

**MUSIC
&
MINISTRY**

Leen La Riviere

biblical foundations volume.2

MUSIC & MINISTRY
by Leen La Riviere
biblical foundations
volume.2

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FOREWORD 1

What is Christian music? Ask ten people and you will probably get ten different answers. To some it means hymns, anthems and choruses: a whole body of music developed by the church to exalt and worship God. To others, it means middle-of-the-road style songs of testimony and encouragement. And to still others, mostly young people, it means alternative contemporary entertainment by artists who are Christians: today's music without today's immorality.

Music in each of these categories is practiced by artists with a multitude of motivations. Money and applause can be powerful motivators, even for Christians. But many Christian artists sing or play simply because they love God and want to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. For these people - regardless of their musical styles • music is a means of ministry. And it is for them that Leen La Riviere has written this book, "Music in Ministry".

"Music in Ministry" gives a biblical basis for music ministry. For many musicians it may open up unthought of spiritual possibilities: the possibilities of being called and anointed as prophets/ministers singing out the word of the Lord.

But, as Leen explains, there are requirements to be met in both the spiritual and technical realms before one is ready to minister in the name of Jesus. He compares ministering Christian musicians to the Old Testament Levites from whom God required spiritual purity and technical skill. He encourages them to become like the New Testament Levite, Joseph, who was surnamed Barnabas, which means "Son of Encouragement." Leen La Riviere's vision is for God's singers and players today to become Sons of Encouragement to a beleaguered church and a troubled world.

With the help of his beautiful wife, Ria, Leen has had a ministry of spiritual encouragement to the Christian music community through a life-style of commitment to God and an example of old-fashioned hard work. This book will be an extension of that part of Leen's ministry.

In addition to all that, through his organization, Christian Artists, Europe, Leen not only offers musicians spiritual encouragement, but helps them to hone and perfect their technical skills through the wonderful summer retreats at DeBron conference grounds in Holland.

So here is a book by a man with much to say to the whole Christian music community. Read it and grow!

Sincerely,

Jimmy and Carol Owens
Texas, USA.

FOREWORD 2

God has created man to make music. We can use this creative gift for the devil, for ourselves, or for the Lord. This book by Leen La Riviere gives us sound biblical instruction on how to create music which will glorify the Lord and edify those who hear it.

Although there is a great variety of musical ministries and gifts, everything from rock music to church choirs, it can all be done in such a way that the motive, the lyrics, the melodies, the presentation, the ministry, and the effect upon those who hear can be pleasing to the Lord.

I am very excited that a book has been written that helps lay the biblical foundation for being priests of God in the musical sphere of life. Whatever your calling, and whatever your style of music, I encourage you to read this book and study it very carefully. You have a responsibility to God to know the biblical principles of how to use your gifts to bring the maximum glory to the Lord and the maximum blessing to those who listen to your music.

Leen La Riviere is one of the most qualified men I know to write such a book. He has a very catholic taste in music and has a broad enough perspective to encourage everyone from rock musicians to classical pianists. For Leen, all of this is rooted in a deep desire to serve God and to edify the Body of Christ. He and his wife Ria are wonderful friends of my wife Sally and I, are faithful members of a local church, and live out what they teach. I highly commend them and the book that Leen has written for you!

Floyd McClung, Jr.
Holland, USA, South Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this book to every Christian who is working in music. I would like to thank all the co-workers in our organisation and give thanks for the support I receive from my wife Ria and from my boys Magiel, Willem and Gys. My greatest praise goes to the Lord who called me when I was only twelve years old and has guided, encouraged and inspired me ever since. My work would have been impossible without the prayer and financial support of many people.

This book is part of the series BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES:

Volume 1: Creative and Christian (about creativity and the arts)

Volume 2: Music & Ministry (this book)

Volume 3: Praise and Worshippers

More to come

INTRODUCTION

Travelling through Europe, speaking at conferences and in churches, meeting many artists, musicians, bands, choirs many questions were asked about the biblical foundations for music ministry..... So can you serve God with your musical talents? And if so, how should this be done? What are the standards, what are the attitudes, what to learn? And can you 'go secular', being a christian artist?

All those questions have been answered in the form of articles, studies, lectures. Finally I composed one book out of that, called 'Finale, biblical foundations for music ministry'. This book got several prints in dutch and in english. Due to an increasing need in local churches, this book got translated in several other European languages. Reading it all again as preparation for the new English print, all mentioned is not a wish, theory or dream, but based on over 40 years musical ministry practice. What you will read, is what works!

WHY is this book important?

- it helps the musicians, singers, artists, bands, choirs, praise-groups in their ministry. It helps to understand what IS music-ministry.
- it helps churches and leadership to understand what the unique function is of the musicians, singers among them.
- it stimulates skills, developments, new possibilities, creativity
- it helps to develop the right attitudes

HOW to use this book?

- It is quite a study, if you want to read it all at once. But you can. This study is as well quite helpful for theology- students.
- For practical use, it is much wiser to read every day a chapter and meditate on that.
- When you are a travelling musician, concert performer, worship leader you can read a chapter before you go on stage. It helps you to focus on what you are going to do 'on stage'.
- Concert promotors, church leaders should read this book, so they will really understand what the musicians & singers 'are doing'.
- And be open, that the content will help to give direction to your personal life.

Based on the many years this book has been used by thousands of artists, musicians, singers, bands it's my hope and prayer that this book will help many in your nation, now it is available in your own language.

Leen La Riviere

OLD TESTAMENT

Chapter 1

THE PRAISE-OFFERING AND THE PRIESTS

In the Old Testament, we see that when the Israelites left Egypt, a group of people was set apart to serve God in a specific way. Aaron and his sons were ordained to serve as priests and to be responsible for the sacrifices. All first fruits were to be set apart for God. All Israelites had to do this, but God also ordered that the first-born Sons of the tribe of Levi should devote their lives to His service. These Levites undertook all priestly duties and officiated at all offerings.

At a certain point in the Old Testament narrative, the PRAISE OFFERING was added to the sacrifice of animals. As soon as the Tabernacle was set up permanently in Jerusalem, at the time of King David, the praise offering assumed still more significance. This 'sacrifice of praise' featured singing and musical instruments and emphasized God's desire for His people to praise from the heart and not be content with sacrificial offerings alone. Again, the Levites led the way in the celebration of the praise offering.

With the coming of Jesus and His 'perfect sacrifice', all burnt offerings and sacrifices are no longer required (1). Does this apply to the praise offering as well? For a Christian, it feels 'right' to lift up one's voice in praise in the 'company of believers' but can we find proof in the Bible that celebration, feasting and the 'offering of praise' are in accordance with New Testament teaching?

Fundamentally, gospel music is music written about God to honour God (2). "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess His name."(3). It is useful to look at the Old Testament background and decide in what respect it is still applicable to believers today, especially those who seek to serve God in music and the arts.

Christians are meant to be a 'holy priesthood' and this New Testament praise offering is a command to all those who believe (4). From Mount Sinai on, it has always been God's intention that all His people would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, a 'light to the nations'. In the Old Testament, the offerings were only brought by a select group of priests, whose duties were performed against a backdrop of very specific rules and regulations. In the New Testament, there is a 'priesthood of believers' (5). If our 'sacrifice of praise' is to actually involve coming into the Holy of Holies, it is essential to earnestly examine His word to find out how and when our sacrifices should be brought and what is required of us in the way of personal holiness. Otherwise, we are in danger of bringing the equivalent of unacceptable burnt offerings to the altar. If our offerings are acceptable to God, our gospel music will also be an acceptable sacrifice of praise and will bring people closer to Him.

(1)Heb.9:12,25,28; Heb.4:14; Heb.5:9; Heb.7:27; Heb.10:1-12; Eph.5:2; (2)Eph.1:5,14; Heb.2:5; (3)Heb.13:15; (4)1 Pet.2:5; Ex. 19:6; (5)1 Cor.14:26; 1 Cor.14:15; Eph.5:19; Eph.5:4; Rev.15:3

Chapter 2

PERFECTION

Old Testament priests had to comply with certain requirements before they were admitted into the service of the Lord. The first requirement was to be without physical defect. The Lord said to Moses: "Say to Aaron: For the generations to come, none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has any defect may come near;

No man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect... no descendant of Aaron the Priest who has any defect is to come near to present the offerings made to the Lord." (1). 'Imperfect' people were not allowed to take part in either the sacrifices or the praise offering. Some contemporary commentators would like to compel Christian performers in particular to present themselves in certain 'acceptable' ways, (particularly with regard to physical appearance and dress), claiming this would be more 'acceptable' to the Lord. But the Old Testament requirements apply to outward, visible features, whereas in the New Testament our inner life, our 'heart' is to be without blemish through the saving power of Jesus Christ. It is not a seemingly flawless external appearance or a perfect programme that will make our sacrifice acceptable but our inner perfection in Christ that is all- important.

If we have to be without blemish to bring our praise offering to the Lord, we must be born again - only then will our gospel music be sanctified for use in God's service (2). Let us not be deceived - certain priests used the wrong kind of fire when bringing an offering to God and paid for their mistake with their lives. God's judgement will come eventually on the group, soloist or choir who offer praise without the experience of being born again. Sometime ago, I overheard a visitor at a gospel concert say to a friend: "I heard Jesus singing." This would have been a reaction to performers whose personal devotion (like that of the Old Testament priests) and personal conversion came across ahead of any matters relating to outward appearance.

(1)Lev.21:16-21; (2)Heb.7:11,19; Col.1:28; Eph.1:23; Matt.5:48; 1 John 4:12,13,18

Chapter 3

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

It was clear from the garments the priests wore that they formed a very special group (1). These sacred garments were designed to give dignity and honour (2). We read about special belts of purple and scarlet (3) and also about the special garments that the High Priest wore (4).

What is the relevance of this for the musical priests of today? If we were to wear "sacred" garments, they would not make us "holy". What we must do is offer our bodies as "living sacrifices" (5). Holiness is about your inner being, and does not depend on your clothing. Peter says "we ought to live holy and godly lives." (6).

Peter also tells us that "our beauty should not come from outer adornments" (jewellery, fine clothes and so on), but from our inner self, our 'heart'. We should have "a gentle and a quiet spirit, of great worth in God's sight." (7). The priests belt, of purple and scarlet, symbolized binding and loosing; it symbolized spiritual power, "whatever you bind will be bound and whatever you loose will be loosed." (8). Linen reminds us specifically of the linen cloth in which Jesus was buried (9), and it refers to the sacrifice and burial of the old self. Linen also reminds us of the fact that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and took a linen towel to dry them and in so doing became an example to us of service, God assuming the nature of a servant (10). The priestly garments were multi-coloured and this reflects the manifold wisdom of God (11). The scarlet colour refers to our sins which "shall be white as snow" (12), through the blood of Christ which purifies us. Purple and scarlet were royal colours and it was for this reason that the soldiers clothed Jesus in robes of purple in order to mock Him (13). When Jesus appears as Judge in the Book of Revelation, He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood (14), the Royal Garment. These colours indicate a host of things, including mockery, scorn, sacrifice and suffering, which we also should be prepared to bear as the 'New Levites'. The priestly garments indicate the ministry of reconciliation, which is now a duty of all those who believe and not only of a limited number of Old Testament priests (15). The gold refers to the purity of our faith, which is of greater worth than gold itself (16), and also refers to the refining process (17). The gold also refers to our ultimate destination, the Holy City, Jerusalem (18), into which nothing impure will ever enter; only the truly faithful will be there. The breastplate and tunic clearly refer to the Armour of God (19), which offers protection and equips us for spiritual warfare. These magnificent Old Testament priestly garments have been replaced by a new garment: "He who overcomes (i.e. who is converted and cleansed), shall walk with Christ in white." (20). Those who really follow Jesus will walk with Him in "new clothes" (21).

(1)Ex. 28,29; (2)Ex. 28:2; (3)Ex. 28:40; Ex. 39:1; (4)Ex. 39:23; (5)Rom. 12:1; (6)2 Pet.3:11; (7)1 Pet.3:2; (8)Matt.16:19; (9)Matt27:59; Mark.15:46; (10)John.13:4; (11)Eph.3:10; (12)Isa.1:18; (13)John.19:2; (14)Rev.19:13; (15)2 Cor.5:18,19; (16)1 Pet.1:7; (17)Rev.3:18; (18)Rev.21:18; (19)Eph.6:11-17; (20)Rev.3:4,5; (21)Matt.26:65; (22)Rev.3:4

Chapter 4

CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

"Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve Me as priests." (1).

A complex procedure was involved for those wishing to become priests. The entire procedure is summed up in anointment and consecration. A clear summary is given in the Bible of what was required for the consecration of priests and how it was applied (2). "This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve Me as priests." (3). Animals and unleavened bread had to be brought as a sin offering (4), and then a burnt offering (5), and a wave offering (6). The priests had to wash with water (7), dress in holy garments (8), then they were anointed with anointing oil (9) and sashes were tied on them (10). This Feast of anointing and consecration took seven days. The priests had to eat, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, from the offerings of atonement. No one else could eat of them, because they were sacred (11). In this way, the priesthood became a lasting ordinance (12).

An elaborate ritual was required before one was ready for priestly duties. Gospel singers can take things too "easy", and it is too often taken for granted that one is qualified to bring a praise offering or to serve as a priest. The Bible is quite explicit about the need for anointing and consecration. This requirement is still applicable today. Have we been cleansed? Are we pure? "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our bodies washed with pure water" (13). Are you sure this applies to you? If not, you are not yet qualified to serve as a priest. Are you wearing the priestly garments? (14). Have you been anointed by the Holy Spirit? (15). If you cannot give positive answers to these questions, you must make sure that you are anointed and consecrated, otherwise you will be 'playing with fire' (16).

The consecration rights were performed in part at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and were visible to everyone. The priests who were consecrated were well-known people. Can this be said of us? Can people testify of us that we have undergone a process of cleansing and consecration to be compared with that spoken of in the Bible? We are only too ready to serve as priests in music. The Bible speaks of seven days of consecration which had to be observed. Have our seven days been observed?

It is fascinating to read that when the priests were being consecrated, they were allowed to eat from the sin offerings. They took part in the atonement. Now Jesus Christ has obtained eternal redemption for our sins, but are we really part of Him? Have we shared in the sufferings of Christ and experienced his forgiving Blood and personal salvation? You could not be half-hearted if you wanted to be a priest. It was a long-term commitment. You could only become one when you had reached a certain age (17) and you were a priest for life. We enter all too easily into the musical priesthood with the attitude of "we'll just do it", without thinking of the consequences. Every year when editing our annual 'Gospel Information Book' we are amazed to discover how many gospel groups have disappeared, having broken up after only one or two years.

To be enthusiastic about praise offerings is good, but let's begin with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and personal holiness. There are no short-cuts to heaven.

(1)Ex.30:30; (2)Ex.29:1-35; (3)Ex.29:1; (4)Ex.29:14; (5)Ex.29:18; (6)Ex.29:24; (7)Ex.29:4;
(8)Ex.29:5; (9)Ex.29:7; (10)Ex.29:9; (11)Ex.29:30,35; (12)Ex.29:39; (13)Heb.10:22; (14)see
Chap. 3; (15)see Chap.5; (16)see Chap.10; (17)Num.4:3

Chapter 5

SACRED ANOINTING OIL

In Exodus(1), the sacred anointing oil is given much significance. This oil was carefully prepared for the anointing of the Tent of Meeting, the Ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the basin for washing and the anointing of the priests and their garments. No-one was allowed to anoint anything else with this oil. "Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest, must be cut off from his people." (2). This last verse emphasizes how serious a matter it was. If someone was not a priest, he could not be anointed. If you did not observe this rule, the punishment was likely to be death.

Later on in the biblical narrative, this sacred anointing oil was used to anoint kings (3), and in this way they gained special authority. "And from that day on the, Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power." (4).

Isaiah says: "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." (5). In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus told the people that this part of scripture was being fulfilled and applied it to Himself (6). From this it is clear that the Old Testament anointing (7) gains a new meaning in the New Testament - the Spirit of the Lord means the Holy Spirit (8). If we share in the Lord's anointing (that is Jesus' anointing), God will confirm His calling of us because the anointing of the Holy Spirit will also be upon us (9). Without this authority, we will not be prepared for the priesthood. We cannot buy or earn this anointing, however. (See the examples of what happened to Simon the Sorcerer (10) and the false prophet Bar-Jesus (11)). Our hearts must be purified and holy and only then are we prepared and qualified to receive this sacred anointing. The Holy Spirit provides us with the authority that the priesthood requires. Let the praise offering be brought by people who have been given authority in this way, and then let the power of the Kingdom to come be revealed by this new priesthood.

(1)Ex.30:22-33; (2)Ex.30:33; (3)Psa.89:21; (4)1 Sam.16:12,13; 2 Chron.11:12; (5)Isa.61.-1;
(6)Luke.4:14-21; (7)Isa.11:1,2; (8)Acts.10:38; (9)2 Cor.1:21; (10)Acts.8:18-23;
(11)Acts.13:6-10

SPECIAL WARNING

Recently I came across praise & worship leaders who said during worship, that they "felt the anointing present". The church audience was impressed and added a lot of applause, outburst of appreciation... After too many of those experiences and talking to worship leaders, artists, performers, checking data of science and performing arts the following panorama must be shared: During performing you release a lot of energy and that is changing very strongly your hormonal chemistry. That change is the source of feelings of euphoria (this is equal true for any secular act). So some misinterpret their own emotional high as result of their own high energy as "the anointing". No, it is NOT anointing, it's just euphoria produced by your own body. I have even run into worship leaders who were totally addicted to this emotional high and thought they were really close to God... Well, do not fool yourself, as all of this is NOT any form of anointing.

I recommend for anybody active in Praise & Worship to study my next book: PRAISE & WORSHIPPERS

Chapter 6

INCENSE

Incense was important to the Levitical Priests for the performance of their duties. "Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense." (1). When we read on (2), we find a description of how this altar had to be made. This special altar was set down just outside the curtain in front of the Ark, the place where God met with His people (3). Every day incense had to be burned on this altar, "before the Lord for the generations to come." (4). No other incense (or any other kind of offering) was allowed to be offered there (5). Apart from this special incense offering, the High Priest had to make atonement on the altar once a year (6), on the Day of Atonement (7). The incense had another function on this day as well: "The High Priest is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die." (8).

The incense burnt on this altar was very special, as it had to be prepared:

"take gum, resin, onycha and galbanum and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred." (9). Some of it had to be ground to powder and placed in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting. All this has significance for our present-day musical ministries.

I was struck by the fact that in the letter to the Corinthians we read about "the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ spread by us" (10). It is explained here that the spreading of this aroma is no longer a ceremony of burning incense, but what is meant by this aroma is our personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and the extent to which we radiate Him. The same part of the Bible says that we should be the "aroma of Christ". This is far removed from a desire for personal advantage and is all to do with a sincere heart (11). The incense (as in the Old Testament) should be pure.

Another part of the New Testament which speaks about the 'aroma' is the letter to the Ephesians(12). In this passage we read that we should love, act and live in the way Jesus loved, acted and lived. This is a "fragrant offering and sacrifice to God".

In the Book of Revelation, the 24 elders around the throne of God were holding golden bowls of incense which were the prayers of the saints (13). Who are these saints? They are all those people who have given themselves completely to God. They are holy and set apart. The prayers of the saints are as incense before God. We should ask ourselves the question - are we among those saints? Are our prayers incense before God? So now the place for offering incense is literally right in the presence of God.

In the Old Testament, the place where incense was offered was in front of the Ark. This altar played a significant role on the Day of Atonement. This too indicates that our relationship with God, our 'incense', is only valid because of the atonement. It is remarkable that the High Priest should come with hands full of incense. Are our hands filled with meager 'hallelujahs' and scattered prayers? The cloud of incense had to conceal everything in the Most Holy Place. What is the condition of our relationship with God? Will our prayers and our relationship with

Him form a thick cloud or will it be like a mere thin mist? Let us serve like Levitical Priests and know what we have to bring as an incense offering.

(1)Ex.30:1; (2)Ex.30; (3)Ex.30:6; (4)Ex.30:8; (5)Ex.30:9; (6)Ex.30:10; (7)Lev. 16;
(8)Lev.16:12,13; (9)Ex.30:34-38; (10)2 Cor.2:14-17; (11)2 Cor.2:17b; (12)Eph.5:12;
(13)Rev.5:8

Chapter 7

UNAUTHORISED FIRE

"Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took their censers, put fire in them and added incense, and they offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, contrary to His command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died before the Lord." (1). These two priests did something unauthorised and as a result they met their death. Their intentions may have been good, but good intentions are not enough to serve before God.

In Leviticus we read that only the High Priest was allowed to come before the Lord at the Ark on the Day of Atonement (2). We read that this priest had to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar, put the incense on it and present it to the Lord behind the curtain, so that he would not die (3).

These two sons did something God had not ordered them to do and they paid the price. They did not comply with the rules laid down for the incense offering. It is clear from Leviticus that they acted in ignorance and not in accordance with precise instructions (4). This example should be a warning. The first lesson to be learned from it is to examine our intentions-are they just good intentions or do we act in accordance with the instructions God has set? Now you may say: "How am I to know?" You can be sure in certain cases that God has called you to do something and you are able to say "this is absolutely right." That is something which can only happen in a close relationship with God and through constant prayer. The two priests in question had never thought about a direct command from God, otherwise they would never have made such a mistake. We should try to discover what our personal calling is, something which is important in all spheres of life as well as in music ministry. The other lesson we learn from this is to act "according to the rules." As we saw, these two priests made a terrible mistake in this respect. They should have taken fire from the altar and put the incense on it in the Most Holy Place.

