

TUNES OF GLORY

G.Wauchope Stewart 1926 *Music in Church Worship*¹
W.D. Maxwell 1952 *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland*²
Ian Mackenzie 1990 *Music's Magic Lost: Can it be Regained?*³

At the beginning of the period covered by the Baird Lectures,⁴ worship in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland was proceeding on its slow recovery from the 'rant and cant', the wearisome length and verbosity, of the previous century. It is nevertheless possible that the picture painted by Dean Ramsay of worship and its setting around 1820 – the lack of font and table, the absence of Scripture readings and Lord's Prayer, and of 'extemporary' prayer which consisted merely of its component parts reshuffled,⁵ without variety and beauty - was still applicable in many places. However, such privately published volumes as *The Scotch Minister's Assistant*⁶ both reflected and resourced a movement towards more finely wrought prayers, coupled with better prepared preaching, while the General Assembly in 1859, on the heels of *Prayers for Social and Family Worship* - for those in this country and abroad who were out of contact with regular pastoral provision - appointed its first Committee on Aids to Devotion. Finally in 1865 there was founded the Church Service Society⁷ to study the origins and history of Scottish worship with the goal of improving the worship of its day, a society which at one time had a third of the ministers in its membership and was to have a lasting influence on parish worship.⁸

A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland: W.D. Maxwell

Three of the series related to Christian worship. It is interesting that two of these took the music of the church as their focus - those of G.Wauchope Stewart in 1926 and those of Ian Mackenzie in 1990, reflecting perhaps the fact that, of the various media through which worship is expressed, the close personal relationship people have with music makes it an area of the greatest debate and, frequently, anxiety. In between these lectures, over the years 1952-53, W.D.Maxwell addressed the history of worship in the Church of Scotland in a set of lectures seen by one authority as among the most 'notable' in the series,⁹ and which, in Douglas Murray's estimation, 'provided a much needed standard survey of that subject'.¹⁰ Maxwell, at the time minister of Whitekirk and Tynninghame, was born in Canada, studied there and at Glasgow, becoming minister at Hillhead, followed by army chaplaincy during the Second World War. Later, he was to be appointed to a succession of South African chairs, of Ecclesiastical History in Fort Hare and of Divinity in Rhodes University, Grahamstown. His work on the origins of the *Book of Common Order* had broken

¹ G. Wauchope Stewart, *Music in Church Worship* (London, 1926).

² W.D. Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland* (Oxford, 1955).

³ Ian Mackenzie, *Tunes of Glory* (The Handsel Press, 1993).

⁴ The first lecture was given in 1873.

⁵ Maxwell, 170-1.

⁶ Inverness, 1802.

⁷ This was echoed in the two other main Presbyterian churches.

⁸ For a fuller account of this period, see Duncan Forrester & Douglas Murray, eds., *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* (T & T Clark, 1984, second edition 1996).

⁹ D.F. Wright, 'Baird Lectures', in N. M. de S. Cameron, ed., *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (T&T Clark, 1993), 52.

¹⁰ D.M. Murray, *ibid.*, 555.

new ground,¹¹ while *An Outline of Christian Worship*¹² and *Concerning Worship*¹³ continue to be highly valued.

Maxwell belonged in a line of scholars who in the previous hundred years or so had set out to uncover the earlier history of Reformed worship. G.W. Sprott (1829-1919), like Maxwell of Canadian birth, minister at the Chapel of Garioch and at North Berwick, had provided analytical editions of earlier liturgies and prayer books, such as his *Scottish Liturgies of the Reign of James VI* (1871),¹⁴ as well as surveys of practice in *The Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland*.¹⁵ Thomas Leishman (1825-1904) is remembered not only for his collaboration with Sprott but for his seminal 'The Ritual of the Church' (1890).¹⁶ H.J. Wotherspoon (1850-1930), who was the co-author with J.M. Kirkpatrick of *A Manual of Church Doctrine* (1919),¹⁷ published an edition of *The Second Prayer Book of King Edward VI*, while his *Religious Values in the Sacraments* was described by D.M. Baillie as 'the best book Scotland has produced on the sacraments for a long time'.¹⁸ This surge of scholarship was powered by a desire to renew worship by the recovery of elements and practices which these authors were concerned to show as at once truly Reformed and belonging in the best traditions of the Church catholic – for example, the centrality of the Lord's Supper, the saying of the Lord's Prayer and Creeds, the singing of the doxology. The close connection, as they understood it, between liturgy and the space in which it was celebrated is expressed through the work of James Cooper, founder of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society, who published an edition of 'Laud's Liturgy' (1637).¹⁹ A similar earlier comprehensive treatment of the subject to Maxwell's is found in McCrie's Cunningham lectures of 1892,²⁰ although he differs from the emphases of the previously cited writers and criticises positions which see authenticity in Reformed worship as deriving from the inclusion of certain detailed practices. Another scholar to which Maxwell makes much reference is William McMillan, whose *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church*²¹ is now a standard reference work for detailed study of the period between 1550 and 1638.

