

## EDITOR'S NOTES

**Leonard W. Pine**

In his article, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs" (*CT*, July 12, 1999, p. 29), Michael S. Hamilton observes that "since the 1950's, denominational divisions have steadily become less important in American church life. . . . at bottom we are all still sectarians; we still prefer to congregate with the likeminded. Our new sectarianism is a sectarianism of worship style. The new sectarian creeds are dogmas of music. Worship seminars are the seminaries of the new sectarianism; their directors are its theologians. The ministers of the new sectarianism are our church worship leaders." Sadly, what he says is true. People choose their churches, not on the basis of faithfulness in theology, but rather how "accessible" the worship appears to be. And it's not limited to music. Large numbers of dissatisfied and unfulfilled evangelicals are flocking back to Rome, Eastern Orthodoxy, or other highly liturgical churches because the worship trappings seem to be more meaningful.

The problem is that the contemporary Church has abandoned its moorings. The number of professing Christians that understand that Word (and I mean that term in its fullest significance) is ordained of God to be the focus of our celebrations as believers. Even in non-Charismatic fellowships the emphasis has turned to feeling and cultural relevancy. Naturally, the result is that the Church ceases to exhibit little, if any, difference from the culture at all, and the salt loses its savor.

Somehow, the evangelical world has bought the lie that worship is a personal matter between every person, and that there are no absolute standards (other than the most obvious denial of impurity) regarding the forms of man's expression. In the next breath, Christians then glibly talk about our absolute God and how we need to bring His standards to society. Society, however, is quick to see that this is all so much gibberish. You can't have it both ways!

In the next two issues of the WRS Journal, we will examine a few of the battlegrounds in the issue of worship today. For it is a battleground. Just try telling someone they're doing something wrong according to the Word of God, and see how tolerant they are! "Judge not, that you be not judged" has never been misused so many times to excuse such ungodliness as in this day of worship-how-you-will-since-God-loves-us-all.

Nevertheless, there are standards for worship, not of our own making, that we must adhere to if we are to please to God. In this issue we will emphasize the ministry of the Word in worship. This summer, Lord willing, we will take a look at the more emotive aspects of worship: giving, singing, and prayer. We hope these issues will be of use to you. Write to us, and let us know what you think!