Are we following rules as laid down in the Bible? Is our fire the fire of human enthusiasm that goes out all too quickly, or is it the fire of God's altar, the fire of the Holy Spirit? (5). Can our actions be tested by fire or will they be burned away? Peter says, "that our faith may be proved genuine, as though refined by fire" (6). Paul speaks about the testing of our actions (7) and that upon the return of Christ everything will be judged. Have we really been building on Jesus Christ, the strong foundation? The fire will reveal whether it is gold or straw that is being burnt. John the Baptist said about Jesus, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" and "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (8). This is what Jesus does in us- He lights the true fire of His Spirit in us and burns away the chaff. The fire is also the light by which we can distinguish whether we are working according to the rules laid down in the Bible. It is also the means by which we can discover our calling (9).

If we, like these two priests, act in accordance with our own insight and not in accordance with what God asks us to do and what He requires of us in His world, all our work will be futile and will lead to nothing but death (10). Let us be aware of unauthorised fire and hypocritical offerings, offerings not brought in the right way and not in accordance with the rules given. Isaiah says emphatically that this kind of incense is detestable to God (11). Our relationship with God will have to be pure in every respect so that we can truly follow our

calling and carry out His divine commands. Then there will be no chance of unauthorised fire, no death or unfruitfulness, only life and blessing.

(1)Lev.10:1,2; (2)Lev.16:1-13; (3)Lev.16:12; (4)Lev.10; (5)Matt.3:11; (6)1 Pet.1:7; (7)1 Cor.3:11 -15; (8)Matt.3:11,12; (9)2 Thes.1:11; Eph.1:17,18; Heb.3:1; 2 Pet.1:10,11; (10)1 Cor.3:18-20; (11)Phil.2:16; (12)lsa.1:13

Chapter 8

NO COMPROMISE

In Exodus we read about the golden calf (1). We all know the story: Moses on Mount Sinai, having been summoned by God, is a long time in coming down from the mountain, too long according to the people. They want to be able to see and touch the great invisible Creator. An action-group begins to pressure the future priest Aaron. Aaron readily yields to their pressure and all sorts of golden objects are handed in order for him to make a golden calf. The people call the calf 'God' and Aaron joins the majority and even goes so far as to build an altar for this 'God'. The next day the people hold a festival (2) and make music (3), but all this degenerates into an orgy. To begin with it looks like a genuine religious festival, but the people start running wild and get out of control (4). God's anger is naturally aroused.

It is quite remarkable that at this point Moses seeks the favour of the Lord by praying and pleading for mercy (5). Moses then takes action and faces the people with the choice between Godliness and worldliness, flesh and the Spirit (6). Subsequently it is the Levites who gather around Moses. This minority, the priests, made a firm stand for the Lord and did not want to hear about compromise. These Levites had to take their swords and go through the camp killing brothers, friends and neighbours (7). All this was because they did not want to compromise and in so doing they received a special blessing (8). These Levites were predecessors of the later-appointed Levitical Priests, whose task it was to serve God unconditionally. What lessons can we learn from these Levites?

Firstly, we should listen to God's commands unconditionally. What standards are applied in gospel music nowadays? Our own opinions, our own feelings, or the Word of God? Secondly, we have to act irrespective of persons. Evil was dealt with in this biblical episode, even if it meant killing what was evil. Nowadays hypocrisy is tolerated all too often. Are the Levites of today just as unconditionally devoted to the Lord as they were in the days of Moses? "They went back and forth through the camp from one end to the other". We must actively expose sin. A gospel group, choir, or solo artist must bear this in mind when being sent out to preach the Kingdom of God. This is emphasized in the letter to the Ephesians, where those who believe have to put on the full armour of God and use the sword of the Spirit in spiritual warfare (9). This sword is the Word of God. This means that all acting in our own strength and musing our own words is pointless, and may even be dangerous, because you are not using a real sword. What is it then that we should wield? It is the Word of God (10), proclaiming Jesus (11) "which is sharper than any two-edged sword". This uncompromising and unbending attitude can prove a blessing to those who come in contact with it.

I was struck by the fact that at the beginning of the story, everything sounded "religious", this search for a god. It appeared to be a religious festival with singing and even sacrificing offerings, but the Levites were not deceived, a tree is known by its fruit. It was all "of the flesh". It was much like our present-day society, whose only end is decay and death. How do we act as Levites? Do we wield the same sword? Our course of action should be like that of Moses, to call sin sin and make atonement.

(1)Ex.32; (2)Ex.32:6; (3)Ex.32:18; (4)Ex.32:25; (5)Ex.32:11; (6)Ex.32:26; (7)Ex.32:27; (8)Ex.32:29; (9)Eph.6:17; (10)Heb.4:12; (11)Rev. 1:16; Rev.2:12; Matt. 10:34

Chapter 9

THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

On the LP "Drifting", Sheila Walsh sings the song "Turn, turn, turn" which refers to the text in Ecclesiastes: "There is a time for everything." This also applied to the Old Testament ministry of the Priests. God gave all kinds of rules and regulations with respect to serving in the sanctuary. We read about the Tabernacle, within which was the Ark of Testimony. This was hidden behind a curtain woven out of finely spun linen (1) in the royal colours of blue, purple and scarlet, a multi-coloured piece of work. God, in His manifold wisdom, wanted to make it clear to us that the royal priesthood was connected with sin and forgiveness. "Though your sins are like scarlet..." (2).

When Jesus was crucified, the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Thus eternal redemption was offered to all those who trust in Christ. In the Old Testament the High Priest was allowed to come into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain once a year; unauthorized persons would die. Now we are all authorized to enter the Holy Place. Are we aware of this privilege?

There was the altar, where all offerings were brought (3). Blood was shed here, for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (4). From Hebrews it is clear that God does not want all these offerings. He wants people who have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ and who do the will of God. Can this be said of us? (5).

There was a courtyard (6) where the altar and Tabernacle stood. All the sacred rites were performed here, because the people were allowed to enter this courtyard. This is where the priests served the people. And we, the priests of our own time (i.e. all those who believe), should likewise serve the people in our ministry, namely the ministry of atonement and of offering praise. Is it really our aim to reconcile people with God, to lead them to salvation, or is our altar call no more than pop-music with nothing definite to proclaim? We have been placed 'in the courtyard' to proclaim hope which is to be found at the foot of the altar, the cross of Jesus Christ.

There was also a lamp (7), which had to be kept burning with pure oil. This reminds us of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (8). Five girls did not take any oil with them, so their lamps went out and they were not allowed to enter the wedding feast. The five wise girls had enough oil, so their lamps did not go out and they went in. Do we have enough oil, meaning the light of the Holy Spirit? If we do not keep our lamps burning, our ministry, our priesthood, is incomplete. Fortunately, God can supplement our supplies and deal with our shortcomings.

There was also an Altar of Incense where every morning and every evening the priests had to burn fragrant incense (9). As we have seen, this refers to prayer. Are we coming into the presence of God regularly? Do we pray regularly?

There was also a basin for washing (10). Whenever the priests came forward to perform their duties, they had to wash themselves with water (11) so that they would not die. This illustrates cleansing (12). Have we been purified to perform our duties, to serve as priests?

There was a table for the Bread of the Presence (13) with plates, ladles, pitchers and bowls and the Bread of the Presence had to be there at all times (14). Essential at this table was the

"pouring out of offerings" in the presence of God. Paul was aware of this when he said: "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering." (15). Are we "being poured out" to our very last, giving our lives in God's service? Paul was prepared to go as far as this; he was prepared to give everything he had for others and give himself as well(16). The other function this table had was that offerings were to be put there in "the Presence of God". Do we realize that we should be prepared to come before His presence at anytime? What would it be like if God held us up to His Light? Is everything we do really aimed at glorifying God or are we doing things to satisfy our own needs? Paul is quite clear about it when he says(17), "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons." There is only one choice in priestly service: God or the devil. Bob Dylan understood this when he wrote, "You've got to serve somebody." It is impossible to be neutral.

We read in Exodus that when all the preparations had been made, Moses set up the Tabernacle and everything was put in its proper place (18). Moses knew exactly what he was doing, and as he was doing the will of God, he did not compromise in any respect. The result (19): "The glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle so powerfully that Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting." Because Moses entered into the Lord's presence he was able to speak intimately with Him. His face shone to such an extent that the people could not look at him. Is our musical ministry as radiant a testimony?

In the letter to the Galatians and in Hebrews 9 and 10, all these regulations for priestly service in the Old Testament are examined further in the light of the New Covenant. You should read these chapters very carefully as everything fits neatly into place (20): "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from an guilty conscience."

(1)Ex.26:36; (2)Isa.1:18; (3)Ex.27:1-9; (4)Heb.9:22; (5)Heb.10:5-10; (6)Ex.27:9-19; (7)Ex.27:20,21; (8)Matt.25:1-13; (9,10)Ex.30:1-10; (11) Ex.30:20; (12)1 Pet.3:21; Eph.5:26,27; 1 John.1:7,9; (13)Ex.25:23-30; (14)Ex.25:30; (15)2 Tim.4:6; (16)2 Cor.12:15; (17)1 Cor.10:21; (18)Ex.40; (19)Ex.40:34,35; (20)Heb. 10:22

Chapter 10

OFFERINGS

"Guard your steps when you go to the House of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong." (1).

As we saw previously, the priests spent a great part of their day overseeing the burnt offerings (2). Fire had to be kept burning on the altar and not go out (3). The offering had to be a male animal without defect (4). "It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord." (5).

(6) THE GRAIN OFFERING produced a sweet aroma (7). It had to be prepared from fine flour and oil (8), made without yeast and seasoned with salt (9).

THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERING (10) also had to be "an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (11). The fellowship offering could be brought as an expression of thankfulness (12), or as a result of a vow (13), or as a freewill offering. Anyone who ate of this fellowship offering had to be ceremonially clean, otherwise he would have to die (14).

THE SIN OFFERING (15) had to be brought when a priest had sinned (16), when the people as a whole had sinned (17), when a leader had sinned (18), or when a member of the community had sinned (19). All this was applicable when people had sinned "unintentionally" and had done what was forbidden in any of the Lord's commands (20).

THE GUILT OFFERING (21) applied to many situations, especially with respect to ones "neighbour". It was offered so that others could see that you were prepared to make atonement and restitution first and then you were able to make your offering and forgive.

The priests had to see to it that each offering was perfect, prepared according to the given rules and brought for the correct reason. Is what you are offering to the Lord perfect? Is it really to glorify Him, for His honour? Is what we are doing done for men to see- a kind of trumped-up religion, or is it done because we love Him? If not, we are like the Pharisees, who loved to pray on the street corners to be seen by others. They were strongly condemned by Jesus, who knew their motives.

Does everything we offer really have a pleasing aroma? Read this: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (22). We might be very active in our religious and musical life, but is it in the way described here?

Is our grain offering without yeast? Jesus said: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (23). Paul wrote: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast." (24).

It explains to us that we should not come with surface religion, but we should be 'born again'. We should not contain the "yeast" of all different kinds of human knowledge, but we should be anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit.

Have our offerings been salted? Have the things we do, our music, lyrics, behaviour and speech been salted, or is our musical ministry saltless and tasteless (25)? How we can be salted is explained by Mark (26). To be acceptable, our offerings will have to borne by the fire of the Holy Spirit, they will have to be inspired by that Spirit. We should have been called by the Holy Spirit and not inspired by our own enthusiasm.

The ministry of the priests was concerned with atonement, peace, guilt, sin and forgiveness. Are these the things with which we are concerned in our ministries today? Sometimes our praise offerings seem to sing about many things, but not the most fundamental truths about the reality of Jesus Christ.

Day by day, offerings would be brought to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, because that was where the Lord would meet His people and where His people would be consecrated by His glory (27). They were not allowed to sacrifice anywhere else (28) or they would die. Are we now offering our sacrifice of praise only at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting? Can our offerings stand the test of coming face to face with God? If so, "we will be consecrated by His glory." This is God's promise, and it is clearly described in Leviticus 9 (29). Aaron had sacrificed the offering and then, together with Moses, blessed the people, "and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people."

We pray that the effect of our priestly ministry will be that the glory of the Lord will be revealed to all those present. For only then will it be of any significance. The people shouted for joy and fell on their faces (30). It would be wonderful if such things happened at gospel concerts as well.

All those Old Testament offerings are no longer pleasing to God (31), but He wants us to do His will. We are a chosen people (32) to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices which are pleasing and acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ.

(1)Eccl.4:17; (2)Lev.1:1-17; Lev.6:8-13; (3)Lev.6:13; (4)Lev.1:3; (5)Lev.1:9; (6)Lev.2:1 -16; 6:14-23; (7)Lev.2:2; (8)Lev.2:1,4; (9)Lev.2:13; (10)Lev.3:1 -17; Lev.7:11-21; (11)Lev.3:5; (12)Lev.7:12; (13)Lev.7:16; (14)Lev.7:21; (15)Lev.4:1-5,13; Lev.6:24-30; (16)Lev.4:3; (17)Lev.4:13; (18)Lev.4:22; (19)Lev.4:27; (20)Lev.4:2; (21)Lev.5:14; Lev.6:7; Lev.7:1-10; (22)Eph.5:1,2 b; (23)Matt.16:6,12; (24)1 Cor.5:6-8

Chapter 11

FULL OFF.....

A remarkable passage on priesthood that I found when reading about Old Testament priesthood(1):

‘Then the Lord said to Aaron, ‘You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses.’

Priests were not allowed to drink wine or fermented drink if they were on duty, which means: no alcohol or mind-expanding drugs. This is more striking as other religions did not have such rules. Again, they had to be entirely different, in this case level-headed at all times. We are not supposed to proclaim our own flights of fancy, but what has been revealed to us by God, and this implies that our senses are never to be clouded. There is a good reason for this: a clear mind will enable us to make proper distinctions between matters(2). In the New Testament, this has to do with for instance the planks and specks in the eye(3). You have to have clarity of mind to be able to see clearly and to distinguish the plank from the speck; that way you can distinguish what is really important. And you have to have clarity of mind to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God(4), and sharper than any sword(5). It separates everything, thoughts and attitudes, and brings everything to light. We have to use that which separates with worthy clarity of mind, and this is often not the same as practicing a self-made religion. All too often we see that ‘Gospel’ musicians gloss things over or polish them up a little, robbing the cross of its strength. Too much is covered with the cloak of love. If we are involved with Jesus, this may result sometimes in separation(6). Those who leave this out their musical preaching completely are not building on the ‘stumbling block’. Leviticus says something else about separation, namely distinguishing between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean(7). The former refers to the personal relationship with God, the latter with ethics (what you can or cannot do). The New Testament teaches us that those who are reconciled with God through Jesus Christ are holy(8). This means that everything has been put in order between you and the Lord. What is clean or unclean will not be the same for everybody; what matters is that we realize that “the pure in heart will be blessed, for they will see God”(9). Our hearts are purified by faith(10). Faith in the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin, so that we may serve the living God(11). And this clarity of mind was a requirement in Leviticus(12) for serving God. Another reason why they had to be level-headed was that it would enable them to teach the Israelites(13). They had to be able to do so(14). If people fall short in this respect, God will give wisdom(15), but Paul’s letter to the Corinthians shows that it will mainly have to come from the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit. That means growth is of the essence (and that comes from exercise!). Elsewhere it says “growing in the knowledge of God”(16). For this reason we have to study God’s word and think it over and do it, and let ourselves be filled as Timothy was full of it(17). So if we want to be really good at our ministry, we will need this fullness of the Spirit, as it enables us to teach. The nature of this teaching is also specified in Leviticus(18): it concerns all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses, so no proclamation of half-truths or adapted theology or evangelical ‘trends’. Unfortunately, unbiblical thinking is seeping into song texts as well. Hebrews briefly lists all the biblical foundations of God’s decrees in the New Testament(19). Modern Levitical priests (so all singers, musicians, etc) need to know for

instance what repentance from acts that lead to death means, or eternal judgment, or grace, etc.

The end of this remarkable passage from Leviticus shows that God has spoken. Do we know a speaking God?

There is a parallel passage in the New Testament(20): “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise, but as wise, understand what the Lord’s will is, do not get drunk on wine, but be filled with the Spirit”. Then our singing will come from the heart!

When the first day of Pentecost came, some bystanders thought the disciples were drunk, but in fact they were filled with God’s Spirit and God’s word was so powerful that many people were saved. What about our gospel songs, acts, groups, choirs, etc.? Are we presenting the gospel in such a way that it becomes saltless and powerless, just something vaguely positive that is acceptable to the world?

“Be filled with the Holy Spirit”

(1)Lev.10,8-11. (2)Lev.10,10. (3)Matt.7,5. (4)Eph.6,17. (5)Hebr.4,12. (6)Matt.10,34.
(7)Lev.10,10. (8)Eph.1,4-7;Col.21-23. (9)Acts.15,9. (11)1 John1,7;Hebr.9,14. (12)Lev.10,9.
(13)Lev.10,11. (14)1 Tim.3,2;2 Tim.2,24. (15)Jam.1,5. (16)Col.1,9-10. (17)2 Tim.3,14-16.
(18)Lev.10,11. (19)Hebr.6,1-3. (20)Eph.5,15-21.

Chapter 12

SHARES

"Take the grain offering left over from the offerings made to the Lord by fire and eat it prepared without yeast beside the altar, for it is most holy. Eat it in a holy place because it is your share and your sons' share of the offerings made to the Lord by fire (1)."

On reading these passages one is reminded of what Paul says. "That those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar. In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (2). Now some gospel groups will certainly be of the opinion that this means full-time ministry, but let us get the true meaning of this right!

Groups who aspire to full-time ministry sometimes have quite a different motivation, for example career, professional standing, etc. The real reason is certainly not always sharing in the holy offering. Paul is quite clear about this - he only speaks about receiving your living from the gospel when preaching the gospel. Do you actually preach the gospel when performing as a group/musician/solo-singer? Be honest and decide if that is what you really want to do.

Paul did not always avail himself of this right to make a living from the gospel- he sometimes worked as a tentmaker(3). We have sometimes encountered situations where churches use the above as an excuse to deny gospel musicians support. What a pity and how wrong! If a group really preaches the gospel, a church should support such a musical group or person, certainly spiritually, but probably financially as well.

"If indeed we share in His sufferings we may also share in His glory." (4).

"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." (5).

"I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (6).

"And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort." (7).

"We have come to share in Christ and if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (8).

"But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that through them you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed." (9).

"Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires". (10).

What is your time invested in? You should meditate on these passages from the New testament. Their share value will only increase.

(1)Lev.10:12,13; (2)1 Cor.9:13,14; (3) e.g. contributory causes; (4)Rom.8:17; (5)Eph.5:11; (6)1 Cor.9:23; (7)2 Cor.1:7; (8)Heb.3:14; (9)1 Pet.4:13; (10)2 Pet.1:4

Chapter 13

SERVICE MEANS SERVING

In the Book of Numbers we read, "The Lord said to Moses, "Bring the tribe of Levi but present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the Tabernacle" (1). Serving Aaron the priest meant serving the whole community.

We read in Numbers what these duties were. Special responsibilities were assigned to the Levites. They did not just do what they liked, or even what was at hand. Everything had to be done according to special rules.

"At the Lord's command through Moses, each was assigned his work and told what to carry (2)."

This assignment of work was quite practical and had a two-fold purpose: their duties for the whole community and their service for God. Service is not a flexible concept. If anyone wanted to serve the Lord in his own way, it would become chaotic and 'work of the flesh'. This concept is also important in relation to music and the life of the present-day church. Sometimes you encounter people who want to serve the Lord in a disorderly fashion. They say "I can be free and be guided by the Spirit." This should be contrasted with what the Bible tells us about the Levites. Everything was well-organised and duties were specified.

To serve never meant serving your own interests. How many have lost sight of their duty to serve God and serve others? The service in the temple was not meant to show how important the Levites were. In gospel music the consequences are the same: instead of being thankful for this special ministry (after all it is God himself who set the Levites apart), people get conceited and begin deviating from the rules laid down, get the wrong idea of serving and begin to think their only aim is to 'get on'. God's blessing will only be given when we keep the right priorities in mind (3).

Are we aware that we have been called to serve? Are we serving the Lord or are we dreaming about hits or careers? Are we promoting ourselves or music for its own sake, or are we serving in the ministry God has called us to? Does our music really serve to proclaim God's greatness? What is meant by musical ministry, according to the Bible, is that the content, i.e. the Gospel, takes priority over the means. If we lose sight of this aim, gospel music will lose its power to win souls. In God's Kingdom there is no 'art for art's sake'. Let us be quite honest. Are the means, i.e. your music or your own abilities and your way of thinking, taking on the proportions of a 'god' or are you functioning with the ultimate aim of service to others?

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servants also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me." (4). This is the most beautiful award a gospel singer can receive. The best thing is always to be where Jesus wants you to be, then you will never succumb to the glory of your own achievements. If you serve Him in this way (5), all human compliments, ambition and honours will be reduced to nothing. In Deuteronomy we read: "At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister and to pronounce blessings in His Name, as they still do today. That is why the Levites have no share or inheritance among their brothers; the Lord is

their inheritance, as the Lord your God told them." (6). This seems an uncertain way of life, but how beautiful, how blessed this way of service really is!