In his first two lectures, Maxwell examines the legacy of the Celts and Scots, followed by an account of worship in the medieval church. Central is his lecture on the Reformation (III), continuing on into the time of the covenants (IV), the years following the Restoration (V), and, in the final lecture, some more recent developments which he saw as leading to the 'renaissance of worship'.²² A helpful,

¹¹ *John Knox's Genevan Service Book* (Edinburgh, 1931, 1965).

¹² Oxford, 1936

¹³ Oxford, 1948.

¹⁴ Blackwood, 1901.

¹⁵ Blackwood, 1882.

¹⁶ In R.H. Story, ed., *The Church of Scotland, Past and Present* (1890). He also edited *The Westminster Directory* (Blackwood, 1901).

¹⁷ H.J. Wotherspoon & J.M. Kirkpatrick, *A Manual of Church Doctrine* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1920), revised and enlarged T.F. Torrance & Ronald Selby Wright (Oxford, 1960).

¹⁸ D.M. Murray, in N. M. de S. Cameron, op.cit., 900.

¹⁹ James Cooper, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer for the Use of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1904).

²⁰ C.G. McCrie, *Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland* (Blackwood, 1892).

²¹ Wm. McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church* (James Clarke, 1931).

²² This was the title given to the Lee Lecture of 1905 by John Kerr on the subject of the Church Service Society. (Edinburgh, 1909). See also D. Bruce Nicol, 'The Church Service Society - a Brief Retrospect', *Church Service Society Annual*, 1928-9, 17-20.

and often entertaining, feature is the imaginative reconstruction of acts of worship as they would have been experienced in the different periods. While the first two lectures may need now to be read against more recent scholarship,²³ those on the Reformation and after brought to a wider audience, in fascinating detail, the results of his own and others' researches.

These lectures were the work of a dispassionate historian, but they are at the same time the work of a minister of the Church who held certain convictions about how the worship of his era might more effectively enable the divine-human encounter that lies at its heart. This agenda is partly expressed through closer analysis of the development of the Reformed tradition of worship: first the widespread use up to, and for a short time following, the Reformation of the English *Book of Common Prayer* (1552); secondly, the lineage of 'our' Book of Common Order back through the Genevan service book to that of the exiles in Strasbourg and to Bucer's revisions of the translation of the mass into German by the monk Diebold Schwarz. It is also expressed, at more length and through several lectures, in his attempts to show that practices and forms that are assumed to be 'typically' Presbyterian, as over against others which are surely Anglican, may not be what they seem. The cycle of suppression and re-emergence of various worship practices, now under Presbyterianism, now Episcopacy, are shown to be not peculiar to either and, at different times, equally championed by both. The saying of the Lord's Prayer, of the Apostles' Creed, and the singing of the doxology at the end of the psalms, 'old rotten wheelbarrows to carry the soul to hell', all later seen as a badge of Episcopacy and redolent of attempts at alien control, are shown to have been included in the first Book of Common Order. Similarly, that the Lord's Supper be the normative worship of the Church is attested as the Reformers' ideal whereas during the twenty-eight years of the second Episcopacy²⁴ Communion was celebrated in Glasgow on two occasions only. Liturgical responses on the part of the congregation, far from being Anglican or Catholic, had fallen into disuse in all branches of the Western Church at the time of the Reformation. Extempore prayer and the practice of 'lecturing', with little actual reading of Scripture, the 'lining out' of psalms, and sitting at prayer, are identified not as part of Scottish tradition but as deriving from English Puritanism. The infamous 'Laud's Liturgy' of 1637 is given relatively sympathetic treatment as more of a Scottish compilation than was thought, while the riots in St. Giles', Greyfriars' and elsewhere that attended its introduction were not so much spontaneous outrage as carefully orchestrated demonstrations.

