evangelism

Gerrit Gustafson rightly observes that when worship is separated from evangelism, worship can degenerate into the ongoing pursuit of a spiritual high. Conversely, when evangelism is separated from worship it becomes bound up in duty and guilt.³ [Page 139]

³Gerrit Gustafson, “Worship Evangelism,” *Charisma and Christian Life*, October 1991, 46-50.

39. Service

What nerve you Christians have using a word like “service” (a word filled with blood, sweat and tears) to denote your sedate gatherings at which you sit and think and sometimes only sit. —attributed to John Ruskin [Page 145]

40. Worship Preaching

Worship preaching is theological preaching that focuses on God, His character, His attributes, His person, His acts, and His glory. Worship is not always strictly practical and relevant. In fact, practicality and relevance are at times obstacles to worship because they maintain our focus on the things of this world rather than on the eternal kingdom.

Worship preaching will not always be strictly relevant to this world because we do not belong to this world! Our obsession with relevance and practicality at times borders on idolatry. Worship preaching needs to focus on declaring who God is. [Page 154]

41. Sacrificial Worship

... there can be no doubt from Scripture that while salvation is free, worship is costly. To worship is to ascribe worth, to declare by our sacrifice that God is worthy! Mary, when she used the occasion of a dinner party to honor Jesus with an expensive gift of ointment, declared that Jesus was worthy of such an offering. She entered into “worship.” [Page 165]

42. Living Sacrifice

Perhaps the most obvious list of appropriate sacrifices is found in the balance of Romans 12 and 13, a list I have long overlooked. However, if we look at the following verses in a slightly different way, we can see the life lived sacrificially in response to the mercies of God.

Living Sacrifices
**Responses to the
Mercies of God**

**Actual
Sacrifice**

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.

pride, ego

Honor one another above yourselves.

pride

We have different gifts... use it in proportion to faith.

servicing others

Hate what is evil; cling to what is good

your own pet sins.

**Responses to the
Mercies of God**

**Actual
Sacrifice**

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

your own agenda

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord.

comfort, convenience

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction

complaining, negativism

Be . . . faithful in prayer.

Pride, self-sufficiency

Share with God's people who are in need.

material things, money, pride

Practice hospitality,

convenience, privacy

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

rights, demand for justice

Live in harmony with one another.

Individualism, private agendas, need to control

Do not be proud, but be willing to people of low position.

pride, snobbery, associate with status, prejudice

Do not be conceited.

selfish desires

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

need to control

Do not take revenge, my friends, room for God's wrath. . .

demand for fairness, but leave demand for revenge

These are living sacrifices! Only one or two are material sacrifices. The rest are related to pride, power, control, and other matters of character and personality. For some people, these are much more daunting sacrifices than a major financial sacrifice. [Pages 167-69]

43. Self-Gratifying Worship

The health-and-wealth gospel offers an example of a stimulus for worship that is corrupted by self-centeredness. As we see the widespread impact of this teaching we can only wonder how many seek God not for Himself but for the promise of prosperity.

Akin to the health—and-wealth doctrine is the myth of superspirituality. Superspirituality advances the idea that Spirit-filled worship equates with a mystical experience such as being slain in the Spirit. Those who are motivated by the desire for such an ecstatic experience as the quintessence of worship are really an updated version of those who in the 1970s were intent on getting high on Jesus.