(1)Num.3:5-8; (2)Num.4:49; (3)Deut.6:1-25; (4)John.12:26; (5)Rom.7:6; Phil.3:3; 1 Thes.1:9; 1 Cor.4:1; 2 Cor.6:4; 2 Tim.4:5; Rom.6:13,19; (6)Deut.10:8,9

Chapter 14

DEDICATION

The Lord said to Moses: "Take the Levites from among the other Israelites and make them ceremonially clean. To purify them do this: sprinkle the water of cleansing on them, then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves. Have them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil; then you are to take a second young bull for a sin offering. Bring the Levites to the front of the Tent of Meeting and assemble the whole Israelite community. You are to bring the Levites before the Lord and the Israelites are to lay their hands on them. Aaron is to present the Levites before the Lord as an offering from the Israelites, so that they may be ready to do the work of the Lord. After the Levites lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, use one for a sin offering to the Lord and the other for a burnt offering to make atonement for the Levites. Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as an offering to the Lord. In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. After you have purified the Levites and presented them as an offering they are to come to do their work at the Tent of Meeting. I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. Every first born male in Israel, whether man or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt. I set them apart for myself, and I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel. Of all the Israelites, I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the Tent of Meeting on behalf of the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary." Moses, Aaron and the whole Israelite community did with the Levites just as the Lord commanded Moses. The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes. Then Aaron presented them as an offering before the Lord and made atonement for them to purify them. After that, the Levites came to do their work at the Tent of Meeting under the supervision of Aaron and his sons (1).

It is immediately apparent that the Levites took their calling seriously. Nowadays, in sharp contrast to this, we see that there are gospel singers who often function without the same kind of personal call that made the Levites LEVETICAL PRIESTS (2).

Nowhere is this act of consecration spoken of as an optional extra. The Levites were well aware what it all was about (3). They had to purify themselves- a conscious act of atonement. Sometimes it is quite painful to meet groups whose members have no knowledge of this conscious act of purification. Worse still, when you ask them about it, you are told that "you should not ask such personal questions" or "they say you can never be sure" or perhaps: "suppose you frighten people". Nobody can judge what is in the heart of a person, but the person in question certainly can. The Levites were quite sure that they had been reconciled to God, and a present-day Levite must be sure too. In biblical times it was because a sin offering had been brought (4), but now it is through Jesus Christ. There is a remarkable and striking parallel in the concept of washed clothes. In the New Testament (5) washing signifies baptism (which one goes into voluntarily). The Israelites had to lay hands on the Levites in blessing (6). This is symbolic of baptism by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. After this, the Levites were ready to do their duties (7), and to do them unconditionally! This ought to be quite a lesson for us. As modern Levites, is our "devotion" just as unconditional as it was for the Levites in the Bible? Before we can serve the Lord, the same process, which outwardly prepared the Levites for their duties, should prepare us inwardly for ours. Motivation in the biblical sense is a spiritual process, and those who do not know what procedures should be followed, should follow the method given in Numbers: you should be purified and baptised,

receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit and then you should devote your life to Christ unconditionally. Only then will your gospel music be a ministry and have purpose in God's eyes.

(1)Num.8:1-22; (2)Num.8:14; (3)Num.8:20-22; (4)Num.8:8; (5)Re.3:1-6,18; (6)Num.8:10;
(7)Num.8:15

Chapter 15

SUBSTITUTES

In Numbers (1) we read: "I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman." (2). Every firstborn, whether man or animal was His and had to be consecrated to God (3). The Levites were, however, taken in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel (4).

In the Tent of Meeting (a kind of mobile temple) the coming together of two opposites took place, that of God and man. It was the responsibility of the Levites to effect this meeting. The question arises as to whether the Levites of today have ever discovered this aspect of their ministry. It is obvious that we, in our Levitical priesthood, have a lot to do with people, so the "man" element can be seen clearly. But do we recognize the other element in this meeting - God?

If we are aware of our responsibilities in this respect, our musical ministry will certainly be characterized by more reverence and respect and a sense of responsibility and devotion.

With God, the "firstborn" has a deeper meaning. This was clear in Exodus, when the tenth, most terrible plague was the death of the firstborn sons. The resulting despair and confusion led to Pharaoh letting the Israelites go (5). The Angel of Death which brought this plague also made a distinction between those houses where blood had or had not been put on the doorframes and in that way the firstborn were spared (6). This was the institution of Passover. The offering of the firstborn finds fulfillment in the offering of the Firstborn Son of God (7) at Easter, Jesus Christ.

The firstborn sons of the Jews were actually meant to be sacrificed, but instead of the people making this sacrifice the Levites were dedicated to the Lord for life. They were substitutes and thus a living reminder of suffering and atonement. Therefore, we should certainly be much more careful and respectful towards our gifts, our possessions, etc, as we are only Levitical 'managers' on behalf of a Holy God.

The other party present at this meeting is man. The Levites served as substitutes for others. In the New Testament everyone who believes is called to the priesthood, and not just the Levites. Yet it may be useful to look at the unique function of the Levites in the Old Testament. They take our place and this is clearly mentioned in Numbers (8). This too refers to Christ who made atonement for us.

These passages remind us that all those who believe are called to the ministry of reconciliation. Musicians though should be even more aware of their function as a bridge between God and man. They lead the way with music which opens hearts and the way to heaven. More people have been 'sung' to heaven than 'preached' into heaven. Does the church realize that gospel artists have this Levitical duty? Does it realize that they are acting as substitutes? Are they looked upon as missionaries being sent out into our own towns and villages? When we hear the word "missionary" we are apt to think of people who bring the gospel to Africa. But we are missionaries when we preach the gospel with music in the dark cities of Amsterdam, London or Paris.

As mediators, the Levites' duties are often quite a heavy burden. If we do not surround them with our prayers, their bridge-building function may be hindered. Levites take the lead in spiritual warfare, with the magnificent promise (9) that on the last day they will come to a solemn and spiritual gathering of the firstborn.

(1)Num.8:5-22; (2)Num.8:16b; (3)Ex.13:2; Num.3:13; (4)Num.3:41; Num.18:6,7;
(5)Ex.11:5-7; (6)Ex.12:12-14; (7)Col.1:15-18; (8)Num.8; (9)Heb. 12:23

Chapter 16

ADULTHOOD

The Lord said to Moses: "This applies to the Levites: men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the Tent of Meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites." (1).

This Levitical priesthood was no child's play. People in the prime of life served the Lord. You had to be twenty-five or more, and not older than fifty, though you were to free to assist thereafter. The reasons why they had to be adults to be allowed to serve was clear, because if a priest were to make a mistake, it might mean death. You had to be of sound mind and there was no place for 'child-labour'. So we may assume that those who served, by the time they began their ministry, had been educated and trained and were adults. Levites had to be able to bear full responsibility for what they did.

The same applied to the upper age-limit of 50. Why an upper age-limit? Are there any pitfalls with respect to people over 50? Let us have a look at this rule in Numbers in relation to the New Testament. If we were to take these age-limits literally, then most gospel groups and youth choirs would disband! Most elderly choir members would have to retire. Organisations like Musicians for Missions, Continental Ministries, YWAM, etc. would no longer exist. However, we learn from the New Testament that all these rules were given in the Old Testament for a reason. What do they mean to us? If the Old Testament had to give rules about selecting only mature people, then the New Testament is clearly concerned with spiritual maturity.

Paul says (2): "Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults." As you watch and listen to various choirs or groups you will often catch a glimpse of how childish some people behave. There are squabbles as to who is to stand in the front row, fighting over who is to sing solo, disputes as to who is to lead the band etc. Christian organisations often take on the nature of a social club, with people coming in late, being disrespectful, loveless and full of gossip (3).

In the most beautiful song of the New Testament, the love-song in 1 Corinthians 13, we read (4): "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." And in Timothy (5) we read: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching... and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (i.e. fully grown, fully prepared and mature). Paul very clearly tells us that we should all reach unity in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (6).

This maturity will produce good fruit (7), and so anyone who has not attained this maturity cannot produce as much good fruit. We should be straining towards what is ahead, towards this maturity, which can only be attained through Jesus (8,9). We should also be aiming to instruct each other (10).

Maturity is attained through a relationship with Jesus by living with Him, growing in Him and by perseverance (11). The latter in particular is something we have become quite unaccustomed to. We are lazy and easily scared off, we lose motivation, get discouraged and become negative. The sign above the door leading to musical leadership reads: "For adults only."

Once a rich young man came to Jesus. This young man wanted eternal life, so Jesus said to him: "If you want to follow me, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me." (12).

Only by giving up everything and following Jesus wholeheartedly will we mature. Does that mean living like a recluse, 'far from the madding crowd'? Certainly not, but Jesus should be first in every aspect of our lives. Only then will we develop into spiritual adults (13). "Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect."(14).

(1)Num.8:23-26; (2)1 Cor.14:20; (3)Gal.5:19-21; (4)1 Cor.13:11; (5)2 Tim.3:16,17; (6)Eph.4:13; (7)Gal.5:22; (8)Phil.3:12-15; (9)Col.1:28; (10)Heb.5:12-14; (12)Matt.19:21-22; (13)see Prov.2 and 3; (14)Matt.5:48

Chapter 17

PRIESTHOOD: POWER NOR REBELLION

In the years that I have served in and around (the music) ministry, I have noticed that there is a group of people who have received a clear calling from God to do particular work. This calling may not be in any way related to any natural talent, acquired skills and such like. God called them and because they acted on His call, they kept on their feet for better and for worse. Examples of such people can be found throughout the Bible and include Moses, Joshua, Mary.

I have noticed that in the areas in which such a person is called by God, there are always people who desire the position of the person with the calling. This may be caused by envy, jealousy, ambition, a sense of superiority, careerism, egoism, money, power, desire to receive honour from people, academic achievements over spiritual qualities, etc. Anyone with a calling from God will encounter such a person at least once, and it will call much distress and at times damage.

When preparing this series of articles on musical priesthood, I came across an example from the Bible. Just read Numbers 16, about the uprising of Korah, a Levite. The story reveals a number of interesting things.

Verse 1: create a sentiment against someone

Verse 2: draw people into your camp

Verse 3: imputations and spurious arguments that sound 'spiritual'. The effect on truly spiritual leaders tends to be: distress without a tendency to justify themselves – God will do this – or strikes back. In verse 8 to 10, Moses points out the consequences of the rebels' actions to them: who is Aaron that you should grumble against him? Why desire something other than what God wants you to do? But these dissatisfied people persisted, thus causing their own downfall.

Just note the attitude of Moses and Aaron in this matter(1); they pray, do penance and seek atonement of the sins. The whole history ends with God's confirmation of their calling from God(2).

So what does this passage tell us?

- Never allow yourself to be carried away by a general sentiment.
- Find out what your calling is and stick to it. And why not trying to find out what the others person's calling is?
- If everyone sticks with their own calling, we don't need to fight each other and can trust each other fully. Why would you desire someone else's calling?
- Never let yourself be tempted to oppose someone who has to do something to which she or he is called by God (unless the called 'one' does acts of criminality).

A frequent response to this is that it is just too easy to hide behind a calling with false arguments; after all, you hear too often "God tells me that this or that needs to be done". Some leaders clearly use this argument improperly. So how do we separate the wheat from the chaff?

Look at the attitude of Moses and Aaron: spiritual humility, true service, willingness to listen and to leave judgment to God, efforts towards reconciliation, prayers, intercessions and not using the sin of manipulation! God confirms a calling(3), although at times after personal testing. But someone who is called by God, is absolutely certain about this calling. There may

be a process towards clarity involved, as the example of Gideon shows. But a calling is not vague.

What should the rebels have done? They should have got down on their knees and ask what was actually their God-given task; then they should have focused on this task. In fact, the rebels did have such a task(4). Korah and his band were the forerunners of the later Levitical musicians. In my view this is a warning to everyone who wants to work in God's vineyard, in the music ministry or in any ministry: is your purpose self-realization or do you follow God's calling?(5)

Musical priesthood is not about opposing others or placing yourself above them, but about discovering your personal calling and fulfilling it, whilst accepting and respecting other people's tasks.

(1)Num.16,22; (2)Num.17; (3)Num.17; (4)Num.16,9; (5)Rom.11,29; Eph.4,1; Phil.3,14; 2 Thes.1,11-12; 2 Tim.1,8-9; Hebr.3,1; 2 Pet.1,3-11

Chapter 18

FAIR TRADE

"They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. Instead I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord." (1).

The Levites received no inheritance, no land and no hereditary rights. The other Israelites regularly brought sacrifices, certain parts of which (parts of the animals for sacrifice and of the grain-offerings) could be eaten. The tithes which were brought to the Tabernacle (later the temple) were for the Levites too (2)." Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land." (3). Together the people had to provide for the priests so they could be free to carry out their duties. You should read Numbers 18 with respect to this arrangement. Priests and Levites would do their duties in return for what they got for their maintenance from the Israelites. This constituted their wages.

All gospel singers will cry out for joy, for this part of the Bible opens up the way to "full-time ministry", and the church's responsibility to support musicians. A frequent complaint is that too many churches only support their minister, whose role can be compared with the priests from the line of Aaron. From Numbers and Deuteronomy, it is quite clear that the priests and their brothers, the Levites, served equally and had to be supported in the same way. The duties of the Levites were just as valuable as Aaron's priesthood. The Bible explains that the two are interrelated. Fortunately, in several churches the "preachers" and the musicians work together most harmoniously. In the USA, examples are to be found of various churches with quite an extensive full-time musical staff, with for example a "minister of music" side by side with the ordinary minister. But the question remains whether it is desirable for Christian musicians to work full-time. This should only be done when the Lord quite clearly calls you and in no other circumstances! This does not mean that gospel singers should not be supported by the church more often than is the case at present (in prayer and in practical ways).

Another matter dealt with in Numbers is "inheritance". What is our inheritance? When Paul has to defend himself before King Agrippa he says that Jesus Himself has ordered him to preach the Gospel, "that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (4). He says that we have obtained this inheritance through Jesus (5). Sinners do not obtain an inheritance in the Kingdom of God (6). In Colossians we find some magnificent verses(7). It mentions that we have been given the right to share the inheritance of the saints, a gloriously rich inheritance! (8). "We will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward." (9). The Lord appreciates our service for Him-this is clear from the fact that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance (10). Furthermore we read about a promised eternal inheritance (11), an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, but will be kept in heaven for us (12). We are heirs of God and joint- heirs with Christ (13 and 14), "So that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." (15). It is amazing to meditate on what this inheritance means. The old Levites had no inheritance. In their case, the service of God was a kind of trade for maintenance, money, etc. For genuine servants of the Lord the New Testament provides a special, royal inheritance, permanently and eternally stable, and not subject to inflation. We should keep this in mind when we serve Him and forget selfish dreams of financial profit. Let us bear in mind the attitude of Abraham. "By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would

later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know here he was going." (16). We who are called can willingly serve Jesus and look forward to our inheritance.

(1)Num.18:24; (2)Deut. 18:1-8; Deut.26:12-15; Deut.14:27-29; Jos.13:14-33;Jos.18:7;
(3)Deut.12:19; (4)Acts.26:18; (5)Eph. 1:11; (6)Eph.5:5; (7)Col.1:11-14; (8)Eph.1:18;
(9)Col.3:24; (10)Eph.1:14; (11)Heb.9:15; (12)1 Pet.1:4; (13)Rom.8:17; (14)Heb.6:17;
Gal.4:7; (15)Titus 3:7; (16)Heb.11:8

Chapter 19

CITIZENS

"Command the Israelites to give the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites possess, and give them pasture-lands around the towns. Six of the towns you give the Levites will be cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone may flee. In addition give them forty-two other towns." (1).

In the preceding chapter we saw that the church had to support the Levites and priests. But because the tribe of the Levites had been given to serve the entire people, they did not receive a portion of land like the other tribes did when the promised land was being conquered. They were allocated 48 towns, scattered around the country. The Levites were therefore spared time-consuming work (like agricultural labour) so that they could devote all their time to their task of serving (2). We should note of course, that only the Levites were allowed to populate these towns (3). These towns are mentioned in Joshua 21 and 22. It reminds us of the most famous New Testament 'town', the New Jerusalem, (4), which will be populated by people who serve God, namely those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (5).

Many musicians are quite willing to serve, and though some may be trying to build their own kingdom in music, their intentions are mostly good. But this well meaning game can no longer be played when we read John. God reveals something to him which allows no compromise. If we wish to be citizens of the New Jerusalem, we must be pure. Only Jesus can bring this about. Are our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life? If not, we will not only be denied entry to the city, but also the priesthood will be a prohibited area for us. Are we absolutely sure that our names are written there?

The Levites did not just live in the 48 Levitical towns, they also received the pasture-lands around the towns. These pastures have a deeper significance. God does not want us to go hunting, but to tend our sheep, to be shepherds. As an example, David received the command to shepherd his people (6) in the name of God, who is the Great Shepherd (7). The prophet Ezekiel tells the shepherds, who only take care of themselves, to come back (8). Is serving one another part of our Levitical ministry. He said: "I am the gate. Whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture." (9). It is clear that we can only find abundant life through Jesus. So how disappointing our musical achievements are sometimes, and our lyrics, introductions and testimonies likewise. Sometimes we seem to get no further than: "Jack and Jill went up the hill...", and we do not seem to notice the pastureland beyond. We should be feeding people, but are we (10), or are our pastures no more than arid sandy plains?

Murderers could flee to six of the Levitical towns for refuge. Anyone who killed someone unintentionally was safe in these cities of refuge. In the Sermon on the Mount (11), Jesus deals with murder (12). He says that anyone who says to his brother "You fool", will be in danger of hell-fire. This means that we are all murderers. Words and thoughts are equally bad in the eyes of the Lord, so we all need to be able to flee to these 'cities of refuge'. The service of the Levites included opening the gates so that these murderers could enter freely. Do we, in our music, open the way like this to freedom and salvation? Do we see people as "murderers" and can these so-called murderers flee to us? Or do we send them away empty-handed? The

"citizens" should be open to lead people to the Shepherd, Jesus Christ (13). He is the way, the truth and the life.

(1)Num.35:1,2,6; (2)see Num.35:3; (3)Jos.21,22; (4)Rev.21:10-27; (5)Rev.21:27; (6)2 Sam.5:2; (7)Psa.28:9; 95:7; (8)Ezek.34:2; (9)John.10:9; (10)Matt.14:16; (11)Matt.5; (12)Matt.5:21-22; (13)John.10:11

Chapter 20

LAWCOURTS

When I was studying the Levites, I was struck by the references to "law courts" in Deuteronomy (1).

"If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge -whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults-take them to the place the Lord your God will choose. Go to the priests, who are Levites, and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the Lord will choose. Be careful to do everything they direct you to do. Act according to the Law they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left. The man who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the Lord your God must be put to death."

It is important to take into account the implications of this passage. Levitical service implied far-reaching authority and far-reaching consequences (2). They had to be strong people, for in the aforementioned matters they acted in the name of God, so their verdict was God's verdict, and therefore irrevocable and binding; authoritarian or absolute we are apt to say now.

Let's compare this with the average performance of a gospel choir or group. People do not always (and sometimes never) realize that they act in the name of God and that what they are singing are irrevocable and binding statements. We should realize how vague our testimonies are sometimes, how saltless our performance and how everything that happens is "open to interpretation", lacking conviction. Are we ambassadors for God? When we are sure about our calling we should act as Levites; that is as mediators between life and death. Certainly not everyone is going to thank you for this! On the whole, people much prefer being sociable and shallow and they certainly do not like anything that is too "black and white".

But with God, it is black or white - he spits anything lukewarm out of his mouth (3). He requires us to take sides and be quite frank to the great and lowly alike. When there was a King in Israel, he had to go to the Levites and write for himself on a scroll a copy of the law "taken from that of the Priests, who are Levites." (4). Is the Law of God in the safe-keeping of today's Levitical Priests? Is He revealed through them? Is His Word to be found in them? These are important questions with which we should all be concerned. The first Christians and preachers acted with great authority "in the Name of God" or "in the Name of Jesus.."(5). How our message should be and how we should appear to people is clearly stated in the following verses (6): "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God." Can the people who come and listen to us really hear the voice of God speaking?

(1)Deut.17:8-13; (2)Deut.21:5; Deut.27:14; (3)Rev.3:16; (4)Deut.17:18;

(5)Acts.3:6,16;4:17;8:12;9:27; 15:17; 16:18; 1.Cor.1:10; Col.3:17 2 Thes.3:6; (6)2.Cor.5:20

Chapter 21

BLESSING

One day near the end of his life, Moses gave his blessing to each of the tribes (1) with personal words and promises from God. In this context it is important to know what sort of blessing was given to the Levites. About Levi he said:

"Your Thummim and Urim belong to the man you favoured. You tested him at Massah and you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. He said of his father and mother "I have no regard for them." He did not recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant. He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel. He offers incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. Bless all his skills, O Lord, and be pleased with the work of his hands. Smite the loins of those who rise up against him, strike his foes till they rise no more." (2).

Many a lesson can be learned from this prophetic word. The blessing begins with the words that the Urim and Thummim belong to the man the Lord favours. Levi is that favoured man and the Urim and Thummim were the Lord's 'Holy Oracles' (3). The priests had been endowed with the gifts of judgement and revelation. At Massah (i.e. trial) and Meriba (i.e. quarrel) they had been 'put to the test'. To be obedient to the Lord was of more importance to the Levite than all other family or tribal relationships (4). Three requirements had to be observed: those of revelation, testing and absolute obedience to the Lord, to be able to carry out the work mentioned in the second part of the blessing, namely to watch, guard and teach (5). Our ministry as Levites has to be based on these things and therefore our lyrics and the way we put them across will also have to be as clearly inspired. These are essential items to be considered by all those who are thinking of a career in gospel music.