There is thus a certain crusading quality about these lectures, with positions taken up which have much in common with the convictions of those who tend towards a 'higher' view of liturgy (this last word, by the way, shown by Maxwell to have been used by the Reformers). His arguments are from history rather than theology, but they are telling, and his skills in historical analysis are rounded home in the service of the contemporary Church and its practice. His address to the Church Service Society in 1956 is further evidence of this, where he calls for more carefully integrated forms of worship, for a greater simplicity and directness which would offer worshippers more coherent forms of expression and enhance for them the significance of what they were

²³ See for example articles by Alan Macquarrie and Audrey-Beth Fitch in Colin MacLean and Kenneth Veitch, eds., *Religion*, Vol.12, in *A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology* (John Donald, in association with the European Ethnological Research Centre and the National Museums of Scotland, 2006).

²⁴ Following the Restoration of the monarchy.

engaged in. As in the lectures themselves,²⁵ he calls for the table to be the focus for prayer and the pulpit for preaching, and for greater participation through the Creeds, amens, and prose psalms, together with a greater frequency of the celebration of Holy Communion.²⁶ This concern with good worship was further expressed in Maxwell's involvement in a clutch of landmark volumes, including the 1940 *Book of Common Order*, whose influence spread far beyond these shores.²⁷

Music in Church Worship: G. Wauchope Stewart

One element which makes its appearance throughout Maxwell's series is the employment of music (or lack of it²⁸) in the changing forms of Scottish worship. For this, his main source is Millar Patrick's authoritative *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody*.²⁹ The two remaining sets of lectures focus entirely on the music of the church. The kind of music which is best suited to worship is a topic which has exercised the church from the beginning. It is a question which arises in fresh form following each cultural change, each new shift of religion in relation to society. In the Anglican communion in the twentieth century, no less than three Archbishops' Commissions on church music were deemed necessary to respond to current difficulties and dilemmas and to draw up new policies for the Church - respectively reporting in 1922, 1951 and 1992. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy - Sacrosanctum Concilium*, whose sixth chapter concerned music, has been followed by clarifying statements and further reports, the Instruction *Musicam Sacram* (1967), the American bishops' report *Music in Catholic Worship* (1972), *The Milwaukee Report* (1992), and the *Snowbird Statement* (1995), and others.

It is difficult to approach music in a spirit of pure enquiry. Frank Burch Brown's remark that '(F)ew things at present create more persistent conflict within Christian congregations than differences over worship style, music and media (especially 'contemporary' versus 'traditional')' is echoed by the majority of authors who address the issue. Witvliet reports a loss of 'theological and pastoral equilibrium',³⁰ while Wolstertorff notes, 'We are dealing with passions. I have yet to come across a church member for whom the music of the church is a matter of sheer indifference.'³¹ Indeed, it is common in American literature to speak of 'worship wars', with examples given of the displacement of traditional musicians by technology or by styles of music they neither like nor can produce.³² Such divisions are not confined to Protestantism. From the Roman Catholic Church, Mgr. Francis Mannion notes 'an enormous polarisation with few in the middle ground' and observes that 'the best musicians and composers

²⁵ See page 95.

²⁶ Undated newspaper cutting.

²⁷ For example, it is said to have been influential in the development of the eucharistic liturgies of the Church of South India.

²⁸ He quotes a silence of several years in Edinburgh and the 'discharge' of psalm singing lasting over a decade by the Presbytery of Lothian in 1645.

²⁹ Millar Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (Oxford, 1949).

³⁰ John D. Witvliet, 'The virtue of liturgical discernment', in Charlotte Kroeker ed., *Music in Christian Worship* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2005), 88. Witvliet outlines several typical situations of change for the better or for the worse, and the resulting damage to relationships between clergy, congregations, and musicians.