This is not to say that God does not heal or prosper us, or that an encounter with God in worship is primarily a cerebral experience. God does heal. God does prosper us. Meeting God is a deeply emotional experience. However, right worship requires, first of all, our sacrifice of any carnal or self-seeking motives. The greatest sacrifice of true worship may be the sacrifice of what Stephen Charnock called our demand for satisfaction. [Page 171]

44. Revival

Revival, the supernatural work of the Spirit of God restoring His people to holiness through a new encounter with the Holy God is needed. Revival begins with prayer, seeking God for Himself. It leads to repentance, forsaking the self-centeredness of the age that we have embraced. It leads to healing in the church, restoring unity and singleness of purpose. It leads to service, motivated properly by the Holy Spirit. It leads to commitment, leaving the merely involved behind. It leads to worship in Spirit and in truth, where sacrifice is willingly given. [Page 179-180]

45. Infatuation

Evangelical Rodney Clapp, writing in the Wall Street Journal, argues that evangelicals “are clearly infatuated with outward signs of success,” calling this an age that judges everything by “quantifications and statistics.”³ [Page 181]

³Rodney Clapp, “Give Me That Old-Time Pragmatism,” Wall Street Journal, 1 May 1987.

46. False Security

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your Name, and in Your Name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evil doers!’” [7:21–23]

The most dangerous place to which a false prophet can lead people is not away from God but toward him! The false prophet leads people to a place of false security in the shadow of the church, where they mistakenly think they are part of the kingdom. The danger is greatest because these who are so led astray are unaware of their condition and never have reason to question it. They may see miracles and hear prophecies in Jesus’ name, never suspecting that they are on the outside looking in. [Page 182]

47. We Are Called to Be Faithful

We may actually perform an ultimate and eternal disservice by misleading people into an “easy believism,” thinking they are true believers when they are not. A strong success orientation breeds the temptation to make the gospel more inclusive than it really is by making it something other than what it really is. The temptation grows to enormous proportions in an age when rampant existentialism and narcissism have created a conducive environment for such error. The needed corrective must come from the biblical truth. God calls the church to faithfulness, not success.

Hudson Taylor Amerding, former president of Wheaton College, initiated his thoughtful discussion of leadership by reminding us, “Anyone called of God to Christian leadership should recognize that he or she will be working with a minority in our society. Awareness of the meaning of our minority status is essential to effective leadership.”⁴ God calls us to be faithful leaders, not successful leaders. When faithfulness, the paradigm of Scripture, has been replaced by success, then we must take heed. The church that is preoccupied by success is being squeezed into the world’s mold. [Page 182-183]

⁴Hudson Taylor Amerding, *Leadership* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1978), 11

48. Existential Heresy

... existentialism has encroached on the twentieth-century church like a malignant tumor. James Engel acknowledges that the “existential heresy” is clearly evident in the “excess of the health and wealth gospel.” It is a subjective truth that oils the machinery of existentialism. It has seduced the church into focusing on felt needs and desires rather than on real needs.⁷ Existentialism has lured the church into thinking that how we feel (desires) and what we experience (the fulfillment of those desires) are the guides to truth. Existentialism has diverted the church from its focus on kingdom values to a focus on earthly values.⁸ [Page 185]

⁷James F. Engel, “The Road to Conversion: The Latest Research Insights,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (April 1990).

⁸See the sharp analysis by Robert Johnson in “Heavenly Gifts: Preaching a Gospel of Acquisitiveness, a Showy Sect Prospers,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11 December 1990, A-1, A-8.

49. Heavenly Model for Worship

One of the struggles I have long had with church growth principles is the principle of homogeneity, which gives tacit validation to ethnic segregation. This flies in the face of God’s plan for a church drawn from all of fifteen thousand people groups. It may be a sociological truth that people prefer to worship and fellowship with people ethnically and socio-economically like themselves. Demographics have never been a good test of what is right and wrong, however. Heterogeneity, not homogeneity, is the heavenly model for the worshiping church in heaven and the practical model for the functioning church on earth. We may plant Chinese churches and Hispanic congregations, but we should have a goal of integrating our ethnic congregations as an offering to God.

Those who have had the privilege of worshiping in international assemblies with fifty to a hundred nations represented know the remarkable joy of this foretaste of heavenly worship. Because it not only inspires our worship, but also ignites our evangelism, we must whenever we can cultivate worship that embraces the whole world. [Pages 197-198]

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