Whoever enters the area of 'cross-over' music may lose sight of the Cross. In any case, he is certainly not a practising Levite, because although "positive pop" may be very positive, the basic element of biblical exposition may be missing (6). Someone may even be an established musician, but the way he communicates might not have anything to do with what the middle section of the blessing speaks about which is:

- (a) "watching over" the Word of God
- (b) guarding the covenant
- (c) teaching the precepts of the Law
- (d) offering incense and sacrificing burnt offerings.

We should ask ourselves whether in our personal lives we meet the requirements necessary to take up the Levitical ministry. We deviate all too easily from this Levitical framework of complete devotion, calling and testing (7). These are the requirements we have to comply with. We are not to deal with fashionable issues, but with the fundamentals of the faith i.e. The Word of God (8). A Christian musician may, of course, operate in all kinds of secular enterprises, like the Lord Himself who went to all kinds of people, but his ministry must be based on the Word of God.

The final part of Moses' blessing is a prayer for a blessing on Levi. Moses also asks that Levi's adversaries be destroyed. Present day adversaries are not necessarily flesh and blood - it is a spiritual conflict (9). "The Lord your God has chosen them to minister and to pronounce

blessings in the name of the Lord" (10). They had been blessed and so they pronounced blessings. Jesus said that each tree is recognized by its fruit. When you see that your group does not radiate blessing, go to Jesus for advice.

One day, Jesus blessed some ordinary bread and fish and this little bit of food was enough to feed thousands of people. May the abundant blessings(11) of the Almighty have the same nourishing effect on our imperfect performances.

(1)Deut.33; (2)Deut.33:8-11; (3)Ex.29:29,30; (4)Matt.10:37; Matt.19:27-30; Luke.14:26; (5)Deut.31:9-11; (6)1 Cor.1:21; 1 Cor 2:4; Titus 2:8; 2 Cor 6:7; (7)Rom.5:1-5; 2 Tim.2:15; 1 Pet.4:12; 2 Pet.1:4-11; (8)Matt.21:42-45; Rom.9:32,33; (9)2 Cor.10:3-5; 1 Tim.6:12; 1 Tim.1:18,19; Eph.6:12; (10)Deut21:5 (11) Rom.15:29; Eph.1:3; (12)1 Pet.3:9

Chapter 22

SOMETHING'S UP

“When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it(1), you are to move out from your positions and follow it”(2). “Now the priests who carried the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything the Lord had commanded Joshua was done by the people”(3). “And the people hurried over”(4).

In an earlier chapter we noticed that the Levitical priests had the honour of carrying the ark. This was a very responsible task, for they transported as it were the ‘house of God’. Their carrying the ark also determined the direction the people took. They were not always directed to lush pastures: in this case they actually went from relative security to the uncertain Jordan river. What an adventure. Would God give a bridge? The water parted and the Levitical priests stood there until they had fulfilled their task.

These are matters worth thinking about for our music ministry.

- Do we carry God’s presence?(5) Or do we do nothing more than tubthumping?(6)
- Do we dare to part the stream? Only if you put your foot on the water will it part.
- Does our service give direction to people, or do they dismiss our talking as hot air?(7)
- May we have higher aspirations than giving voice to some silly phrases?(8)

In this passage about crossing of the river Jordan, the effect on people was noticeable: the people hurried across the river. Can our ministry for the gospel inspire in the same way?

(1)Josh.1,1; see too Davids’ flight, 2 Sam.15,25; (2)Josh.3,3; (3)Josh.4,10; (4)Josh.4,10b; (5)cf.Hebr.12,18-24; (6)cf.Mat.5,13; Col.4,6; (7)cf.1 Cor.14,8; (8)cf.Jm.4,8 and 2 Sam.23,1-2

Chapter 23

REGULATIONS

“These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the Lord after the ark came to rest here. They ministered with music before the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, until Salomon built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. They performed their duties according to the regulations laid down for them”(1).

Now that the people had a capital city and a king, and the sanctuary had found a place, David proceeded by reviewing the services. It looks as he put an end to a certain informality. David made clear arrangements as to which Levitical priests would bring the offerings, and who would lead the music, the offering of praise.

People are put in charge and regulations are put in place.

In the area of contemporary Christian Music/gospel music there is still too much of this kind of informality. It would be a good idea for gospel musicians to ask themselves whether they have been put in charge in their ministry. Have you been called by God?(2). Have you heard the voice of Jesus?(3). Are you certain about belonging to these people with a calling, i.e. belonging to Jesus?(4). Peter admonishes us to make our faith and our calling sure by your efforts(5). We may know that we are part of a heavenly calling(6). In the Old Testament, David put people in charge, but in the New Testament such a calling comes from God alone(7). He is the only one who can give you this certainty. This calling allows you to convey hope(8) and be worthy(9). By contrast, how many performances and practicing sessions get bogged up in drollery?

We should also ask ourselves whether we work in accordance with the set regulations. Can we find such regulations in the New Testament? Paul, in his description of a runner's and a pugilist's practice, is very clear about working to a plan(10). He even wrote to the Philippians(11), “I press on towards the goals to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus”.

We too, have to be put in charge in our ministry and work according to the regulations set for our ministry.

(1)1 Chron.6,31-32; (2)Hebr.9,15; (3)Rom.1,6; (4)Rev.17,14; (5)2 Pet.1,5+10; (6)Hebr.3,1; (7)2 Thes.1,11; 2 Tim.1,9; (8)Eph.1,18; (9)Eph.4,1; (10)1 Cor.9,24-26; (11)Phil,3,14

Chapter 24

GATEKEEPERS

"But the four principal gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted with the responsibility for the rooms and treasures in the House of God." (1).

Levites were not only to be singers, they were assigned to all kinds of other important duties. They were gatekeepers, entrusted with responsibility for the treasures and for the rooms in God's house (2). They would even spend the night stationed there in order to guard it (3). They opened and closed the doors and some of them were in charge of the items needed for duties, (they counted them when they were taken out (4)). They were also assigned to take care of the incense, spices, bread for the offerings and so on. What a long list of rules and regulations! What organisation and planning was needed!

For long-term active service, sacrifices have to be made. What about our choir? Is it no more than a social club? Are we really prepared to serve, to support? One often hears complaints about choir-members not wanting to do practical things like tidying, setting up and dismantling equipment afterwards, "They are only there to sing..."

You have to be prepared to serve. Watch that you do not become conceited, like a certain famous gospel artist who only wanted to stay in the most expensive hotels, dine in the most exclusive restaurants and be served the most exquisite drinks in the dressing room. Pride comes before a fall.

But we have a magnificent responsibility, a positive challenge. Do you want to be a gatekeeper? Then you will be one, one day. Do not let yourself think that gospel music is all about 'big business'. What it comes down to is being a gatekeeper. Be gatekeepers of the music-stands you have to set up and clear away. Be gatekeeper of the overhead projector, the song-sheets, the coffee and so on.

Being a gatekeeper is a matter of being faithful to the responsibilities you have been entrusted with. If you have been faithful with a few things, God will put you in charge of many things (5). Faithfulness and reliability are underlined in the Bible- read some of the references (6). In fair weather or foul, in blessing or adversity, carry on! That is what it is to be a Levite. Furthermore, it would be wonderful if the leaders of our churches could discern who the potential Levites are. Only too often things have to be decided upon by means of committees, etc., whereas people who are willing pass by unnoticed. Far too often people are convinced that everything depends on what ministers and elders decide. They ignore the potential gatekeepers.

When we fall short of expectations, when we fail, are overlooked or whatever, we should draw comfort from the text: "The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it" (7).

(1)1 Chron.9:26; (2)1 Chron.9:26b; (3)1 Chron.9:27; (4)1 Chron.9:28; (5)Matt.25:21,23; Luke.16:20,21; (6)1 Cor.4:2; 1 Tim.3:11; Matt.23:23; Matt.24:45,47; Gal.5:22; 2 Thes.3:2; 2 Tim.2:22; Phil.5:5; 3 John 5; Luke.19:17; Rev.2:10; Heb.3:2; (7)1 Thes.5:24

Chapter 25

BIGWIGS

“Those who were musicians, heads of the Levite families, stayed in the rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties because they were responsible for the work day and night”(1).

This text seems to negate the previous chapter, which demonstrated that the Levites did all sorts of work. Yet in essence it is about the same: huge dedication and effort. They didn't do the work they felt like it, every now and then, but day and night. What motivation! What a professional attitude!

These were heads of families, bigwigs, leaders: they stood at the top and rightly so. It was all quite different from well-meaning amateurism.

The Bible tells that we can learn from the world and money(2). This also applies to music. Just see what top artists are prepared to do to get to the top and to stay there. How many hours of practice each day they put in, the things they deny themselves... Most people only see the outside, the applause, the glamour, alcohol, girls. But if you talk to real artists, who have been successful for years, you realize that this is a very hard and disciplined life.

Our bigwigs derive their support from the fact that they had been ordered to live this life. If God orders us to do our ministry, we can build our motivation to devote ourselves day and night to God's cause on that fact (n.b. it does not mean we have to work 24 hours a day, it deals with attitude).

It is a good idea regularly to ask yourself the question, 'did God order me to do this?' If you are certain about this, the certainty will give you the strength to give yourself completely and become an apostle in music. It will give you the drive to win the game by persevering to the end and giving all your efforts to the main cause. Do away with side issues! (which things distract you from your priorities?) It will also give you the self-discipline to develop your skills, to practice. It will turn you into a 'head of the family'.

Once you have heard God's call to develop your skills in the music ministry, you will also get the strength to face up any setback, opposition, lack of appreciation, advice not to continue, etc. The path of a full-time Levite is not strewn with roses.

(1)1 Chron.9,33; (2)Luke 16,8+9; Luke 16,12

Chapter 26

BLUEPRINT

"You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the Ark of the Lord, to the place I (David) have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not enquire of Him about how to do it in the prescribed way." (1).

David had conquered Jerusalem and made it not only the capital city of Israel, but also the spiritual centre of the nation. Therefore the Ark needed to be returned to Jerusalem. A wonderful feast was prepared and the Ark was dedicated to God (2). The people sang, made music, and danced with David, but everything stopped suddenly when the Ark began to slip off the cart. Somebody tried to help, touched the Ark and was struck dead. What a shocking anti-climax!

Many people would have lost heart at this point, but not David, who immediately tried to find out what God was trying to say? David then examined the whole incident to find out what had gone wrong. It became clear that the first attempt had been undertaken thoughtlessly and with not enough preparation. A clear plan of action had to be drawn up. David called the priests and Levites together (3), fetched the leaders (4) and explained the reasons for the disaster. They examined all the ways in which the Ark could be transported in a proper manner and how to avoid accidents (5). After consulting the authority and counsel of God's word, they realised that the first essential spiritual prerequisite was sanctification. That took up several days of ceremonies and we would do well to take note of this. It is the absolute will of God that we be sanctified (6); without it no priestly duties can be performed. Once the principles of sanctification and obedience were established, the whole procedure went according to plan. What an enormous and complex plan! The singers were precisely positioned, as were the musicians. They also received specific instructions to raise loud shouts of joy (8). The instruments were tuned and the music was carefully arranged (9), the trumpets were positioned and the procession was precisely directed (10). Celebrants even had to wear special clothing for the occasion (11).

Now that everything was well planned and arranged, no further incident occurred. Once the ark had arrived in Jerusalem, David wrote a wonderful praise song (12) that the singers sang while he himself danced. This was no carnival rabble. Here is an example for us (13)! This celebration was a divinely ordained use of peoples' talents, well ordered and yet maintaining the joy and enthusiasm that comes of doing things God's way. The whole of 1 Chr. 15 is a blue-print for us - are we putting it into practice? How would you have felt if it had been your mission and you had encountered such an enormous set-back? Most people would have considered something like that a fatal blow, and in the case mentioned (14) there was indeed a deadly outcome. It was right for David to be so shaken (15). Testing always exposes who you really are.

There is something more to learn from this incident. David sought the correct way to serve God. So often we perform almost automatically, but we need to stop periodically and consider what the will of God really is for ourselves, our music, and for our lives.

David understood one thing clearly-that the Ark was not allowed on a cart. This in fact does have a deep significance. You cannot mould God into your own way of doing things. You

cannot programme God, neither can you manufacture revival or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. David's discovery had to do with appropriate reverence and the fear of God. God (the Ark) had to come off the cart and be carried in a reverent manner (16), by reverent people (the Levites). These people were found worthy because they did not do things by mans standards.(in which case they would have used the cart). They did it in God's way, which involved sanctification and obedience.

If you are experiencing set-backs or opposition, do not give up. Examine your intentions and ensure that sanctification and obedience are your main aims.

(1)1 Chron.15:12,13; (2)1 Chron.13; (3)1 Chron, 15:4-10; (4)v11-12; (5)v15; (6)Heb.12:14; 1 Thes.4:1-3; 1 Thes.3:13; 2 Thes.2:13; Eph.1:4; 1 Pet.1:15,16; (7)1 Chron.15; (8)v16b; (9)v21; (10)v22; (11)v27; (12)1 Chron.16:7-36; (13)Luke.16:8; Prov.24:3; Ecc.7:19; Prov.3:21; (14)1 Chron.13; (15)1 Chron.13:11; (16)1 Chron.15:2

Chapter 27

DON'T GIVE UP

In the Bible we see two attempts by King David at getting the ark to Jerusalem. What would you have felt like if you had a setback like this in your work or ministry? For most people something like this is deadly and in this first particular case(1) it was literally fatal. With right it says there that David was deeply affected(2). He did not go blindly, but he stopped in his tracks to think matters over and evaluate what had happened. Yet he did not give up, as many people would have. Testing is a biblical thing! Being tested always shows up who you really are and where your real priorities are. Testing improves character. How is that with you?

There is something else to learn. David looked for the right way to serve God. We are often caught in some form of automatism and just carry on. It is a good idea to stop the cart every now and then and think over what God's will is, with regard to yourself, your music and your life.

There was one thing David understood very well. The ark could not be put on a cart. There is a deeper meaning to this. You can't just transport God as and when it pleases you. 17th century stage plays featured the 'Deus ex machina', literally a 'god from the machinery'. This went as follows. If a dramatist had made his play so complicated that a solution seemed impossible, a god or a messenger from a god would suddenly appear who would provide a dénouement and good ending to the play. In (spiritual) life this is not the case. You cannot programme God. You will not be able to create a revival, or orchestrate the descent of the Holy Spirit. Other factors decide this.

David's discovery was all about dignity. God (the ark) had to be taken off the cart (compare this with our automatism –yet another performance) and had to be carried in a dignified manner (3) by dignified people (the Levites). And these people were dignified because they did not do this on basis of their human diligence (then you would have taken the cart), but because God had called them and they wanted truly to serve God.

If you encounter setbacks or opposition, don't give up, but examine yourself and sort matters out with God.

(1)1 Chron.13; (2)1 Chron.13,11; (3)1 Chron.15,2

Chapter 28

EXCELLENCE

“David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister there regularly, according to each day’s requirements. With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the rest of those chosen and designated by name to give thanks to the Lord, ‘for his love endures forever.’ Heman and Jeduthun were responsible for the sounding of the trumpets and cymbals and for playing of the other instruments for sacred song.”(1)

“And he(David) appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel...They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God”(2)

Once the Ark was in place, David selected from the Levites those who best used the gifts of music and song. However; what they were asked to do was by no means dry and liturgical, as it involved many instruments, including percussion, as well as singing. The whole thing was very dynamic. A remarkable musical 'happening' took place in a remarkable place ie., right in front of the Ark, in other words, in the presence of God. Do we realise that we also perform in this Holy Place?

Have you received your calling direct from the Lord? (3). Are you prepared to serve Him every minute of the day, to give your life without reservation? (4). Are you going to serve Him in a creative way? (5). Can you serve, motivated by your love for Him and not merely in search of personal glory? (6).

Only you can answer these questions. You need to answer honestly, and never forget that when you are doubting or feeling negative, that part of you which falls short of God's special standards can be brought to Him and He can supply the grace you need (7). To attain musical skills you must practise. If you prayed asking God to bless you with extraordinary musical skills, his answer would probably be to direct you to this or that music school. Hard work is an essential element How striking and convincing is the Old Testament combination of spiritual maturity and musical skills! That is true excellence.

(1)1 Chron.16:37,41-42; (2)1 Chron.16:4-6; (3)Rev.3:20; (4)Matt. 16:24-26; Gal.5:24-25; (5)2 Cor.10:17,18; Gal.6:15,16; Rom.7:6; (6)1 Pet.2:16;1 Pet.4:10,11;John.12:26; (7)Rom.12:1,2; John.20:21

Chapter 29

HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES

In Numbers (1), Moses defined the duties of priests and Levites, but once there was an established sanctuary, it was necessary to amend them (2). David immersed himself in the whole subject, as you can read in 1 Chron.23. We should note that duties were clearly assigned and delegated; there was no ambiguity. This is quite different from the lack of accountability we often see demonstrated by members of various musical groups (coming and going as they will). But in the service of the Lord, reliability is very important (4). The Levites work is not child's play, it was for 'adults only' and this should be an example for us today. This is not to say that only those twenty years old or more can participate in a choir or gospel group, but perhaps that is how it should be when you consider how quickly some groups get themselves together and then fold up. Often people do not have any idea of what they are getting themselves into when they set out to be musical priests.

(5) It still happens that an artificial contrast is created between preaching and the rest of the service (including music). In later chapters we will take a closer look at this. But note that everything in the House of God was intended to have its own time and place. Men strove to maintain equality in their tasks, not looking down on one another (6). Those who overrate the ministry of preaching need to take hold of these principles. Billy Graham, in his book, *A Biblical Standard For Evangelists*, stresses the use and importance of spiritual music. As regards musicians and also singers, we are not 'step-children'; the Lord has placed us side by side with others in His service. We should of course, also be careful that we do not begin to overrate the ministry of music.

In order to share fairly in duties, the Levites cast lots; the 'head of the family as well as the youngest brother' (7); the 'teacher as well as the student' (8). How different it is from those situations where feelings get hurt because 'someone else got to sing my solo'. Let us strive for equality therefore-let us do everything to avoid those things that encourage division. Apart from their additional duties as superintendents, judges, and gate-keepers (9), supervising burnt offerings (10), carrying out other tasks (11), and working as treasure-keepers (12) (nothing seemed to go on in the life of the church without the Levites being involved!), (13) the Levites were also singers (14,15).

What is most remarkable is that they were all trained vocalists. They practised, took lessons, or were already accomplished (16). In the light of this, we should be more discriminating about the quality of our member's talent. Willingness to practice and acquire training is essential from those in our choirs or bands. Not just anyone could join the 'Levitical Singers Union.' An interesting additional point is that David not only wrote new songs (that is, the words and music), he also invented new instruments (17). He did not allow himself to be restricted by the strait-jacket of traditionalism.

Once in a while you hear that the organ or maybe the human voice is God's 'only chosen instrument', but nothing could be more false. We should not let the heavy-handed critics hold us back from expressing our hearts to God, whatever the style as this is the only criterion that counts.

All the designated tasks of the Levites were revived whenever there was a significant renewal in spiritual life (ie. revival) as happened under Solomon when the temple was being rebuilt (18).

When Joash became king, it marked the beginning of a time of spiritual revival in which everything was re-established as David had prescribed (19). Hezekiah (20) and King Josiah had similar results in revival (21), and again revival occurred during the period of temple rebuilding after the exile (22). Each time the religious climate became more 'spiritual', the regulations that David instituted were revived. God's blessing is linked with a desire to follow God's ordinances.

(1)Num.18; (2)1 Chron.23:25; (3)1 Chron.23:24; (4)1 Chron.23:27; (5)1 Chron.23:28; (6)1 Chron.23:31; (7)1 Chron.24:31; (8)1 Chron.25:8; (9)1 Chron.23:4; (10)1 Chron.23:31; (11)1 Chron.23:28,29; (12)1 Chron.26:20; (13) 1 Chron.28:21; (14)1 Chron.23:25; (15)1 Chron.23:30; (16)1 Chron.25:7,8; (17)Psa.40:4; 68:25-27; 144:9; (18)2 Chron.8:14,15; (19)2 Chron.23:15; (20)2 Chron.29:25; (21)2 Chron.35:1-5,15; (22)Ezra.3:8,10; Neh.11:22,23

Chapter 30

PROPHECY

“David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals”(1)

“...under the supervision of Asaph, who prophesied...”(2)

“...under the supervision of Jeduthun, who prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising God”(3)

The Levitical music ministers were remarkable men. They were not only accomplished practicing musicians, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and whether singing or playing, they prophesied. David and his generals chose them and made leaders of them, because they represented a charismatic style of leadership.

We should seek to be like this. Who are the musical leaders in gospel music? They are people who are skilled in their craft but also full of the Holy Spirit- musical prophets!

When you talk about musical prophesy you should first take a good look at the prophets in the Bible. Were they strange and unusual figures? By no means. They spoke the truth about God in a 'down to earth' way and for the most part were not thanked for their efforts. They knew that what they said was inspired by God: "Thus saith the Lord". They knew God's heart and so could not hold back - a proof of their calling as prophets. Where are our musical prophets? Who will interpret the heart of God through music?