³¹ Nicholas P. Wolstertorff, 'Thinking about church music', in Charlotte Kroeker *loc. cit.*, 5.

³² For example, Don E. Saliers, 'Liturgical music and electronic technology: contemporary soundings', *Studia Liturgica* Vol.28 (1998), No.2, 166ff.

... are deeply alienated'.³³ One commentator sums up the cost to his Church, as he sees it, of the widespread experimentation in the wake of the Second Vatican Council: 'We in the United States have paid a great price for the freedom of experimentation with secular music. We have gone down some blind alleys. We have made some mistakes. So far, the rewards for this freedom are not overwhelming'.³⁴

The search for criteria to guide or govern what music best sets the texts of the liturgy, what music itself most nearly approaches and takes the worshipper closest to the holy mysteries, what forces most aptly will make such music, what commitment and lifestyle is appropriate for musicians, what priority is given to resources for music-making: all these matters are rendered doubly difficult because of the personal and intimate relationship people have with music to an intensity beyond their relationship to texts and translations. Then again the matter is not simply concerned with finding the best match with the rituals that have evolved; music for ever looks over its shoulder at the wider culture to the secular forms whose language it shares, at ease in either company. This makes it both the advance guard and the rearguard in the church's interaction with society, vulnerably exposed in the debates about the balance between accommodation and distinctiveness.

Wauchope Stewart's lectures were given following a period of particular engagement on the part of the Church with its music, writing as he does on the eve of the publication of the *Revised Church Hymnary* in 1927 and a new music edition of the *Scottish Psalter* in 1929. Stewart had been minister at Fraserburgh, Aberdeen (Rosemount) and Fyvie before going in 1912 to Haddington. After the union of the United Free Church with the Established Church in 1929,³⁵ he was appointed joint convener, with Millar Patrick, of the new Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion. The period in which Stewart lived was not only one which had seen radical change in church music practice – the acceptance of hymns alongside psalms and paraphrases, the 'passing of the precentor'³⁶ in favour of the organ, the establishment of the choir in place of the congregational singing practice – but one in which there was considerable writing about church music.³⁷

In 1893, the newly-formed Scottish Church Society³⁸ held an inaugural conference in which three of the papers given were on this subject, offering a critique of music and how it was employed in worship at the time.³⁹ In sum, they show congregational singing to be weak partly due to a lack of emphasis on the congregation as music makers, and partly to a deficiency in the quality of too many of the tunes on offer, in which an 'essentially musical' nation do not recognise that which normally draws forth their robust singing in secular contexts. Also prevailing is an attitude of passivity amongst worshippers where it is the minister (and often the choir) who alone give expression to the devotional content of the liturgy. In tune with the principles of the

³³ Francis Mannion, 'The need for an adequate liturgical musicology', *Worship*, Vol. 64 (1990), 78-81.

³⁴ Virgil C. Funk, 'Secular music in the liturgy? Are there any rules?', *Studia Liturgica*, Vol.28 (1998), No.2, 192.

³⁵ See footnote 44.

³⁶ The title of a volume of reminiscences by Duncan Fraser (Edinburgh, 1906).

³⁷ A useful analysis was made by H.J. Wotherspoon, 'The Present State of Church Music in Scotland', *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society* 2:5 (1890-1893).

³⁸ See Forrester and Murray, loc.cit., 87f.

³⁹ *The Divine Life in the Church*, Scottish Church Society Conferences, Second Series, Vol. II (Edinburgh, Glasgow and London, 1895), 206-226.

Liturgical Movement, the Society advocates a high priestly role for the congregation in worship, fully participant and recognising that the prayer that is expressed is not that uttered by minister or choir but comes from the heart of every worshipper. To achieve this, a return to earlier practices (the motto of the Society is 'Ask for the old paths, ... and walk therein') is advocated by which music adhered closely to the words and rituals of worship and bound together Word and recipient, simple music which would come naturally from the mouth of every worshipper. Anathematized was a theatrical and sensational style of musical writing ('pretty music') which threatened to replace older, clearer melody, tending to obscure or distort the meaning of the words set. Particular reference was made to the suitability of plainsong for the increasing of congregational involvement.

