

Contemporary Vs Traditional

Many people seeking places of Christian worship are opting out for 'contemporary' services. They view 'traditional' services as 'out of date', and want 'modern' alternatives for themselves and their families. The word 'contemporary' means, 'of the present time' and 'up to date'. Services of Christian worship should be always relevant to the 'present time' and 'up to date'. But unfortunately, for those seeking 'contemporary' patterns of worship, 'up to date' means abolishing anything that has any association with the past. 'Up to date' means changing the 'focus' of 'traditional' worship as well as changing its 'forms', eg., previous patterns of liturgy; the saying of Creeds and written prayers.

In 'contemporary' public worship services there is usually a marked shift in the 'focus' of the service. In 'traditional' services the 'focus' is clearly upon God; the confession of sin; prayers directed to God; preaching from God's Word, the Bible; the reading of God's Word – all play a very prominent part in traditional 'worship' – the expressing of God's worth. In contemporary 'worship' the 'focus' is not primarily upon God and His worth. Some of the features mentioned above will be discernable, but to a greatly reduced extent! Contemporary worship is better described as an occasion of 'entertainment' rather than 'engagement' with God. Contemporary worship is about changing the 'face' of God, to enhance His appeal! Contemporary services are about being 'casual' and 'careless' with respect to biblical doctrine (teaching); they 'dumb-down' the historic Christian Faith! In extreme cases they are a potpourri of pluralism!

Contemporary services are generally, in varying degrees, 'feel good' services. They are intended to make you 'feel good' about God and yourself. To achieve their goal 'contemporary' services will 'focus' on God's 'love', and shy away from the biblical themes of condemnation, judgement and hell. Such 'services' will also want to make you 'feel good' about yourself, and will avoid words like 'sin', 'repentance', confession and 'guilt'. Contemporary services are designed to give you a 'good experience'; to give you a 'lift' or a 'high' and extol your self-esteem!

Now, don't misunderstand what I am saying. I am not saying that traditional services are devoid of 'feeling'. Feeling is integral to the worship of God, but such 'feelings' must be shaped by the entirety of God's truth. Contemporary worship, in providing a 'little' bit of the truth about Christian belief (even if the 'little' is about God's love) is, in fact, in grave danger of distorting our understanding of God's truth about Himself, and 'leading us up the garden path' ie., leading us into 'error and perhaps, taking us away from the salvation of the gospel! All distortion of God's character is paving the way to 'idolatry'!

Contemporary services need not be a hindrance to the true worship of God but, because of their casual and careless indifference to doctrine, they pave the way for increasing error to invade the Christian Church. While our traditional Anglican liturgy may not be 'inspired', it reflects a sound biblical pattern of public worship. It is not only decent and dignified worship – honouring to the biblical requirements, but it is doctrinally balanced. Its regular use will fill our minds with a biblically balanced diet of

God's truth that will assist us to worship God, "in the beauty of His holiness", and it will also prevent the Church from sinking into doctrinal indifferentism and idolatry. It will, in fact, assist us to preserve the true gospel for the next generation.

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