At a certain point in his life, the great prophet Elisha became spiritually dry. The word of the Lord came to him (4). On this occasion music created such a spiritual state of mind that the Word of the Lord was released. Music has a power to stir up or bring to a point of rest (e.g. David's calming of Saul). We need more musicians who, filled with the Holy Spirit, can wrestle with the powers of darkness. Musical aptitude is not enough. We must have our minds renewed (5). We will then have direction and purpose to our music here are many deep problems that can distract our attention. Qualified people are needed who can make sure God's voice can be translated into music. In former times, prophets were confined to a small, select group but at Pentecost the prophet Joel's words were fulfilled: "God's spirit poured out upon all flesh, for you and for me."

(1)1 Chron.25:1 ;(2)1 Chron.25:2b; (3)1 Chron.25:3b; (4)2 Kings.3:15; (5)Rom. 12:2

Chapter 31

THIS SHOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR PRIESTHOOD!

Solomon completed the temple, so the Levites brought the Ark, the holy articles and the Tent of Meeting, where the temple was dedicated by choir and musicians with cymbals, harps, lyres and 120 trumpets, all under the direction of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun (1).

Something unbelievable happened, something beyond their wildest expectations-the Glory of God was manifested. The presence of God Himself filled the temple in such an overwhelming way that the priests could no longer perform their duties. Does it not set your heart on fire that the Glory of God would be poured out in such a way! And yet, this particular incident was not unique. Look at the Day of Pentecost. Church historians have also recorded these types of manifestation during the revivals of Moody, Roberts and Wesley etc.

When reading the story of the temple dedication, it begins to stir your heart to long for the same things to happen among present day believers (3). You begin to long for God's power and glory to be so manifested in music and worship that the sanctuaries and halls become flooded with God's presence, so the performance might even have to stop. This sort of longing brings with it a call to humility, devotion and prayer. Such things will happen like this again and hopefully we will all have a part in it, for we still have God's promise of the "latter rain" (4). May our music be capable of bringing forth blessing and true calling and God's presence be revealed! Music should have the effect of releasing these things, just as it clearly did when Solomon dedicated the temple (5).

(1)2 Chron.5:4,5,12; (2)2 Chron.5:13,14; 1 Kings.8:10,11 2 Chron.7:1,2; (3)Mark.16:17;
(4)Joel.2:28; James.5:7; Deut.11:14; Hosea.6:3; (5)2 Chron.7:10

Chapter 32

TRAGEDY

Chronicles tells us (1) that the breaking up of the kingdom after Solomon's death was a tragedy which resulted in the division of the people. The tragedy became even more pronounced when it affected the service of God. Division was promptly followed by persecution, which forced the Levites out of house and home. They could no longer perform their duties for the ten tribes. They were determined not to compromise (remember Keith Green's song "No Com- promise") and so continued to serve God in Jerusalem, in spite of the circumstances.

See (2) and (3). It seemed obvious that events were eventually to lead to the downfall of Jeroboam and the ten tribe kingdom. Why had things gone in such an ungodly direction? It was because the people's attention was being drawn away from God. Jeroboam began to suggest priorities other than complete devotion to God. He suggested that anyone who so desired could become a priest. You can easily become a so-called 'priest' in different areas, such as winning men's approval in your career, material possessions, riches etc... Enough people become 'priests' in these realms, but this policy will eventually lead to destruction.

Wishing to become priests sounds fine but take note of what lay beneath the surface. It meant being diametrically opposed to God by virtue of the fact that they sought status and not God. Religion lapsed into idolatry(see 1. Chronicles 14:8,9,16). The Levites could no longer function in this hypocritical atmosphere, so they left. Consequently, Jeroboam made everyone a 'priest' of God so long as they were not Levites. Outward appearances were of religion, holiness and priesthood, but inwardly they were corrupt and deceived. Do you ever ask yourself: who do I serve and why?

Take note of this striking observation: "Jeroboam did not repent". This means that repentance was still possible. Let us rid ourselves of idols, false altars of worship and false priesthood. We must be true Levites.

(1)2 Chron.11:13-15; (2)1 Kings.12:31; (3)1 Kings.13:33

Chapter 33

OUT FRONT

In the Bible there are several passages which indicate the position of prominence which musicians held.

- (a) When Jericho was conquered, the priests led the procession blowing ramshorns(1).
- (b) King Abijah (of Judah) exchanged blows with Jeroboam, who ruled the ten tribes. Just prior to this, Abijah gave a speech in which he reproached the idolatry of Jeroboam. The righteous Abijah spoke forth (2).
- (c) During King Jehoshaphat's reign, a war rose against the Moabites and Ammonites (3). Elsewhere it is written that the Levites worshipped with very loud voices (4).

Even among the armies of the past century, music has held a prominent position, from the bagpipers who led the Highlanders to the march music of the 'Third Reich'. Music is involved not only in earthly battles but also in the heavenly realms (5), in spiritual warfare (6), and against unseen principalities and powers. In each example from the Old Testament given above, the confrontation resulted in victory. This reminds us of the Book of Revelation where at the height of the dramatic conflict and judgement, there is a musical 'intermezzo'.

Preachers often refer to music as just a fringe ministry. They see music as a sort of 'warm-up act' for the real ministry time. But their opinion does not hold water from a biblical standpoint. In the Kingdom of God, music is right up at the front with the Levites as frontline soldiers. As musicians we have a special task.

What struck me also were Abijah's words "God is with us... and His priests..." In a regular army, the generals stay behind the lines, but here the leaders are right up on the front line. It also gives us, as music leaders, extra strength because God is with us. Our praise is our best artillery against the enemy.!

(1)Josh.6:4-5; (2)2 Chron.13:12; (3)2 Chron.20:21; (4)2 Chron.20:19; (5)Eph.6:12; (6)2 Cor.10:3; 1 Tim.6:12

Chapter 34

REVIVAL TIME

In the Old Testament, several instances of revival are recorded. Most kings had led the people away from God. Idolatry (1) infiltrated again and again, and God was forced to pass judgment. Fortunately, every so often, a king came to the throne who was a man of God and the temple services would be restored.

(a) Asa was such a King. God again held first place and idols were done away with (2). Where there was rebirth, music, song and praise were present.

(b) Under his sons rule (Jehoshaphat), revival was continued. We read that the king himself appointed Levites (3) to instruct the people in God's word. Then, on a certain day when the enemy attacked, he went first to seek the counsel of God. Only God could save them (4). God spoke by way of a Levite and this singer prophesied (5). It is a sign of revival when singers are so used by the Holy Spirit (6). A special ceremony of singing and praise concluded the whole affair and afterwards the valley where the battle was won was named the 'Valley of Praise' (7). Singing and playing on their instruments, they returned to Jerusalem (8). Note the correlation between spiritual rebirth and a blossoming of praise music.

(c) When Joash became King, revival again took place. The priests and the Levites were rounded up.

(d) King Hezekiah also brought the people back to God. He assembled the priests and Levites and addressed them (11). Here we find the key words of a revival: sanctification and the removal of impurities. We read something directed towards the musicians (12). Along with this restored devotion and dedication of the temple came true praise, sung with exuberance. They had every reason! The people were so caught up in this moving of God's Spirit that they gave themselves to the sanctification process even more heartily than the priests did (13). This renewed dedication to the Lord resulted in a great celebration. Then came the Passover where once again a spiritual feast was celebrated (14). The people were so taken up with revival that they added another seven days to the festival (15,16). The people then turned to go home, leaving behind all the idols that they had destroyed (17).

(e) Under King Josiah 11 (this just precedes the period of exile), there was a final period of revival, and it began in Josiah's heart. At a young age, he 'repented' (18) and afterwards, through his efforts, Jerusalem and the surrounding lands were cleansed of idolatry. At this time the temple was also restored and the Levites took the lead in that work as well (19), The Passover was reinstated with zeal (20) as a seal of their return to God. The sacrifice of praise rang out again (21).

These were five revivals that occurred between the time of David and Solomon and the Babylonian captivity. The thrust of spiritual music clearly seems to lie in a conscious change of heart. When kings chose not to follow God, temple service and praise offering declined accordingly. They became incidental and we find no mention of them in scripture. But when commitment was renewed, the music burst forth in proclamation of God's glory. It can be likened to buds reappearing in spring after a long winter. In this spiritual process, the position the Levites held was that of servants and givers, finding their life source in true faith and sanctification; in other words, they themselves sought for and longed for renewal. There is an

unmistakable correlation between renewed spiritual life and the renaissance of new music. Revival should precede renaissance. Sipke van der Land (a known dutch speaker) once remarked that music was inherent in Christendom (which is not the case in other religions) because only Christians have reason to celebrate. The same remark in essence, was made by the Church Fathers, (i.e. Chrysostom), and is visible in every revival to the present day. Therefore, is our music the result of spiritual revival in our own lives?

(1)God was not No.1; (2)2 Chron.15:14,15; (3)2 Chron.17:7-9; 19:4-8,11; (4)2 Chron.20:1-4,12-13; (5)2 Chron.10:14; (6)2 Chron.20:19; (7)2 Chron.20:26; (8)2 Chron.20:28; (9)2 Chron.23:2; (10)2 Chron.23:18; (11)2 Chron. 19:3-5,11; (12)2 Chron.29:25-30; (13)2 Chron.29:34b; (14)2 Chron 30:21; (15)2 Chron.30:23; (16)2 Chron.30:27; (17)2 Chron.31:1; (18)2 Chron.34:3; (19)2 Chron.34:12,13; (20)2 Chron.35; (21)2 Chron.35:15

Chapter 35

SIDE BY SIDE

2 Chronicles(1) tells us that priests took on the role of preachers and the Levites the role of singers and servants. These are mentioned in one breath because they are all works devoted to the Lord. There has been no discrimination here between different ministries. When Hezekiah sounded the call, the people rallied round, with the priests and the Levites being able to fulfill their allotted tasks because of the assistance that the people brought. In our day, unfortunately, things can be quite different. Speakers easily get our support while music groups (also in the frontline of evangelism) struggle for church support.

Let us learn from this example and stop discriminating against each other's ministries. Paul spoke directly in his letter to the Corinthians (2) about one body made up of many members. There is enough room for everyone's specific ministry and gift to be exercised.

(1)2 Chron.31:4-5; (2)1 Cor.12:12-25

Chapter 36

RESTORATION

The period of exile had nearly come to an end. It had been a period of little praise; the people were downtrodden and subdued. Just read their song of tears in Psalm 137:1-4. The end of the exile was in sight when King Cyrus issued deportation documents (1). This return was a fulfillment of one of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning Israel's restoration (2,3,4,5,6). In Nehemiah, we read precisely which Levites went (7) as members of a choir that sang and declared God's praises (8). Ezra describes the rebuilding of the temple and Nehemiah covers the rebuilding of the walls and gates. Both stories indicate clearly the opposition encountered (9). But, in spite of the resistance, the work continued. The Levites returned to the original duties instituted by David (10). When the foundation of the temple was laid, there was great celebration (11) with songs and music under David's direction. The Levites were also involved with the work of rebuilding the walls (12), and when the walls and gates were finished, the gatekeepers, singers and Levites were appointed (13). The Levites also held special positions as guards and supervisors. The Levites again gave instruction (14) and music was given its proper place of honour (15).

For the time being, Israel had learned her lesson. We need to learn that it is only with Him and through Him that will we be able to serve, to instruct, and to sing. Our ministries and functions will be restored in direct relation to the restoration of our relationship with God.

(1)Ezra.1:5; (2)Jer.30:19; (3)Jer.31:4; (4)Jer.33:11; (5)Jer.33:22b; (6)Ezra.7:7; (7)Neh.12:1-26; (8)Neh.12:8,24; (9)Ezra.4, Neh.4; (10)Ezra.3:8b; (11)Ezra.3:10-13; (12)Neh.3:17; (13)Neh.7:11; (14)Neh.8:8,10; (15)Neh.12:44-46; Neh.11:16,17

Chapter 37

CONSECRATION

Ezra(1) records what occurred during the consecration of the temple. Everyone was present, and the last two words of this account tell us how it was consecrated - with joy! Songs, music, praise and sacrifices, all to the glory of God. The consecration of the walls of Jerusalem was also a joyful occasion. Nehemiah describes how it happened: "The Levites were summoned to carry out this "holy consecration" with songs of praise and all sorts of musical instruments. They cleansed themselves, as well as the gates and walls, before the celebration started. They split into two choirs, each with its own musicians, and marched around the wall, crossing each others paths and returning to the temple. Their joy was so great that it was heard for miles around! (Sometimes it is a good idea to create a commotion at a spiritual gathering). If you read this passage again (2), it is impossible not to enjoy it. It was a beautiful and majestic event, yet over-flowing with enthusiasm. That is the way it is meant to be in our lives as well. As we experience God's salvation and mercy towards us our hearts join with those who consecrated themselves at the rebuilding of the temple (3,4,5,6).

(1)Ezra.6:16; (2)Neh.12:27-43; (3)1 Cor.3:16; 2 Cor.6:16; (4)Isa.26:1; Zech.2:5; (5)Psa.61:4; (6)Prov.18:10

Chapter 38

CARE

"I (Nehemiah) also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields" (1).

The Levites had gone home instead of fulfilling their duties in the rebuilt temple. What was the reason for this? If contributions were not brought to the temple, the Levites could not carry out their tasks. They were in the middle of rebuilding the temple and walls of Jerusalem and they had got as far as clearing away the rubble and rebuilding elsewhere so what was all this about having the luxury of full-time singers when "there was work to be done"? The simple answer is that God wants people to bring Him praise in all circumstances.

The Levites were not required to pay taxes or rent (2). According to royal law, their daily needs were to be provided for(3). There were special storehouses for the Levites and priests serving the Lord. The people were to tithe, give their first fruits (4) to care for the Levites. Real care for God's house and His servants had been present at the outset, but people's willingness to care began to fade. "Why is the house of God neglected?" (5).

Nehemiah held the leaders of the people accountable, because as the leadership loses heart, so do the people. So Nehemiah brought the Levites back to the temple, the people started giving their tithes again, the storehouses were filled, and the Levites once more went about their duties. Do we care about looking after God's house? Do we care about looking after God's servants? Do our leaders care about the musicmakers who give glory to God? Do you care?

(1)Neh.13:10; (2)Ezra 7:24; (3)Neh.11.-23; (4)Neh. 12:44-45; (5)Neh.13:11

Chapter 39

BEING SERIOUS

"Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy." (1). "Remember them, O my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites." (2). Nehemiah closes his book with these pronouncements. The return from exile was a fact, as was the dedication of the temple and walls. But once more the people were in imminent danger of failing in their commitment towards the Lord. They settled down and old faults and habits surfaced again. The foundations of holiness and cleaning were laid shortly after the return. We read that the Israelites were required to separate themselves and even divorce themselves from foreigners. This cleansing process took place under the direction of Ezra (3). It appears severe, but separation was necessary in order to cleanse. Just read how full of compassion and grief Ezra was concerning the sins of inter-marriage and sins in direct disobedience to God's commands. The call to cleansing was for everyone: priests, Levites and the people alike.

The result of contrition and cleansing?-"Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength". They had to celebrate this cleansing process with a feast! Days of prayer and penitence (5) did not culminate in despondency but were characterised by real joy, worship and praise. There is a continual call to cleansing and re-dedication, getting back on the right path, until the day of rejoicing comes at the Lord's return.

(1)Neh.13:22; (2)Neh.13:29; (3)Ezra.9:1-3, 10:1-5; Neh.8:3,9:12; (4)Neh.8:11; (5)Neh.9:1,5

Chapter 40

MOVEMENT

In Isaiah (1) we read that priests and prophets staggered and reeled from intoxicating drink, whereas David danced with all his might (2) when the Ark was carried into Jerusalem by the priests and Levites.

The first example illustrates leaders who lost their way, filled with drink and not with the spirit. Therefore their movements were not inspired by the spirit, but by human nature. David was filled with the spirit and pleasing to the Lord. In the first instance the deluded leaders were without excuse and needed to be sternly reprovved. In David's case, even though his wife (Michal) despised what he was doing, God found it acceptable.

This shows that rather than a particular style of singing, dancing or music being wrong, it is all a question of what motivates the person concerned or in other words, who or what are we relying on for direction in our lives? The drunken leaders were relying on their own strength, whereas David was filled with God's spirit. Appropriately, the New Testament states: "Do not get drunk on wine... instead, be filled with the Spirit." (3). God's Spirit always brings life to and refreshes our work. We find ourselves rejoicing and singing from the depths of our hearts! (4). Let us not be like Michal, who despised such motivation.

(1)Isa.28:7; (2)1 Chron. 15:28; (3)Eph.5:18; (4)Eph.5:19

Chapter 41

PROFILE OF AN PARTYGOER

“And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel”(1).

How beautiful and joyful do these verses sound. They make you tingle inside. Something is happening here! The festival is about to start, people are preparing themselves, something is going to happen. These verses evoke the joyful excitement, and at the same time they are very moving. The songs that will be sung will come straight from the heart (2).

Aren't these all images that can show the right direction for gospel (contemporary Christian music) today? Music that comes straight from the heart, the sound of the feast of the Lord(3), coming close to Him, He is coming.

May we, too, prepare ourselves like this, and may our music radiate the same tremendous dynamics that the verses from Isaiah do.

(1)Is.30,29; (2)compare Col.3,16; Eph.5,19b; (3)compare Mat.25,1-13; Mat.22,2-10; Rev.19,7-8

Chapter 42

THAT'S WHY

“The Lord will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the Lord”(1’).

Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was ill and at the point of death(2), and the prophet Isaiah had to go to tell him that he would die. The king prayed sincerely to God. It is a prayer of a humble heart. Then Isaiah may tell the king that he will live.

Hezekiah then sings a song of thanksgiving and the verse with which this chapter begins is the final verse of this song of thanksgiving.

In this fragment, the core of gospel music is expressed masterly. The Lord saves, and that’s why we will make music.

The Lord saves you and me too, and, hopefully, also the audience, and all of creation. That’s why we can sing

(1)Is.38,20; (2)Is.38,1

Chapter 43

DRY

“...because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise”(1).

Active artists know the feeling of ‘standing dry’. You are working and struggling, but there is no inspiration, no creativity. In such times these words, that God gives water in the desert, can provide such consolation!

Sometimes we are working on a creative achievement with others. On such occasions, it may at times seem that you are not getting anywhere and everybody seems to be running themselves into the ground. How beautiful is a verse like this when that happens: ‘God gives streams in the wasteland’. God will bring the way out.

We have never been able to understand that there are Christian choirs who do not even pray before rehearsals and performances. We so need the experience of water in the desert and streams in the wasteland. It is the Spirit of God(2) that can make our stuffy practices turn to life.

The end of the verse from Isaiah makes clear that it is all about God’s formation. God has to form, shape us, our lives, our choir, our music. The result will be accordingly: we will really be ‘proclaiming His praise’.

(1)Is.43,20b-21; (2)Is.44,3

Chapter 44

EDEN

"The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; He will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the gardens of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing." (1).

One of the beautiful things about God is that there can always be a fresh beginning. God is not only a ruling King and Judge, He is also a merciful Father. How often our efforts come to nothing! How often we meet with suffering and disappointment. Anyone who has directed a choir or any other musical organisation for any length of time knows this, but we often just accept our failures. God's character is quite different- He comes looking for us in the midst of failure to comfort and encourage (2). The wasteland is made into a garden. The last verse "... joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the sound of singing" spells out a message of hope and jubilation (3). These verses should encourage anybody who has been frustrated by setbacks or failure (4).

(1)Isa.51:3; (2)2 Cor.1:4; 2 Thes.2:16; (3)Isa. 48:20; (4)Isa.55:12, 61:3; Jer.30:19, 31:4,7

Chapter 45

DEFILEMENT

"The elders are gone from the city gate and the young men have stopped their music. Joy has gone from our hearts, and dancing has turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned." (1).

The book of Lamentations is a song of mourning about what happened to the people of Israel because of their sins. In the verse quoted above, we see a small part of the judgment inflicted on them. Sin was the cause and defilement was the effect (2). Sin preys upon every person and the devil delights in their fall and subsequent defilement. We often continue "in the flesh" (3), living as worldly, compromising and unspiritual people, bearing death as our fruit. As a result, our music and praise is empty and meaningless. When sin is present, our music becomes empty. Whatever is false and unclean cannot please God (4).

Is this process reversible? Psalm 103 gives us an indication: "Praise the Lord, oh my soul and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems all your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (5).

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him." (6). The crown is the life you receive from Jesus and loving Him means following him unreservedly. "Be faithful, even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life." (7).

The process of sin and decay is reversible (8). Mourning can turn to dancing because there is a solution to sin. "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no-one will take your crown." (9).

(1)Lam.5:14-16; (2)Eze.7:13b; (3)1 Cor.3:1-3; Rom.7:5, 18, 8:5-13; Gal.6:8; (4)Rom.8:8; Jer.14:10-12; Hos.8:12; (5)Psa. 103:2-5; (6)Jam.1:2; (7)Rev.2:10b; (8)Eze.18:31; 36:25,26; (9)Rev.3:11

Chapter 46

GOOD EXAMPLES

During the Exile of the people of Israel, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel. He prophesied the coming events and God also told him what would become of the Levites (1). They had wandered away from God and had followed idols and so they were to bear the consequences of their sin. Nevertheless, they were to serve in the temple which was to be rebuilt in the future, but not in the Holy of Holies, as they had been bad examples to the people (2). Of all people, Levites were expected to know the difference between clean and unclean, holy and unholy (3). Today, we are responsible for setting a good example and for teaching others, otherwise God will turn away from us too. Backstage, on the bus or at home, our behaviour should not be different from what we present on stage. We must not pretend to be what we are not.