What might be meant by 'pretty music' is elaborated in a lecture delivered in London to the Church Music Society in 1910.⁴⁰ J.A. Fuller-Maitland strikes a contemporary note with his call to the church to decide 'whether the music is an oblation to the Most High God or a means of attracting a large congregation', two points of view that are 'too apt to merge in a kind of pious haze'. A main object of his concern is the provision by composers of weak imitations of such as Spohr and Gounod and he comments: 'Sometimes one feels that this habit of truckling to the passing tastes of the public is debasing music to the level at which it is used by keepers of fashionable restaurants, who hope to disguise the inferiority of their food by the ministrations of a few miserable fiddlers'. Low standards of performance, the preference for commercially acceptable styles of music, lack of co-operation between clergy and organist, 'playing down to an assumed standard of bad taste', and the uninformed editing of the treasures of the past, all lie behind the 'urgent requirement' for reform in church music.

Where Fuller-Maitland outlines the problem, in a lecture to the same Society some three years later, H. Walford Davies⁴¹ offers some principles for the evaluation of church music, in contradistinction to theatre or concert music. Good art, like the good life, is both free and orderly. Sensation, emotion, and reason must be kept in balance, and this balance, in the case of church music, serves its purpose of bringing the known and the seen into subjection to the unknown and the unseen. It also avoids the danger of music becoming its own end, mere performance, display divorced from purpose. Davies then applies these guidelines to matters of melody (it should be melodious rather than 'tuney'), harmony ('no chords with aggressive charm to be used for their own sake'), rhythm ('energy controlled not energy spent'). W.H.Hadow further offers⁴² an analysis of 'good' and 'bad' hymn tunes, the former being where the emotional content is appropriate to its place and occasion, the melody well drawn, the rhythm stately and dignified, and the harmonic inner parts interesting, whereas the weak tune is one that is dull, 'luscious', with an ill drawn melody. To the argument that it is more important to attract people to worship than satisfy canons of aesthetic taste, Hadow answers that experience shows that all people prefer the best tunes if they are given a chance to grow familiar with them.

⁴⁰ J.A.Fuller Maitland, 'The need for reform in church music', lecture delivered to the Church Music Society on 29th May, 1910, *Church Music Society Occasional Papers No.1*, Church Music Society, no date.

⁴¹ H. Walford Davis, 'Music in Christian worship', delivered to the Church Music Society, 19th February, 1913, *Church Music Society Occasional Papers No.4*, Church Music Society, no date.

⁴² W.H.Hadow, 'Hymn tunes', *Church Music Occasional Papers No. 5*, Church Music Society, no date.

Echoes of this debate surface in Stewart's lectures. He quotes with approval the first Archbishops' Report's warning about the serious danger that lurks in music characterised by emotionalism, attacking a 'mawkish sentimentality',⁴³ and calling for music of dignity and restraint. Such is not to be found among the 'sorry make-shifts' that filled our earlier hymn books, nor among Victorian tunes which are too chromatic and lack strong melodies, nor among the florid, over-dramatic repeater tunes preferred for psalm singing over the strong melodies of the Reformation.⁴⁴ (Stewart, like Maxwell later, advocates a return to prose psalms, failing which they should be read antiphonally.⁴⁵) Music in worship must not merely excite our feelings but stir our devotion, a devotion which is also to be the spring of action. In his comments on the contents of current hymn books we are surely being offered an insight into the policies of the committee about to launch the *Revised Church Hymnary*. What he finds lacking is a note of joy. We are to put away the notion that God likes to see his children making themselves miserable, that the worship of God's house is an obligation laid upon us to be performed with a sort of sullen devotion.⁴⁶ There is a distinction to be made, however, between what is genuinely joyful and music 'in vogue in a certain type of religious service' which in its desire to secure brightness produces only a boisterous vulgarity! So much for Moody and Sankey, you might say, yet Stewart is sympathetic to the popular. On the perennial question of the balance between the secular and the sacred, he suggests that a criterion might be that the music we use has to convert every room into a church not the church into a concert-room or dance hall. We should not, however, be afraid of popularity. Folk song has 'entwined itself round the hearts of the people', while cheap music-hall ditties are soon forgotten, showing that in the end we are people of good taste. There can be nothing wrong in using melodies from the folk tradition, assuming that the associations are not too strong or that the original text has passed out of use.⁴⁷