"As marauders lie in ambush for a man, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, committing shameful crimes." (4). How clearly the Bible paints a picture of priests who have gone "off the rails", where spiritual leaders are actually likened to marauders. The abuse of leadership has taken the place of true servanthood (5). The outcome is injustice, which is an abomination to God.

"But let no man bring a charge, let no man accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. You stumble day and night and my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests." (6). The only way of ensuring that you do not go 'off the rails' is to stay close to the Lord, meditating on His Word and learning to hear His voice.

"From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike all practice deceit." (7). The sin is serving your own ends (8). Hosea and Jeremiah are constantly calling us to draw water from the springs of life and knowledge, the Lord. The plain and simple gospel truth is follow Jesus and live, so that we might continue to be good examples to those who we serve.

(1)Eze.44:10-31; (2)Eze.44:12; (3)Eze.22:26, 44:23; (4)Hos.6:9; (5)Hos.4:1; (6)Hos.4:4-6; (7)Jer.8:10, 23:11; (8)Jer.16:12; 17:13

Chapter 47

MARAUDERS

“As marauders lie in ambush for a man, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, committing shameful crimes”(1).

“Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the Lord because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against the law”(2)

What a sharp depiction of degenerated priesthood the Bible gives here. It is not a good sign if spiritual leaders are compared to marauders. Watering down the importance of God in life will almost automatically lead to misuse of the position someone has been given in his or her work for God. The blessing turns into a curse for his/her environment. If the attitude of true serving disappears, a ministry turns into misuse of leadership. It is no longer about faithfulness, love and acknowledgement of God(3). It results in injustice. People start robbing others, and this can at times extend to their spiritual freedom or their lives.

“But let no man bring a charge, let no man accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. You stumble day and night, (...) my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests”(4).

The room for manoeuvre for anyone who ventures onto the field of Levitical priesthood is very small!

The pivotal point to keep in mind to prevent yourself from running out of the rails and dragging the people around you is therefore the knowledge of God. This is what you will have to work on continuously. It means knowing God, following Him, considering his words(the Bible, have you ever read the whole book?), and learning to listen to His voice more closely.

The prophet Jeremiah, too, calls the priesthood that misuses its task/position a plague. ‘From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practise deceit’(5). In essence, the sin consists of serving yourself(6). That way you are no longer filled with living water, because you are not drinking from the source, the living God. As Jeremiah writes: ‘your path will become slippery’(7) and nobody will help you. You will get lost and fall.

Hosea and Jeremiah keep calling us back to the Source of life and knowledge, the Lord. The worst that can happen to a Levite is to be thrown out. This is something that everyone has in their own hands. It is not fate that strikes you.

It is very much like the gospel: follow Jesus and live.....

Hosea ends his prophecies with some wise lessons: ‘Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love’(8). ‘But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always’(9). ‘You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Saviour except me’(10). ‘Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: ”Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips”(11).

The Old Testament prayer of a sinner closes the circle. There is a reconciliation and forgiveness. The judgement is not inescapable. It is possible to minister as a Levitical priest

only by conversion. The offer we bring for this is not a million euros or indulgences, or a pilgrimage, or giving up your car, or whatever. It is the offer of our lips: the praise of a child of God that comes straight from the heart.

(1)Hosea 6,9; (2)Hosea 8,1; (3)Hosea 4,1; (4)Hosea 4,4-6; (5)Jeremiah 8,10; Jer.23,11;
(6)Jer.16,12, Jer.17,13; (7)Jer.23,11; (8)Hos.10,12a; (9)Hos.12,6; (10)Hos.13,4; (11)Hos.14,2

Chapter 48

SHOCK ABSORBERS

"Blow the trumpet of Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly, bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests who minister before the Lord, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, 'Spare your people, O Lord.'"(1).

These verses from the prophet Joel again dramatically point out what Levitical Priests should do - stand as mediators between God and the people, seeking to bring reconciliation.

Step by step the excitement and tension builds in these verses. The trumpet sounds for attention and the congregation must gather. Both young and old are to come. Tension mounts dramatically as the priests walk back and forth, weeping and calling out to God for salvation. There is real sympathy with the people, a far cry from clichés like "pull yourself together".

A short time earlier, Joel had cried out, "Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God." (2). Repentance and intercession must be real-they must be part of us and we must live out our musical calling. Levites who are ready to fill this role are desperately needed. Is the need for true intercession not obvious in many situations? Think about the group that must perform in a Christian coffee-house for a handful of self-satisfied 'Christian' young people. Or the visiting choir that must perform in a church where the people, used to hearing visiting choirs, can only make comparisons such as; "I liked the choir which sang three weeks ago much better." Or the special church gathering where the pastor thinks himself so much more important than the gospel group, who may have come with the intention of winning souls.

The summons still goes out for true Levitical Priests to humble themselves and intercede (3). It is the Lord Himself who asks for such an attitude. The Lord desires us to serve everywhere as "shock absorbers"-truly humble and vulnerable. The people sitting in front of you do not need to be 'entertained'. We are not above them, but we stand alongside them as together we come before the Lord.

God honours humility and the prophet Joel was able to make this clear (4). Deliverance was on its way. The people could break out in joyful singing because God would marvellously act on their behalf (5).

Our role on stage must always be like this. Who knows what is going on in the life of someone in the audience? Perhaps there is bitterness, hate, dissension, apathy, lovelessness, egoism. Let us, in their place, humble ourselves and intercede so that the Lord may be able to do great things (6). Let us not consider ourselves too great to be a 'shock absorber'. Only then are we truly "servants of the Lord".

(1)Joel.2:15-17; (2)Joel.2:13; (3)1 Tim.2:1; (4)Joel.2:18-27; (5)Joel.2:21,23,26; (6)Joel.2:21

Chapter 49

SICK AND TIRED

"Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream." (1).

God can actually get tired of our music. Gospel groups, gospel rock bands, gospel choirs, gospel books, gospel records, gospel music, gospel organisations, gospel!! Amos declared that the Lord was nauseated by all the meetings, celebrations, and sacrifices (2). The reason was that something very essential was missing. They had become insincere and untruthful. Of course the celebrations and sacrifices were performed according to the rules, but the Lord drew back in disgust from them. What is more, Amos' condemnation is strong (3).

A pastor who was strongly 'anti-music' could quote this verse in order to prove that musical instruments were unimportant and musical innovations were worthless. No bass guitars, no synthesizers or drums - they are all instruments of the devil. But this portion of scripture is not referring to judgment on musical instruments per se. David found a number of ways to perform musically, and the Lord was very pleased, but that was because David's heart was right before God. These verses clearly demonstrate this. The people's attention was not drawn to the true need of the moment; they did not care about their transgressions or about justice and righteousness. If we are filled with God's love, we will start to care, but this can only happen if one has a deep relationship with the Saviour. He alone is righteous and wants to fill us with His righteousness. Our musical celebrations can become a blessing and not a curse. As gospel musicians, we are going to need to take a look in the mirror. Are our hearts truly upright before the Lord and have we truly been made righteous through Jesus? (4). If not, our gospel celebrations will be like the fulfillment of those verses from the book of Amos.

(1)Amos.5:23,24; (2)Amos.5:21,22, 8:10; (3)Amos.6:5,6; (4)Rom.5:21, 14:17; 1 John.2:29; Rom.3:23-26, 5:1

Chapter 50

THE STATUTE

The prophet Malachi made accusations towards the Levitical Priests. "A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father where is the honour due to me? If I am a master, Where is the respect due to me? says the Lord Almighty. It is you, O priests, who despise my name. But you ask 'How have we despised your name?' You place defiled food on my altar." (1).

This is already quite an accusation, but in the verses which follow(2), Malachi expands his charge against them. The priests show neither respect nor awe. They conduct their business noisily and the sacrificial animals which are supposed to be healthy are lame or sick. Therefore the sacrifice is imperfect and insufficient, reflecting the state of the ones who offer the sacrifice. These priests profane the ministry of the Lord (3). It is ridiculous then to expect that the Lord will be gracious or hear their prayers. The Lord takes no pleasure in them; rather, He curses (4) the ones who do such great evil. "And now this admonition is for you, O priests. If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honour my name, says the Lord Almighty, I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings." (5). Clearly, the Levitical Priests had lost all sense of proportion. "It doesn't matter how it's done; it's still done for the Lord." What a conceited attitude! They think that they are 'mates' with the Lord. But man does not approach God like that. He is mighty and to be feared (6). He must be respected and held in awe. That is not to say one must live in anxiety and constant fear of Him! You do not need to live in fear of God if you are in a right relationship with Him and if you know that you are saved and reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (7). If that is not the case, then your offerings are crippled and lame.

A little later Malachi points out again what the true tasks and goals of the Levites are to be. In several verses he repeats the central issue (8); "And you will know that I have sent you this admonition so that my covenant with Levi may continue." says the Lord Almighty. "My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave it to him." The one who, in fact, is truly reverent is described by Malachi in the following way (9). "True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found upon his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin. For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty."

Malachi shows us a clear and unambiguous picture of what the Lord expects of us. It is good to compare these fundamental principles with the activities of your choir or gospel group. Are there any areas which do not measure up to God's standards? If there are, something must be done in order to change them. These verses should be incorporated into every choir's statutes. Note that God warns us not (10) to go back on this agreement. The meaning of all this music lies in the manner in which we sing and perform. We must be consistent in our ministry—we must not dare to steal honour and glory from God and our sacrifices must not be lame or crippled. We must realize that we are messengers (11) of God! A wonderful calling indeed!

(1)Mal.1:6-7; (2)Mal.1:7-, 2:9; (3)Mal.1:12; (4)Mal.1:14; (5)Mal.2:1,2; (6)Mal.1:14b; (7)John.10:9; Acts.4:12; Eph.2:4,5; Heb.7:25; (8)Mal.2:4,5; (9)Mal.2:6,7; (10)Mal.2:8,9; (11)2 Cor.3:2,3

Chapter 51

PURIFICATION

"But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like the refiner who purifies silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness." (1).

In the previous chapter of this book a rather harsh warning was issued. This chapter brings hope. If we are imperfect and our sacrifice is insufficient, then the Lord is there, wanting to purify, sanctify and cleanse. No-one can endure a meeting with God because no one is good enough to completely fulfill God's law. Our efforts cannot survive His scrutiny. Only the Lord himself can change in us what we cannot change. It is only God's grace that purifies us.

The prophet Isaiah said that for his own name's sake, God delays His wrath and does not completely destroy us, but chastises us for our own good (2). How great is God's mercy! We certainly cannot comprehend it. God makes time for each one of us, to purify and sanctify us so that our praise offering will be acceptable. Unless God acts in our lives, we remain earthly, unspiritual, the old Adam. It is truly the work of the Lord Jesus himself that can transform us with power from the Holy Spirit.

This last book of the Old Testament opens the door for the New. It is a fact that each one of us must take a step through that door. Change and purification is only possible if you really desire it. However, it is certainly God's purpose, "in order that they (the Levites) might, in righteousness (that is through Jesus Christ) offer sacrifice and praise."

(1)Mal.3:2,3; (2)Isa.48:9-11

"INTERLUDES"

In a musical work, interludes connect the various sections of a composition. In the following pages I have brought together a few short sections (without actually making them a part of the "composition"), which incorporate some of the main themes of both Old and New Testaments.

The first chapter explains in a nutshell how various forms of gospel music came about.

The second chapter is written by Ria La Riviere. She has often found herself in discussion with other parents who are wrestling with the problem, "What am I supposed to think about rock music?" As a mother of teenagers she relates her own point of view and experience. Her remarks have much to teach us.

The third chapter discusses various topics dealing with contemporary music.

The fourth chapter is an assortment of "marginal notes" concerning praise music, and in the fifth we are able at last to look at the fact that gospel music seems "arrived".

And last, but not least, the sixth interlude deals with other ways of being involved in music and in particular the problems related to involvement in the secular music world.

INTERLUDE NUMBER 1

THE HISTORY OF GOSPEL MUSIC

Recently I was involved in yet another discussion about gospel music. Someone from a television journal telephoned to say that they were going to do a write-up about the Continental Singers as they were going to be touring in Holland again. He wanted to know what kind of music the Continental Singers were into. I tried to explain that what he called gospel music was actually not technically-speaking 'gospel music', although in some cases it could be called that. The man did not understand what I was talking about. He planned to call it religious-pop. And why not? There exists today a great deal of confusion concerning gospel music. In the following section I would like to try to bring a little clarity to the discussion.

If you take a specialist music book and look up the term "Gospel music", then you will read such definitions as: "evangelical songs from American negroes, also called 'spirituals'", or "see Mahalia Jackson", or something similar. These definitions are partly correct, since the source of contemporary gospel music is found in the 19th and 20th century revivals amongst American blacks. That is where gospel music began. During these revivals the preaching was emotional, as were the effects and reactions. The preaching and response were often closely woven together, a liturgy with antiphonal response between preacher and congregation. An example of how that worked can be seen in the film "The Blues Brothers" when the "Brothers" visited a black church service. The service is a parody, but the sung sermon, with sung-responses from the congregation, does still occur in contemporary black services. In such services you can feel a wonderful sense of enthusiasm. This "call and response" style constitutes one form of gospel music. Some songs, however, are solos. Mahalia Jackson was a very famous gospel soloist with a very expressive style.

In addition to being sung as solos, gospel songs are also sung by an entire congregation. These songs are rhythmical, sometimes jazzy in character and they inspire one to join in. The content of the songs is taken primarily from the New Testament. Gospel songs are not the same as spirituals. Spirituals usually deal with subjects taken from the Old Testament and are sadder in tone (often in blues style).

Originally, a gospel song was something a preacher did spontaneously, followed by a response sung by the congregation. After this came the gospel soloists. In the 1940's and 50's gospel songs were known as "easy-listening" religious songs. They were characteristically sung testimonies and therefore written in the first-person. With the passage of time, the simple piano or organ accompaniment (for example as with Mahalia Jackson) expanded to a band or even, as is the case nowadays, to a large orchestra (as with Willa Dorsey). Even if the finer points have changed, the music remains emotional and rhythmic. Hand-clapping and tambourines are an appropriate accompaniment to this uplifting type of music.

USA: Up until the 1940's, only negroes sang 'gospel'. After the 40's, whites began to sing 'gospel' as well. This hybrid music is less rhythmical, not as smooth or accompanied by hand-clapping or tambourines. The style that caught on most was that of the gospel quartet, with four men singing in close harmony. These quartets were particularly popular in the American South and in some places this is still the case. This development actually led to a confusion of terms. Whereas "gospel music" originally referred to music sung by blacks in their church services, people now began to give that name to any upbeat music that had lyrics to do with the message of the New Testament. Currently one can call any music "gospel music" if the

message is taken from the Bible or experiences of biblical principles, or if the musician is a committed Christian. Gospel music has something inherently to do with proclamation. Nowadays, the term "gospel music" no longer has anything to do with musical styles. Every culture throughout the years has produced its own gospel music. It appears that the need to write about and proclaim the 'Good News' in contemporary ways shall continue and here another term did appear: contemporary Christian music.

To sum up, one could say that literally-speaking, gospel music is black, religious music, but a broader definition of it covers any highly motivated proclamation of the gospel through music. Some still call it today 'gospel', others call it 'religious pop', others call it ccm: contemporary Christian music.

INTERLUDE NUMBER 2

CONDEMNED TO LIVE AS HYPOCRITES?

by Ria La Riviere

As I sit down to write this article, I am alone in the house and I am listening to some classical music on tape. What I am trying to say is that as a parent, you do not always have to have the same musical tastes as those of your children.

I should add that for our own family it is slightly easier than for the average family. Our work is musical, and that means all styles-pop, rock, classical, jazz and so on. But even if your work has nothing to do with music, you must make sure that you have an honest and open relationship with your children. Make sure that you can discuss everything together, and start working on this while your children are still young. We have discovered that even in our evangelical and pentecostal circles, if we are not careful, we can end up with the same sort of problems that the formerly over-strict "orthodox" families had, where children did a lot of things behind their parents' backs. The parents then acted as if they did not know, did not want to know, or perhaps really did not know. As a parent you must realize that things can still go wrong, so bring up your children with an openness and with prayer.

When our oldest child was 8 years old (he is now 16), he began to watch popular music programmes on T.V., like Top of the Pops, Countdown, etc. We always watched these programmes with the children, and we would talk about the music and the content. We would also tell them if we liked the music. Then a couple of years ago satellite T.V. music programmes began, (eg. Sky Channel and Music Box). These transmissions are primarily made up of video clips. Videos seem, at the moment, to be far more important than the music. The visual aspect has become very important. Now I can imagine that if you as parents have never been very deeply involved in music, these videos can open up a completely new world for you. Not always a nice world, I would agree. Much of what is presented is glorifying sex, violence, even occultism. But, and I still need to say this, our children live in this society, and music is a very important part of it. We could forbid it all and not allow them to watch anything, but what would happen then? Your children would become secretive, and they would go and watch it at the neighbour's house, or so intensely desire the wrong things that could begin to have a fascination for him or her. Our sons (though they are far from being ideal examples) have now progressed to the point where they can differentiate between what is obviously anti-Christian and what is not. Their non-Christian friends have no critical sense. For our boys the intensity is gone. They watch it and sometimes I hear "This is good", and "That is a new one", and sometimes, "Dad, mum, come and have a look."

Now I do not want to insist that you do the same as us. Imagine though that in your child has turned to drugs. Of course, you as a parent, would not go and start taking drugs, but you would read anything you could get your hands on that had to do with drug abuse. You would go and speak with others about the problem, and you would want to be well-informed.

So it is with music. Get involved with your children's music. If it is too loud or you are not acquainted with a particular song, then don't automatically say it is wrong; don't turn it straight off. Talk about it with your children. The family is the best and only place where a child can be confronted in an open and honest way with the good and evil aspects of the things he experiences. For example, two of our neighbour's children were at our house

playing with our youngest son. They did not have a T.V. at home (they come from a very strict religious family), and it was Wednesday afternoon, which in Holland means children's T.V. and cartoons. These two children sat with flushed faces, intense excitement as they watched the programmes. They were drinking it all in as if it were real life. Our son, on the other hand, hardly paid any attention to it.

As Christians, we are people who want to know precisely what is and what is not allowed with regard to good behaviour. Many have the same questions with regard to music. All kinds of music can be good as well as bad. In a household where the parents are Christians, there will be a daily struggle, not with words, but in prayer. Pray for your children and for their struggles in this world. It is the most important thing you can do.

As believing parents, we have given our children back to the Lord, so expect Him to continue working. However, perhaps your attitude is that you don't want 'that sort of music' in your house. Sometimes my husband and I have the feeling that we will never have a moments peace. Since we allow things into the house, everything happens at home - friends, music, T.V., etc. Some parents, with good reason, are afraid of the potentially great influences, but your influence as a Christian parent is greater. However, we will often do our 'fighting' in quiet and secret so that our children are often not aware of it. It is in praying, striving, and sometimes fasting for your child that the battles are won. In Luke 11:21 we read: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe."

INTERLUDE NUMBER 3 ROCK VERSUS ROCK

When studying the history of music we often find that each time a new style appears on the scene, those representing the old culture react fearfully. Today's avant-garde is tomorrow's 'old-hat'. Before long, the former 'new' stylists become the intolerant ones and so on. In their time, romantic and impressionist styles were resisted, as was praise music in the 1960's. Today, rock is the subject of controversy. We never learn from history and yet we are often so retrospective by holding on tenaciously to the old and remaining closed to the new. Do we conclude then that new wine does not belong in old wineskins?

We arrogantly assume that 'that style of music' and 'that type of instrument' are the only sacred ones. Try reading Psalm 150 and Daniel 3:5-10,28. Note that in these passages, instruments were used to praise the Lord AND to serve false gods. If one reads the rubric above the Psalms one is struck by the fact that David used popular music to worship the Lord. Certain instruments are not holier than others, and certain styles are not more consecrated than others.

This was well understood by William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. Although initially hesitant about using secular tunes with Christian lyrics, after hearing a well known hymn sung to the tune of 'the latest Number 1 hit', Booth was convinced that contemporary music should be used to proclaim the gospel. A year later (around 1880) the 400 Salvation Army bands had 88 top secular tunes in their repertoire, but with Christian lyrics. This sort of music kept people's attention yet they heard the gospel.

The late Christian rocker Larry Norman is famous for his quote: 'why should the devil have all the good music?' He said the same as Luther 450 years earlier: 'why should the devil have all the good tunes?'

We should beware of identifying the 'Rock music' style with the way of life of many secular rock artists. Many people who naively declare that only classical music is good music ought to be made aware of how many classical composers were involved in satanism, the occult, etc. As with driving a car or watching T.V., they are merely tools which can be used for good or bad.

Look into new styles and developments rather than alienating yourself from young people, but remain open to that which is good and reject that which is evil. Unless we do this, we lose our flexibility and will become ourselves "old wineskins".

We must not fall into the trap of presenting 'Christian' arguments like those used to try and hold back the growing use of the locomotive or the car. We need to be open in a creative way and in the end we will be able to tell if the tree is good by the fruit it produces. There is room for contemporary answers to contemporary problems by contemporary means.

INTERLUDE NUMBER 4 PRAISE VERSUS PRAISE

The word praise, for a lot of people, evokes thoughts of a very specific kind of chorus-increasingly popular over the last few years.

However, is this the only way to offer praise? If one looks at the various forms of worship in the Old Testament, then one sees that worship was:

- (a) modest or exuberant.
- (b) quiet or so loud that even the ground shook.
- (c) amateur or professional.
- (d) vocal or instrumental.
- (e) by soloists or in groups.

Many forms and styles were used to praise God. In the New Testament as well, there is quiet worship and noisy enthusiasm. The spiritual atmosphere in which the worship takes place is not to be found in the method, but in one's own attitude, in the heart. The singers who perform traditional church music almost without thinking may well be less pleasing to God than a recently converted pop musician who, with his music, offers his praise to God.

The function of the singers in the Old Testament was to bring worship, but today our whole lives need to be an act of worship. It is not a job for professional singers alone, but for every child of God to undertake.

The English word "worship" expresses this beautifully. It is taken from the words "worth-ship," an expression of value and affection. We express our lives in an attitude of surrender and our dependence on and our thanksgiving to a wonderful, marvellous God. How anaemic some of the modern praise songs are! If we limit our praise offering to just, "Jesus died for me, He has set me free" accompanied by a neo-romantic melody, then we undervalue the Gospel. Someone like Graham Kendrick (an English song-writer) knows how to break through that sort of superficiality. He writes beautiful, simple praise songs, as well as deeply meaningful rock music for artists such as Sheila Walsh. Where are the Davids and Asaphs of our own time, those who know how to break through superficiality? Our whole lives must be an offering of praise (Rom. 12:1), for example doing the dishes, listening to sermons and singing together. Giving yourself completely to the Lord is part of praise as well. There is no need for this to be boring; on the contrary, we need to get back to the point where we can express ourselves freely again, back to real celebration?

Having said the above many years ago, let's have a look at the praise & worship situation today.

-many churches have included praise & worship songs in their services. So from that point of view the mission to enlarge the segment praise & worship, has had successful.

-many musicians and singers participate now in this musical style, it created new 'work'. So as well a success from this point of view.

-Unfortunately I see many church members use this style of music to get in an 'emotional high'. They think they get closer to God, but they only get high in their emotions. And why is this wrong? Because God is always with you, in you. I have even been in churches where praise & worship songs were sung for more than an hour to get us all more and more to a

particular point. This was pure manipulation and it was sold to the audience: ‘the Spirit is moving us now.....’. No, those were our own emotions and hormones moving us, it was the flesh, not the Spirit of God. Praise & worship is a lifestyle and NOT a state of emotions. (please study my book Praise & Worshippers!)

-there is of course nothing wrong with listening to praise & worship music. But it can have strange by-effects. I know people who need to have it on all day, otherwise they think the evil world gets too near..... So, here we have even forms of addiction combined with a very strange theology.

-there are even Christians and churches who count the number Jesus mentioned in a song, if the songs does not have 1 JPM (one Jesus per minute) it is not a good song....

-there are composers who see the praise & worship wave as a great way to success, because if they make a song in that genre, it will really go all around the world; that feels great, it’s a nice statement on your CV and think about the possible copyright-income....! Here commercialism has crept into praise & worship. I know a few of those composers. Hear them talk how the Spirit has moved them to write, but see their arrogance and greed. They misuse a style and turn it into musical wallpaper. I know others who saw it as a ‘trick’ and wrote several songs in that genre, sometimes only based on a repetition of the same words..... No eye for quality. Some of those songs are nothing else as christian ‘mantra’s.

-And of course the record-industry got involved. With a mouth full of words that they are doing it to serve the church or do it for God.... in the meantime they record and repack the best praise & worship and buy the copyrights to get the largest possible market-share..... Commercialism has entered here too.

This all sounds negative and critical. But if a genre gets such a great success there are always things happening misusing that success. So it’s a challenge to search your own motivation, why you want to be involved in situations doing praise & worship-music. For the easy success? Or really with pure motives?

Finally think about the Old Testament: “do away your instruments and praise-songs”(Amos 5,23). So God at times dislike all our praise & worship music. Why? Because our lifestyle is not counting with God. Our lifestyle should express in the first place what real praise and worship is: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream”(Amos 5:24). If you do this, then we can sing His praises.

(further reading, see volume 3 of this series Biblical principles: Praise & Worshippers)

INTERLUDE NUMBER 5 ARRIVED?

Gospel music has gradually become acceptable. There remain some marginal disagreements, but generally speaking, the existence of gospel music is accepted. We have come a long way from those first three gospel groups in Holland and Belgium in 1970 to the thousands of groups in existence today. The mission of Continental Sound has been a success, gospel music has been accepted. But has the mission really been a success if more and more singers confine themselves to a "safe" repertoire which only deals with salvation (because that is what the congregation is so eager to hear) but ignores other subjects and other creative ways of saying things or if a gospel singer does something creative and "respectable" church people are horrified as happened with Elly and Rikkert's new album *Maskers Af?* (*Maskers af* means: take your masks off. With this album the famous dutch duo Elly & Rikkert were back on their original creative track. Very powerful lyrics, beautiful stories, great challenges to be real, true. God is present in all the songs but you find hardly the name of Jesus mentioned. And this shocked many christians, because they want to hear the word Jesus in every sentence, and the word salvation in every song. So a good number of people send the album back, because it was 'not christian' enough. But non-believers were touched by this great album with great creativity. There is an interesting parallel with Jesus, who was as well 'not religious' enough; just read again how much and excellent He communicated with great stories, without mentioning the word 'God').

Is the mission succeeding if we go no further than simplistic lyrics? Is the mission succeeding when churches stifle the creative spirits with theologies like "submission to the pastor" and "the church is the only goal in life" to such an extent that either creativity is killed off or the creative ones are painfully forced to flee the confines of the church? Is the mission a success when the stimulation for creative innovation threatens to wear out, the pioneers begin to grow tired, and there is still no second generation to pick up the torch?

Now, the time for prophets, poets and singers with creative gifts has come. An artistic "renaissance" will lead the way. Revival has been announced, but it begins in one's own heart. May the thoughts expressed in this chapter stir up your desire for such things.

INTERLUDE NUMBER 6 GOING SECULAR

This book only deals with those who want to be involved in music ministry. Besides music as a ministry there are other possible ways of being involved in music. For example:

- Listening to and enjoying music. It is good to be entertained and we derive pleasure from the experience.

- Playing music for yourself. You may like playing the piano or some other musical instrument, but you have no desire to perform or you do not have a calling. Making music as a hobby is very uplifting and (as Plato said) will help you to be a mature human being.

- Making music for fun. We can do that with friends, family or the youth group. God likes us to relax and have fun.

- Wanting to be "salt" in the secular world and not to be playing just in churches. This will entail two things:

- a) Cross-over situations. It means that you as a Christian performer will play more and more in non-Christian locations. Not all your Christian lyrics will be appropriate, so new songs must be written, expressing your attitudes and general ideas about God. Several Christians who have tried this have ended up nowhere because they became trapped by the career syndrome or ungodly living. In the past, several Christian bands have wanted to go secular because they wanted hit records. If your motivation is right and God calls you to "cross over" you will succeed. If your motives are to "have a hit", you might well find success for a short time, but you may not going to "make it".

- b) You want to be "salt" and be like those who, as Jesus did, lived alongside the non-believers in their day. This is a very difficult path to follow though not impossible. It means that Christian actors will act secular dramas, Christian musicians will play in secular bands, and so on, with the purpose of becoming part of the non-Christian culture and reclaim it for God. There are questions to deal with on a very personal level, as to what you can say "yes" to and when you have to say "no"? However, we still need more bands like U2. Again, seek God's will. If he makes it clear to you to take that route, it will be difficult and many Christians will misunderstand you, but in His presence you will survive. Read the Bible daily and be part of a strong body of believers. You will need Him with you in order to stay clean and pure in the "big, bad world".

The above is written from the point of view of 'ministry' and career.

But there is another side to the story as well. Most musicians and singers do not even have time to dream big dreams to be on the mainstages (secular or in church). They just struggle to make ends meet every day. Their main concern is how to pay the bills and to care for the family. So they teach music to students in school, or they teach music to students at home, or they take a part-time job work in an office and are work in music for the rest of the week; they play in some bands or quartets during the week-ends and sometimes help the church-music. They do hundred different things in a month, just to survive. They do not have time to think about ministry or secular, they just try to live and make it work. They do not live in a 'big, bad world, but live in a permanent crises because of lack of income. Those musicians should earn our respect, because they go and work with their gift, and that is as well honouring God

(see Jesus' story of the talents, He never told the persons how to work with the talents, but just to work with them; and being active and creative was what the He rewarded).

NEW TESTAMENT

Chapter 1

YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE

"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'" (1).

This verse should actually save us from getting involved in all sorts of controversies about musical styles. The real question to be discussed is:

Why is there no response? It is true that the Cross draws some while others stumble on. No matter how nicely we wrap the package, in rock or classical style, there will always be those who only want to be entertained and do not really care about any message in the music.

This is actually a fulfillment of the prophecy by Ezekiel (2): "To them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice".

Those who have a ministry in music or want one must realise that success is irrelevant; it is the reason for doing it that matters. We look all too readily for "results", or at the quality of the performance, or how well it is attended, or the quality of the piano, the neatness of the dressing rooms, the record sales, or the possibility of performing on TV or radio, but we do not examine the significance of what is being presented. Jesus firmly reproached people for their indifference (3).

(1)Matt.11:16,17; Luke.7:31,32; (2)Eze.33:31-33; (3)Matt.11:18-24; Rev.3:15,16

Chapter 2

TALENTS

There are Christians who think that the Holy Spirit will do everything and that any kind of human effort would contaminate God's work.

It is true that the Spirit of God should lead us in all we do, but it is wrong to think that our human efforts play no part at all.

In connection with this it would be good to read the parable of the talents (1). We read that there is a difference between the servants: "To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability." (2).

We do not need to envy the talents of others. Each person will receive as much as he can cope with and he will be fully taxed on that amount too!

The parable shows clearly that the person who did not use his talents was the one at fault, and in the end his talents were taken from him (3) and he disappeared into the darkness. Without a doubt, God wants us to develop and use our talents. If we fail to, they will begin to wither away and will finally disappear. Everyone has at least one talent, and if we would only get down to developing our talents we would surely have no time to be jealous, or to criticize others. You will go on to receive an abundance of talents (4) and begin to bear fruit that will refresh many. The Kingdom of God is indeed a multi-faceted composition, constantly developing and with room for everyone!

(1)Matt.25:14-30; (2)Matt.25:15; (3)Matt.25:28-30; (4)Matt.25:29a

Chapter 3

JESUS SANG

In certain circles, there always seems to be controversy about how important music is in the church. Those who claim that music and other related ministries have no scriptural support, do the Bible an injustice.

There is only one occasion mentioned in the scriptures when Jesus literally sang, namely at the Last Supper. "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (1). In the old Passover celebrations, the songs which were traditionally sung were 'Hallel Psalms' (2), songs of triumph.

When you take a good look at all the quotations Jesus used in His stories, you find a good many of them come directly out of the Psalms. The Psalms were the Jew's spiritual songs, sung at celebrations and on other occasions. You would only cite verses from songs if they meant something to those listening; so Jesus must have been accustomed to singing songs. Even the words He spoke while on the cross came from a Psalm (3).

Then there was the occasion just before His Ascension when Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission. "He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (4).

According to Jesus, there was no difference in value between the Law, prophecies, and songs - each was of equal importance to Him. Jesus indicated that each of these sources carried a message. Music also contains a message that can be prophetic. The prophetic sections of the Psalms were fulfilled in Jesus, but the other songs will endure until they reach the throne of God in the new heaven and the new earth.

Another text from Luke (5) says that "the Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached". That means there will be singing in the Kingdom of God. The Law and the Prophets will have been fulfilled and at last the New Jerusalem will have come. Prophesying and the institution of laws will no longer be necessary because the Lord Himself will be there.

By now it will be clear that the preaching and the songs of the Kingdom of God goes hand in hand and therein lies the glorious spontaneity of the Kingdom. This was visible in the life of Jesus and everywhere He was at work, those who looked on gave glory to God. They praised and sang, the most natural reactions for a child of God to have.

(1)Mark.14:26; (2)Psa.113-118; (3)Psa.22; (4)Luke.24:44,45; (5)Luke. 16:16

Chapter 4

INVOLVEMENT

In the New Testament there are two stories about Levites. The first is in Luke and it is the story of the Good Samaritan, a parable of Jesus to teach what is meant by 'loving your neighbour'. The second person to ignore the victim was a Levite, perhaps in a hurry to get to a choir practice! After all, singing was a task that the Levites had been assigned to so obviously he had to do his job. Had he got his hands dirty, he might have jeopardized his ministry. This Levite was so intent on his ministry, that there was no longer any real life to it. He had lost his love for others and for him the medium of music had become an end in itself. He had totally forgotten compassion and his involvement in 'real life' had completely disappeared. He may have had the voice of an angel, but this Levite had become worthless for the Kingdom.

The second story about a Levite is found in Acts 2. Joseph owned a piece of property and noticing a lack of funds in the first Christian church, he sold his property and donated the proceeds to the church. He was also called by another name: 'Barnabas', which means 'Son of encouragement'. This Levite was deeply involved in the joys and sorrows of his surroundings. He was not so intent on his ministry that he could not love and feel compassion for others. He was Christianity in action.

We come across both kinds of Levites. It is your own decision to walk by on the other side or to have compassion. Hopefully all Levites will be 'Sons of encouragement', full of love for others and willing to get involved.

(1)Luke.10:29-37; (2)Acts.4:36,37

Chapter 5

CLARITY

"Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction between the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1).

Paul used a musical example to make it clear that church proceedings must be clear and meaningful. The example Paul used shows him to be someone who knows what he is talking about when it comes to music. Since Paul makes reference to the trumpet, which appears to be 'summoning' us, let us take a look at two examples of where it is used in the Old Testament. "I appointed watchmen over you and said 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet' but you said, 'We will not listen.'" (2). The watchmen (the prophets and judges) were compared here to the trumpet. These trumpets had a very distinct sound, but the people refused to listen. "Then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself." (3). Here again we see the connection between the message and the trumpet, which was sounding out a warning. The sound, and the message, were both clear.

In the passage in Corinthians, we see that musical instruments have distinct sounds and messages and so therefore what we are doing should have that same kind of clarity. We should never wrap our message in music to the extent that its content becomes unclear.

Jesus also has something to say about clarity. At the end of Luke's gospel (4), he sums up the entire content of the law, the Prophets, and the Psalms in terms of suffering, resurrection, the preaching of repentance, the name of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, witnessing, and the promise of the Holy Spirit (5). Is our musical message clear about these aspects?

Then our message will yield fruit. "And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God." (6). What a spirit, what a great musical 'happening', what an atmosphere.

Back to Paul. He mentions in that passage written to the Corinthians that there are fruits. As the sounds can be understood (7) it works uplifting, encouraging, building up.

(1) 1 Cor. 14:7,8; (2) Jer. 6:17; (3) Eze. 33:4,5; (4) see Chap. 3;
(5) Luke. 24:46-49; (6) Luke. 24:52,53; (7) 1 Cor. 14:11,12

Chapter 6

CEMENT

"When you come together, everyone has a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the Church." (1).

There were certain faults in the Corinthian church. Paul gives guidelines in his letter about how to straighten out various problems and also talks about meetings and public services.

In this verse, he lists the elements that belong in a service. The tone of this passage is noteworthy as he gives equal attention to each element and brings them into harmony- the musical element, the teaching element, the prophetic element.

Over the years we have been sidetracked by a number of issues. Some churches consider the 'celebration of worship' the most important part of a service, whilst others think that teaching deserves the most attention. Neither is absolutely correct and it is important that they give one another freedom in these matters. If one begins to look down upon the others opinion, neither one will be edified.

In the light of this, Paul devotes a chapter to love (2). Love appears to be the cohesive element. That particular section of the Corinthian letter can be summarized as 'without love, it is not music, it is just noise and the meaning is lost'.

These musical examples should be a warning to us. In a worship service, we should not overrate or underrate any element! We should support each other and pray for each other - this is edification, the 'cement' that makes the service unified in worship. Each one of us needs to have this love in our hearts.

(1)1 Cor.14:26; (2)1 Cor.13:1-13

Chapter 7

ONLY PSALMS?

There are Bible teachers who claim that the New Testament contains no examples of musical instruments being used in worship, basing their claims on the text found in one Corinthians 14:15.

In the same chapter of this letter however, Paul also stated that, "I will sing with my spirit but I will also sing with my mind." Paul also begins to speak about a new form of spontaneous singing, singing with great emotion and enthusiasm. Another translation says "Praising in the spirit and praising in a language that can be understood." This passage clearly relates to that of Galatians(1) where it talks about the fruits of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace and so on. People who are filled with the Holy Spirit make music in a different manner.

The Psalms are different, but again they vary one from another. Some should be sung exuberantly, while others had clear directions regarding the use of instruments and tempo etc. Those who are of the opinion that the Psalms should be sung slowly or arhythmically are likely to be mistaken. Even the Church Fathers reported the use of instrumental accompaniment in the worship service and that was during the second and third centuries. It is certain that the early church expressed its inspiration in music; Paul himself took a lead in this, even while in prison (2). There is power in praise, and praise songs set the captives free. Literally in Paul's case!

(1)1 Cor.14:26; (2)1 Cor.14:15; (3) Gal.5:22; (4)Acts. 16:25

Chapter 8

MINISTRY

"What is our New Testament mission? and what is involved in a music ministry? In response to this there are several fundamental truths: "Christ who gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (1,2). Further, "as God's fellow workers..." (3), "As servants of God" (4). It is also written "How can they preach unless they are sent?" (5). See also (6).

From these verses, we see that the circle from Old Testament sacrifice to New Testament mission/ministry is complete. There is no longer a select group of priests and Levites because now everyone has received the ministry of reconciliation (7). Every Christian choir, every Christian band, every member of a group has become an ambassador of Jesus who can re-echo the words of Jesus in his music (8).

Therefore, the question to ask yourself is; "Am I sent?" and "Is my service acceptable to God?" (9).

For some, the answers to these questions will be negative, and some do not know. Some however know full well. Yet the answers can and should be positive for each of us (10). If there is something missing in our lives, if something is holding us back spiritually, God will complete it or change it, providing we are open to Him (11).

(1)2 Cor.5:18b; (2)2 Cor.5:19b,20a; (3)2 Cor.6:1a; (4)2 Cor.6:4a (5) Rom.10:15; (6)Rom.12:1b; (7)2 Tim.2:15,16; Heb.3:1; (8)Heb.2:12; (9)Rom.12:9-21; (10)Heb.6:11,12; 12:28,29; 2 Pet.3:11; (11)Rom.15:13; 1 Thes.4:17; 2Thes.2:16,17

Chapter 9

HOW AND WHAT

Ephesians 5:15-21 is a magnificent verse! It has countless angles to it that we could meditate on but the crux of it is 'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs'. After only a short period of evangelism, the first century church already had many forms of musical expression. Alongside the Psalms, numerous kinds of hymns and spiritual songs had come into being. The latter may mean spontaneous songs or words inspired by the Holy Spirit, or singing in the spirit (2). What a wonderful variety, with so many possible ways of expression.

The following part of this verse says: "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" (3). Literally in Greek it says: "Sing from thankfulness (4) and play stringed instruments with all your heart (5) to the glory of God." This all constitutes the 'what'.

The 'how' is also seen from several angles:

- a) "In your heart". With your whole heart, and in this way really serving God with your whole life.
- b) "Always giving thanks". In times of blessing and times of adversity, to continue to thank God is to continue to serve God.
- c) "As wise". This is brought about by the Holy Spirit helping us to understand God's will. Doing God's will is always the best for us (6).

(1)Eph.5:15-21; (2)1 Cor.14:15b (3)Eph.5:19; (4)Greek:ode; (5)Greek;psallo; (6)Rom. 12:2: 1 Tim.2:3-6; 1 Thes.4:3; 2 Pet.3:9

Chapter 10

THANKFULNESS

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."(1).

These verses say much the same as those in Ephesians (2), from our last chapter and also verses in Corinthians (3).

Love completes things and holds them in the right perspective. The peace that only Jesus can give must rule in our hearts. With this peace there is unity. Not just peace with God, but with one another. This peace is vital whether working together as a choir or as a small group, and it deals with the problems of jealousy (4). See also Colossians 3:17 (5). The word of God, that is Jesus Christ, (6) should dwell richly in us. Bible study and prayer on your own as well as in a group are not optional.

We can thank God in song, and how beautiful that the Bible reaches us with so many forms of expression, from Psalms to Christian rock. Another verse (7) says: "overflowing with thankfulness" and "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises" (8). "Is anyone happy? Then let him sing songs of praise" (9). Peter also sings in this 'thanksgiving choir' (10).

It is remarkable how often people burst into thanksgiving and praise when God performed a miracle. The Book of Acts has, in fact, never been finished as God continues to act in these days and in our own lives. This experience should be the real motivation for singing to the Lord.

(1)Col.3:14-16; (2)Eph.5:19; (3)1 Cor.13:1; 1 Cor. 14:15,26; (4)Col.3:12,13; Phil.2:4,5; (5)Col.3:17; (6)John.1:1-5; John.1:12-14; (7)Col.2:7b; Eph.5:4; 2 Cor.4:15; Heb.12:28; (8)Heb.2:12; (9)James.5:13; (10)1 Pet. 1:3

Chapter 11

PRIESTHOOD:THE FINAL DESTINATION

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1).

We no longer inherit the priesthood, because every true believer (2) is called to be a priest. Every believer is made holy, consecrated, and set apart. Priests no longer bring animal sacrifices, they bring spiritual sacrifices but what are these spiritual sacrifices?