There is a certain modern ring about this proposal, and there are several other points when Stewart might seem to have been writing only yesterday. One is when he criticizes the way some fine earlier tunes have been squeezed to 'fit the Procrustean bed of recognised metres in vogue' and where the vigorous rhythms of the old church tunes have been ironed out. Another is his surprising strictures, uttered in more than one place in his lectures, upon revision committees who wish to dictate to us how we should express ourselves in worship! 'We have a right to demand in our Church music ... that it be music that does express what we actually feel, not what the Church authorities think we ought to feel'. It is the feelings of people which should be finding expression, not those of the comparatively few experts.⁴⁸ This is a criticism that was

⁴³ Page 154.

⁴⁴ This was a principal bill of fare, for example, in a publication which was popular at the time entitled *Old Scottish Psalm Tunes* (Bayley and Ferguson, 1905, revised and enlarged 1908), the greater part of the contents being neither old nor Scottish. Yet it provides an example of how even tunes which could be criticised musically can carry meaning for those who use them. George Reith in his *Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assembly* (Edinburgh, 1933) reports that, as the processions from the two General Assemblies converged at the Lawnmarket on their way to their uniting service in St. Giles', the crowd broke into Psalm 133 to the tune Eastgate, a repeater tune found in that collection but not in the hymn or psalm books of either Church.

⁴⁵ Page 105. He writes: 'One wonders why this method is not more generally practised'.

⁴⁶ Page 66.

⁴⁷ Page 72.

⁴⁸ Pages 68, 72.

also later levelled at the compilers of *CH3*,⁴⁹ who were rightly or wrongly accused of pursuing a didactic purpose, and among these voices was that of the author of the third set of lectures we shall examine. Further, Stewart regrets the tendency of hymn book editors to focus on harmony (most usable for choirs) whereas melody is indispensable. A choir's primary function is to encourage and support the congregation. In fact, 'Ideally, the congregation should constitute the choir'.⁵⁰ There should be more 'natural unison singing',⁵¹ with the pitch lowered for the sake of the men, matters again which occupy our third lecturer. That said, Stewart writes knowledgeably and sympathetically of the cathedral tradition and its derivatives,⁵² and how this can best serve the local parish. He is not short of advice also for organists, including a warning about filling in gaps in the service with shapeless improvisations which go nowhere, characterized by the great French organist and composer Widor as so much 'macaroni and cheese'.⁵³

Stewart's lectures are entertaining and stimulating to read - and must have been so heard in delivery - and represent a considerable contribution to the debate of the time, while by no means being out-of-date with our own. There is another way, however, in which the lectures add to the knowledge of the subject. In addition to substantial accounts of the history of psalmody and hymnody, Stewart brings a stiffening of theory and theology to a debate which had tended to be conducted mostly in musical terms, and this from a mind well stocked with philosophy and poetry, British and continental, ancient and modern, and all the time a thorough musician. Still useful are his two opening lectures. The second, his discussion of the kind of music suitable for worship, has already occupied us. The first is on the five-fold value of music as an aid to worship - its propensity for appealing directly to the feelings, its ability to be a channel for the expression of feeling, its association with dancing and poetry, the way it can instantly call up associations with circumstances in which it has been heard before, and the social nature of music-making which unites participants in a unique way. This strong underpinning emerges also in the substantial provision for the improvement of skills and the expansion of repertoire that is known to have been made in these years.

Music's Magic Lost: Ian Mackenzie

Six decades later, Ian Mackenzie refers to the earlier set of lectures and offers the view that Stewart would hardly recognise the church music scene of the day. 'There has been, in these sixty years, a revolution: in attitudes to theology, in experience of religion, and in the practice of worship; and simultaneously an earthquake in the technology of music and entertainment'.⁵⁴ While it might be possible to argue that Stewart would have coped very well with what he might find today, it is certainly true that since the late nineteen fifties there has been what people often call a 'church music explosion', developments which Ian Mackenzie does not just chronicle but

⁴⁹ *Church Hymnary: Third Edition* (Oxford, 1973).

⁵⁰ Page 181.