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (3). "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess His name" (4). The sacrifice we can bring is singing God's praises out of thankfulness to Him (5). Jesus said that it is not what enters our mouths that makes us unclean, but what comes out (6). See also what James says (7). Therefore shall we continue according to our sinful natures (8) or will we be transformed into that new priesthood which praises and worships God?

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (9). We have been chosen to be holy priests (10), full of God's honour and glory and to sing of His wondrous deeds. It would be wonderful if it were that which shone from the stage during our performances. If people saw that wonderful, radiant, majestic, dynamic, sparkling, eternal, and holy priesthood shine through our performances they could be set free, refreshed and renewed (11).

If you know that you have been freed from your sins, then you have become just such a priest (12). It is God's purpose that when Jesus returns, we should serve and praise him as priests (13), with new songs (14) and new music (15). "They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him."

(1)1 Pet.2:5; (2)1 Pet.1:7; (3)Heb.12:28; (4)Heb.13:15; (5)James.3:3-12; (6)Matt.15:11,18; (7)James.3:9; (8)2 Pet.1:4-8; (9)1 Pet.2:9; (10)Rev.1:6(11) 1 John.2:17; (12)Rev.1:5b,6; (13)Praise songs and music are found throughout Revelation. (14)Rev.14:2,3; Rev.15:3; (15)Rev.20:6

Chapter 12

THIRST

When man's history comes to a close there will be two cities, two epochs, two ways of thinking which remain. One is Babylon and the other is the New Jerusalem.

Babylon represents man's desire for a religious 'experience' and inevitably leads to fornication, all sorts of atrocities and the oppression of truth. Babylon is looking for their own 'gods' and turning them into idols. Babylon advocates the storing of earthly treasures and other dark areas such as magic, drugs, and the occult. It has dominion over this world and man's natural tendency is to veer towards it. It is false religion (1). It stands for confusion, as there always is without God. After the flood, man began to build a new society but continued to turn his back on God. They exalted their own knowledge by trying to build a tower (2), but it became their downfall as God declared judgment on a people trying to reach heaven without Him. In Babylon there is some sort of artificial unity. Greed will draw them together but at the same time God will declare that unity cannot exist without His love. God's wrath will be great in the judgment of Babylon (3). All voices will be silenced and all instruments (4). God's children will rejoice at the end of this mockery and persecution (5,6). The heavens will resound with the rejoicing of God's people over the fall of Babylon (6).

In contrast to Babylon is the New Jerusalem (City of Peace, City of God). It is the city of priests and Levites (7), and countless thousands will be present(8) because they are all God's children. Man cannot build this city, it is supernatural and will come out of the heavens.

"I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order has passed away'. He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (9). See also (10).

Reading this stirs in us a deep desire to sing in that New Jerusalem but it will not come without a battle. "He who overcomes will inherit all this." Overcoming yourself and all your selfish ambitions and carnal thoughts is imperative. The Holy Spirit, the 'living water' will give you the power to overcome (11). Are you thirsty?

(1)Rev.14:8, 17:4-6, 18:2-7, 18:11-24; (2)Gen.11:1-9; (3)Rev.16:19; (4)Rev.18:22;
(5)Rev.18:20; (6)Rev.19:1-5; (7)Isa.66:21,22; (8)Jer.33:21,22; (9)Rev.21:2-5a; (10)Rev.21:6;
(11) Rev.22:17

POSTLUDIUM:

In the following chapter you will read practical suggestions what you can do to put the content of this book into action, so that you will improve musically and spiritually! :

PRACTICAL

After all the analyses, historical and prophetic explorations and conclusions, it is time to put things into practice. This chapter gives some suggestions that may be of help to make progress. This practical aid has also been published in Volume 3 of this series.

1. Two-track policy and the railway sleepers

Proper rail connections depend on good rails on perfect railway sleepers that keep the rails in place. On these rails the (gospel) train is on its way to its destination.

Balance

The above metaphor shows that everything has to be in balance. Both rails have to be strong, the sleepers have to be equally strong and maintenance is required to keep it that way. This way the track remains in balance, there is no danger of derailments and the gospel train can safely reach its destination. In the following paragraphs I will elucidate all these aspects.

- * left rail: artistic quality
- * right rail: spiritual growth
- * sleepers: infrastructure

2. Artistic quality

This whole book has demonstrated that quality is particularly valued by God. Quality brings God honour, as it does full justice to the praise. You have been able to read in the book that the Levites who made sacrifices of praise by singing and making music under the reigns of David and Solomon were '*trained and skilled in music for the Lord*'. That is not something you achieve in a fortnight. It is the result of painstaking practice, teaching, tryouts and critical assessments. Does it then mean that in fact only professionals deserve a place in the choir, band or praise group? Certainly not! I only emphasise a principle, the need for the motivation to learn and to be trained, which are the things that distinguish such a group from a church that sings (out of tune).

The following requires proper agreements:

- * set weekly rehearsals or practice on a fixed evening;
- * set clear times for the start and finish of such rehearsals;
- * appoint a leader;

- * everybody knows the repertoire in time;
- * start with a welcome, open the meeting with a thought, Bible passage or chapter from this book, and prayer;
- * do singing exercises at the start;
- * do relaxation exercises;
- * if there is a band, the band must have tuned up before the start;
- * if you use equipment, it must have been set up *and* adjusted before the start;
- * appoint a music leader;
- * start with a well-known song to get into it;
- * then start on a new song;
- * have the break on time;
- * end with a final prayer;
- * keep practising during the week at home.

How to work out the above in detail to achieve good quality is described in the book *Behind the Scenes* (published by Continental Sound/Christian Artists).

Quality is the result of practice, practice and more practice, inspired by spiritual growth and motivation.

3. Spiritual growth

I hope that the contents of this book have aroused your interest and you are now determined to bring its principles into practice. In that case there are a few issues to take into consideration.

* If you are an existing choir or youth choir, gospel group or praise team and you intend to apply biblical principles, it is worth realising beforehand that changing an existing system can be an uphill struggle. You cannot simply be the bull in the china shop, leaving a trail of destruction. There is another method, that Jesus mentions in one of his parables: “plant seeds and have patience”. It may take a whole season before you see sufficient result to be able even to start applying the principles from this book. A good way to start each rehearsal is by reading a chapter together, individually or as a group. Another thing is that you should invest in relationships among group members. You can’t go faster than the slowest member of your group. This is called the shepherd principle: the slowest lamb determines the pace of the flock. But the flock does move.

Another aspect is that you should beware of the overenthusiasts. They can start nagging and before you realise it they can develop a touch of fundamentalism. This kind of people has to be tactfully but

resolutely curbed. If such a person is unable to show respect for insights and feelings of others, your choir, group or band is perhaps not the right place for him/her.

* If you are about to form a choir, group, band or praise group, you have the opportunity to put down a firm foundation from the very start by making use of this book. Make it very clear to everyone who wants to be involved that you are going to take this book as a guideline.

Unfortunately, there are evangelical groups that dislocate the entire train. In the end the only thing that matters to such people is to be 'spiritual' (superspiritual), based on the thought 'If we just sing in new tongues, the Holy Spirit will do it all'. Nothing is further from the truth. The examples from this book show how the depth of the spiritual sacrifice of praise becomes apparent from the quality of our work. The next question you will get is 'But surely God works in people even if things do not go smoothly'? Of course God can work in people under any circumstances: He can even work through the braying of Balaam's ass. Only, it is not the purpose that you hide behind this argument. It has always been God's intention for you to develop each gift, talent, or personal opportunity (this is explained in Volume 1 of this series *Biblical Principles*, called *Creative and Christian: Biblical Principles of Creativity and Art*). This book on worship has to help you on the way to quality (study and practice) and spiritual growth, which can also only be effected by study and practice.

Spiritual growth does not come out of the blue! It requires looking up the Bible verses from this book and reading the Bible in general. This book also encourages further thinking, considering, weighing, internalising, making choices, motivation, meditation and prayer. That will take time as well and you'd best spend some time doing this *every day*. It will add much more depth to your life and your music, which will in turn be much more convincing and a great blessing for your audience, the congregation.

4. Railway sleepers

The *longest existing* (since 1963) and *most comprehensive* music ministry is that of the Continentals (annually ca. 70 groups on the road; more than 1500 tours; more than 15,000 participants in the tours; more than 10 million visitors; more than 100 LP/CD productions). There are Continental Kids groups (8-12 years old), Young Continentals (13-16 years old), The Continentals (16-33 years old) and Continentals Encores (25-55 years old). In addition to many English-singing groups there are also tours in the languages Dutch, French, German, Spanish (South America), Brazilian-Portuguese, Japanese, Italian, Korean, Slovakian, Hungarian, and Romanian. Practically every country is covered. What are the reasons for this enormous success? Those who know the Continentals, know that they

go for quality, an extensive repertoire, artistic renewal and spiritual depth, in combination with great motivation. But there are more groups which do this and yet disappear at some point, so there has to be another aspect to the Continentals. That's right! It is the aspect that the Continentals share with every other successful organisation, choir, dance or theatre company, and ministry: they are supported by a very clear and well-qualified **leadership and management structure** that creates and maintains the infrastructure, keeps the rails in place and ensures that the train reaches its target.

There are some (over)spiritual groups that will tell you to your face that such things are all nonsense and are only in the way of the Holy Spirit's work. Their motto is "Management is wrong." But the Continentals could never have reached so many people and been a blessing to millions of people if the organisation had not had proper administration, leadership, organisation, regulations, management and promotion. Very worldly things! They constitute the railway sleepers that are placed in the gravel, holding the rails together and at the right level to ensure that no stones get onto them that might derail the train. There is a biblical mandate for all this organisational work:

- In the New Testament, the gift of administration is clearly mentioned among the apostolic gifts, "*And in the church God has appointed ... those able to help others, those with gifts of administration...*" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

- In the previous book you could read up on all the tasks the Levites (the singers from the Old Testament) performed as part of their calling: they were, among other things, gatekeepers and assisted with jurisdiction, transport, education and events. They were masters in organisation, management and administration! Their activities did not simply appear out of the blue. The temple organisation was huge and needed conscientious and careful planning that involved a whole machinery. The choirs and orchestras that could be heard in the temple were just the top of the iceberg. God is a God of order. Chaos, unnecessary improvisation and makeshift solutions are actually the things that impede the work of the Holy Spirit. Proper organisation takes time and energy and involves costs. What such an infrastructure looks like is described in detail in the book *Behind the Scenes*. Below you will find a summary of principles from the experience of the Continentals and other ministries, all of which can be found in the book *Behind the Scenes*.

* Motivation

There are various forms of motivation (this is explained in Volume 5 of this series *Biblical Principles* entitled *Leadership*).

- Most members of choirs and bands are motivated for one season, so don't drag people along against their will. Start each season with an interview for everyone and discuss why they should join for the

new season. Don't admit unmotivated people, as they can easily demotivate others. Unmotivated people are loose canons that can cause much damage.

- If someone is motivated to perform a particular duty or fill a particular post, make sure that s/he has (or wants to acquire) the competence or skills needed, for example:

- light and sound: don't let them sing, only do the 'technology';
- logistics: let them arrange all the transport and only allow them on stage if they have the required talent for that ministry;
- speaking: a good talk or presentation is worth a million, but there are many speakers who sing like crows;
- management: management is an art and not the same as dictating to people what they should do. Management tasks cover a period of several years. An average board member is in office for four or five years, so people will need long-term motivation to do this. Management training pays rich rewards, so learn to manage.

- The motivation of groups/members of choirs can get into a dip as well. There are activities and techniques for boosting motivation and encouraging teambuilding.

* life span: our organisation of Christian Artists/CNV Kunstenbond has existed since 1969 and we have gone through many phases in our own development, as well as witnessed the same phases in member organisations. If you look closely at these phases, the following pattern appears:

- Pioneers set the organisation up. They are top-down organisers, a kind of generals whose greatest value lies in getting something off the ground. Pioneers are often (though not always) not very democratic in their decision-taking, and as a result most pioneers get stuck after a few years when the organisation is up and running. The group wants to have a say but the general wants to continue taking all the decisions, and the result is a crisis, damaged people and often the end of a great initiative. Therefore the general has to start building a leadership framework, set up a board and start delegating tasks as early as in the third year, and transfer power in the fourth year. The initiative has to continue within an association structure. If you don't do this and there is no crisis, many workers from the beginning will stop in the 4th or 5th year. It may be necessary to have a change of conductor or artistic leader before the 5th year.

- The pioneering phase is followed by a phase of democratisation, which is also a consolidation phase. New conflicts often (but not always) break out in the 8th, 9th or 10th year. Timely changes of board members may help or it may be necessary to take on a new conductor or artistic leader.

- The next crisis is likely to present itself around the 14th or 15th year. The same action should be taken as in year 8/9/10.

- The following crisis is likely to present itself around the 19th year. The same action should be taken as in year 8/9/10.

The life span of a group can therefore be very long, but if you don't take a number of administrative precautionary measures, chances are that a great initiative stops after a few years.

Apart from this, there are of course activities with a maximum duration of one project. An example of this is the Christmas musical: three months of rehearsals followed by the performance. Yet these short-term activities also have to be well organised, directed, managed, and promoted.

* Board

A board manages the organisation. Board members have to pick up external and internal signals and react to them quickly. Aspects to manage are:

- Finances, which includes balancing the books. The members pay contributions, which, together with the revenue from performances, actions, subsidies and the sale of CDs constitute the income. All receipts of expenses have to be kept for seven years. Proper accounts must be kept. A treasurer has to be appointed. An auditing committee has to check everything for the annual report. If the organisation has a large annual budget with substantial expenditure, an accountant should do the annual accounts.
- Taking decisions *and* carrying them out. This includes monitoring afterwards, by making a report of each meeting (the minutes).
- Meeting.

What does a board do during a board meeting?

- the chairperson opens the meeting;
- the minutes of the last meeting are confirmed (is the report correct?);
- the minutes may give rise to issues that need to be discussed;
- other items on the agenda are discussed:
- incoming correspondence (for example a complaint, mail from your umbrella organisation, a letter from a church);
- policy aims;
- projects;
- rehearsals;
- general finances;
- public relations;
- recruitment of members;

- members' functioning;
- other matters:
 - set a date for the next meeting.
 - briefly summarise who will do what and when (deadlines).
 - any other matter
 - someone closes the meeting.

Remark: the chairperson leads the meeting; the secretary makes minutes and sends them to the board members later.

- Minutes have to be with the board members within three days after the meeting, so that everyone knows what actions s/he is expected to take.
- The agenda for the next meeting is drawn up by the chairperson together with the secretary. The agenda (including any relevant documents) has to be with the board members seven days before the next meeting.
- Confidentiality. Make it a rule that what is discussed at a board meeting is to be kept confidential. If you don't, inner circles develop, people hear things on the grapevine, and matters tend to be blown out of proportion. This has ruined many groups, so a serious warning is fitting.

* Members' meeting

A general meeting is typically held in spring and in August. Such a meeting has to be prepared in detail as well:

- announce the date long in advance;
- the agenda and any documents have to be with the members at least seven days before the members' meeting;
- for other actions look under the heading 'Board';
- note that during a member's meeting members have to have their say about each item on the agenda. The majority decides and this decision is binding.

* Aims

The choir, group or company will obviously have listed its aims in its statute, but such aims are often very general in nature. The following may help:

- * List the long-term aims once every four or five years, for example during a weekend in the countryside, asking questions such as 'Where does the group want to be in five or ten years' time?'; 'What do we want to achieve and *why*?' Then describe in detail for the next four or five years *how*

you are going to carry out a number of activities each year in order to achieve the five-year objective.

Such long-term aims comprise a number of aspects, including:

- aims as regards quality;
- aims as regards contemplation/spiritual growth;
- aims as regards your church/churches;
- aims as regards the repertoire;
- aims as regards the members;
- aims as regards public relations;
- etcetera.

It is a very good idea to define a number of aims for the board and each individual at the start of the five-year term in office. Such a list offers a blueprint that you can refer to at the start and at the end of each year and ask where we are / where I am, what should be done, etc. And, if possible, it will be interesting to formulate a number of personal aims with each new group member and briefly discuss them each year.

* Promotion/PR

The best advertisement is who you are, what you do and how you do it. This applies both on stage and backstage. In addition, there are a number of activities that have to be planned and carried out strategically.

- INTERNALLY

Keep your members well informed, otherwise you are sitting on a time bomb. An announcement during a rehearsal is not enough. Everything should be confirmed in a notice sheet that also has to be sent to those who were absent as soon as possible.

- EXTERNALLY

Inform the media well in time before your performance/activity takes place and have posters, articles, photos and a website ready.

- If you are part of a larger organisation, church, institution or similar, ensure that the organisation receives regular monthly information and updates on work in progress. If monthly reports are considered too much, make sure quarterly reports are sent. Organise a meeting once a year with the council of elders and the minister at which you discuss at least the short-term and long-term aims.
- N.B. 1. a complete book about how to manage a choir, group, ensemble, etc is found in our publication: BEHIND THE SCENES

- N.B. 2. a complete book with special biblestudies for travelling music groups etc is found in our publication: THE WAY, biblestudies for discipleship

Epilogue

I have received many questions on the subject of ‘working in the world’ and I would like to make use of this opportunity to answer them. Making music or art in ‘the world’ (i.e. not in the context of or for a church) is a Levitical calling as well. Doing everything ‘as for the Lord’ is a healthy, honest and true principle. This means it is not a problem to play hard-rock in a secular rock band or modern classics in a philharmonic orchestra. In that case your Levitical attitude will be focused on the following aspects that have been discussed in this book:

- delivering quality;
- proper motivation, including supporting your group and individual members (also personally);
- going the extra mile;
- acting ethically, which includes fair deals, keeping agreements, taking good care of materials and equipment, being honest and sincere, and speaking the truth;
- being on time, being punctual.

Your witness will be in your acts rather than in your words.

TO CONCLUDE

My aim for this book is that it will prove an impetus for:

- * originality
- * quality
- * creativity

in all forms of praise and worship.

Would you like to react to this book after reading it and acting on it? Please do! I hope this book will be a blessing to you in your daily practice.

Leen La Rivière

Personal notes

Once you have read the whole book, you are advised to start again at the beginning, read a chapter an evening and think it over.

1. Note HERE, what has challenged you from the passage.
2. Note HERE, what you are going to do about it in your own music or art.

This is Volume 3 in the series *Biblical Principles*.

Volume 1 of this series is called *Creative and Christian: Biblical Principles of Creativity and Art*.

Volume 2 of the series is called *Music & Ministry*.

Please send any reactions to these books to:

Leen La Rivière, CNV-Kunstenbond/Continental Art Centre, P.O. Box 81065,

3009 GB Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Alternatively, send an e-mail to leen@continentalart.org

You can also order the next volume of this series from the above address

(Volume 4 of this series is called *Biblical Principles for the Message*).

The Continental Art Centre organises activities to stimulate creativity and the arts. These include one-day workshops, conferences, seminars, publications, yearbooks, exhibitions and concerts. The Continental Art Centre has several sections:

- The visual art section;
- The music and media section;
- The literary section;
- The dance and other performing arts section;
- A register of musicians (listing musicians with professional diplomas).

- All these sections together constitute the CNV-Kunstenbond (Christian trade union for the arts), which helps, advises, supports and encourages people via a clear structure. You are invited to become a member.
- In addition, there is the annual Christian Artists Seminar, an international study week in July/August for professional artists and artists in training. All artistic disciplines are represented during this week, see www.christianartists.org.
- For post-academic education and lifelong learning there are numerous modules available at the new European Academy for Culture and the Arts, integrated in the annual Christian Artists Seminar, see: www.christianartists.org.

A perfect opportunity to gain experience for those who are active in music is to take part in a project of the Continentals. These projects last two to four weeks and participants get professional training in all disciplines needed to function as a choir or as a leader, to do the technical, musical, or instrumental work, to function as a band or a praise group. Continental groups exist for various age groups,

including Continental Kids (aged 8-12), Young Continentals (aged 13-16), The Continentals (aged 16-35) and Continental Encores (aged 25-55); to join: see www.continentals.nl.

Further information can be found on www.continentalart.org. Alternatively, please write to:
Continental Art Centre, P.O. Box 81065, 3009 GB Rotterdam, The Netherlands, tel. ## (0)10-4568688; fax. ## (0)10-4559022.

EPILOGUE

Ultimately all different musical styles will merge into one before God's throne in a celebration of beauty and majesty. (Isa.33:17). "There the Lord will be our Mighty One" (Isa.33:21). That is our future, our destiny. What we do with our lives now and what decision we make will determine whether we participate in that celebration.

It is good to think about all that God has said so why not start all over again reading this book and this time look up all the scripture verses and read them in their context, meditating on them. We are desperately in need of music that emanates from the Spirit of God and not out of human nature. Whether our music is from God or not is not determined by its style. It is determined by the attitude of our hearts.

May the dynamics of the Kingdom fill our music just as it did in earlier times when the presence of God (Shekinah) filled the temple.

May the prophetic promises concerning music's central role in the revival be realized and fulfilled in our day. May we march forth, just as the Levites of old, leading God's army with conquering praise.

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF MUSIC

This book is the conclusion of a 45 years Bible study, examination, and research in evangelistic activities and a fifteen year study into the biblical basis of music ministry. Anything that had practical application or contained spiritual and life lessons contributed to the structure of this book.

In view of the many questions about the spiritual equipping of choirs and Christian bands, this book should prove a valuable resource. For example, at the beginning or end of each rehearsal a chapter could be read. Various chapters could be used for meditation and study or as topics for group discussion. They are intended to encourage the spiritual life of your group as well as your own and it will help you, as a musician or singer to comprehend the ministry you are involved in.