⁵¹ Stewart here quotes the first Archbishops' Report of 1922.

⁵² As well as serving on the revision committee for the *Revised Church Hymnary*, Stewart was associated with the revision of *The Church Anthem Book* (ed. Walford Davies and H.G.Ley, Oxford 1933), which was authorised by the General Assembly.

⁵³ Page 256.

⁵⁴ Page 90.

some of which he could be said to have provoked, or at least to have aided and abetted.

The terms of the present discussion have been consistent since the mid nineteen fifties, when the Twentieth Century Church Light Music Group first published its work. This group of London clergymen was concerned initially only with tunes, seeking to replace standard hymn tunes with melodies in popular dance and ballad styles which would prove more attractive to the young people of the day. These pioneers had recognised the emergence of the 'youth generation' which was to dominate the agendas of the music industry, and of the market in general, but the style of music they favoured was judged to be already dated. In a scene which then began to unfold with rapidity, a landmark event was the Bristol Congress of the Student Christian Movement in 1963 where the worship included lyrics written overnight during the event to the hit parade melody 'Telstar', celebrating the launch of the first communications satellite. The theme of the conference was 'Jesus Christ the Servant' and the emphasis was on a world much in need of Christian ministrations. The use of the tune and the nature of the text spoke together of a desire that the Christian Gospel should be seen to be relevant to the life of society. Mackenzie, along with hymn tune composer Peter Cutts, was music director of the congress and also included some songs by Sydney Carter, then little known. These, written by a Quaker who was also much influenced by the lively folk revival of the time, offered to bring a new sensibility to Christian song, with texts which startled by their outspokenness and by melodies which echoed the simplicity but also the irony which characterised folk culture.⁵⁵

The founding, in Scotland, of the Dunblane Music Consultation, of which Mackenzie was a member for the several years of its existence,⁵⁶ was in direct response both to these new compositional styles but also to the furious debate that ensued. Its purpose was not only to regulate the discussion but also to contribute to the development of good hymnody written in a contemporary style, which now seemed inevitable. While the Dunblane group interpreted 'contemporary' widely, there was concurrently much experimentation with popular styles. The first ever hymn book 'supplement' (a new concept) in the UK, *Sing!*, was published by the youth department of the Church of Scotland.⁵⁷ In 1969 and 1976, the Iona Community (again, with which Mackenzie had a connection as master of music at the Abbey during at least one summer) published two volumes of hymns from Africa, brought to Scotland by missionary and Community member Tom Colvin from Malawi and Ghana,⁵⁸ many of which now appear widely in hymnals on both sides of the Atlantic.

In several respects, this is a remarkable series of lectures. One is the way the lecturer pushes at the boundaries of the form – just as he had done when head of religious broadcasting at BBC Scotland – by his incorporation, after the lecture, of a further half-hour round the piano (in one case, the organ), playing and talking, with occasional singing involving the audience. Another is the approach to his subject in

⁵⁵ 'It was on a Friday morning', first heard at the conference, contained the lines: 'To hell with Jehovah, to the Carpenter I said; I wish that a Carpenter had made the world instead'.

⁵⁶ 1961-1969, meeting at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane.

⁵⁷ Edited by Ronald Beasley and Douglas Galbraith.

⁵⁸ *Free to Serve* (Iona Community, 1969) eds. Tom Colvin and Peter McLean, *Leap my Soul* (Iona Community, 1976), eds. Tom Colvin and Douglas Galbraith.

offering what was really an extended ‘riff’ based round life experiences and musical memories (always with total recall of detail!), passionate and engaging.⁵⁹ A moving account of a recovery from a heart attack, a Communion service that went disastrously wrong, his first hearing of a particular musical work leading to his staying out all night in contemplation, a visit to Prague to make a broadcast and the spontaneous singing of a carol by local guide and camera crew, his mentors at the organ, all are quarried for insights about the music we ought to make in church – an ‘anecdotal’ approach which the author acknowledges, and defends. Another remarkable feature of the lectures is the language in which they are delivered. Wauchope Stewart may be nearer in sympathies to the issues of our time than the sixty year gap may suggest, but I doubt if he could ever have compared the function of church music to a gin and tonic.⁶⁰ Mackenzie makes his points, or, rather, drops his bombshells, less through logical argument than by throwing into the air a rich scatter of images and allusions that explode together in the imagination of the listener. Here are not so much six lectures as an extended (musical) work in six movements with an inner coherence that defies summary.

What, however, does he wish to share with us? One of Mackenzie's contentions is that it is wrong to impose uniform, from-above, standards, a position with which we have seen Stewart agree. But Mackenzie would go further. Questions of taste are irrelevant when it comes to church music. What matters is personal involvement, but an involvement which is exercised at a higher and more intense level than we are accustomed to. We are not to be afraid of vulgarity, even kitsch. What is needed is not new this or new that but the exercise of our imaginations and the activity of our emotions, even our rawest emotions, but redeemed by as skilled an art as we can manage. If the music doesn't thrill in the church today, it is because our imaginations are moribund. For renewal, it is not enormous resources that are required, but a readiness, on the part of ministers, musicians and congregations, to take risks. The real difference is not between people of different views, or different generations, but between danger and dogma. Risk is all. We have to go over the top, and anecdote after anecdote describes how this conductor, that organist, or Mackenzie himself chose, or was provoked, to step over the cliff, to go beyond what was asked or required. This opportunity and responsibility is given to all involved even in the smallest corner of church music. The organist in Mucklehuggie on a cold November Sunday morning, about to play over the first hymn, has the same potential effect as the butterfly wings in chaos theory which call up a storm on the other side of the world.

Mackenzie, himself a consummate musician and gifted improviser (no macaroni chef, he!), writes about *music* before, and as, he writes about *church* music. He makes church music break out of the walls, asking us to let in the cultural forces from outside and not limit ourselves to churchly versions. Many of his examples are performances of concert works that he has heard (often travelling from Edinburgh to Glasgow incredulously to hear a second performance), but his emphasis is usually on the conductors, an area in which he is expert. One of the reasons for this concentration, he explains, is that in talking of conductors and their musicianship he can talk obliquely of organists and their crucial role in producing the church's music.

⁵⁹ Some of these, and much else, are recounted in his autobiography, *I Was Invited* (Glasgow, ICS Books, 2003).

⁶⁰ Page 41.

What he in fact does is rehabilitate the church's organists, choir leaders and music directors, offering them a new value and role. But this also he offers to choirs, dismantling the assumptions that prevail and placing them in a new relationship to the congregation. Finally, he charges congregations to more authentic and honest living and praying, to trust their feelings and their imaginations to carry them into the presence of God. In the local church he looks for the minister who acts truthfully, the musician who is vulnerable and listens, and worshippers who share their lives with others; then will be heard the 'tearing sound of costly truth being fashioned, the word becoming flesh'.⁶¹

Yet, alongside all these insights, Mackenzie, who himself as a minister remained close to his musicians and in retirement regularly accompanied singing and trained choirs, declares that his aim ultimately is to improve congregational singing, which he suggests can be achieved by 'spectacularly simple means'. He offers ten golden rules which include lowering the pitch (a suggestion made also by Stewart), dramatically varying the speed of hymns, more unison singing (Stewart agrees), the use of other instruments, seeing the choir as supporting the congregation (Stewart also) but every so often offering a spectacular anthem, singing in different styles, bringing back the old favourites,⁶² organists and clergy to talk to each other, step off the cliff!

This prescription is even now renewing the music of the church, including through practitioners Mackenzie has influenced, both within and furth of Scotland, continuing a long tradition of exporting good practice and glorious tunes to lands afar.⁶³ One of the pleasing strands in his lectures was a welcome recalling and celebrating of figures in Scottish church music who had changed the situation they had found, a roll call of saints who had influenced a generation, a pantheon that Ian Mackenzie has surely joined.

⁶¹ Page 114.

⁶² Lowering pitch, the use of widely different styles, and the restoration of old favourites, all are characteristic of the recently published *Church Hymnary: Fourth Edition* (Canterbury Press, 2005).

⁶³ A recent study from beginnings to Reformation is *Our Awin Scotis Use: Music in the Scottish Church up to 1603* (Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, 2000). See also Douglas Galbraith, 'Music, Church and People' in Colin MacLean and Kenneth Veitch, eds., loc.cit.