

## Three Songs And A Prayer

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by Robert F. Turner

*The following article by brother Robert F. Turner was written in his popular bulletin, Plain Talk, back in May of 1973. It could have been written today, and so I commend his thoughts to you for consideration.*

Today's popular rebellion against the establishment has spawned both good and bad elements. As might be expected, there are some who are genuinely concerned that cold formalism and traditional bindings give way to sincere, spontaneous worship of the true God; and there are those who use current discussions to promote childish emotions and clap-trap schemes to improve the worship ...schemes as much or more mechanical than those they seek to replace. (Stand in a circle, hold hands with your neighbors, close your eyes, turn your faces to God – if you know the direction – and sway gently as you pray. If that does not produce the Spirit let me know, and I will change the recipe.)

There are many who accept the word of God as the means of determining the proper concept of the church, its worship and work; but recognize that many details are left to judgement and expediency. They are re-examining such practices to see if better ways can be found. We should never allow the way we have done it to be accorded the status of divine law, and if someone can find a better arrangement than three songs and a prayer then let us consider it. But don't think a change is better just because it is a change; and if some are tradition bound surely the more mature, spiritually minded will exercise great patience toward all.

Sometimes the changers are neophytes, having zeal without knowledge or experience, who cripple their own plans and the good they could do, by their childishness. I heard of one fellow who thought the contribution should be more distinctly separated from the Lord's Supper. This is good thinking, and is implemented in some churches by careful announcement, or different time and ushers. But I was told that this fellow refused to give unless they accepted his reform. In another place discussion of the traditional nature of the invitation song led some to say that a service was not scriptural unless it contained an invitation song, and others said there was no authority for singing to sinners at any time.

The traditional expediency is often the fruit of years of testing by trial and error, and has endured because it has proven to be workable and good. Change, especially radical and abrupt change, may distract and produce an effect the very opposite of that desired. It may open the way for problems the traditional method was developed to solve, but of which this generation know nothing. There is no place in Christianity for anarchal revolution.

And as regards spontaneous worship (everyone hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue – 1 Cor. 14:) – even when such signs were a part of delivery and confirmation of the word of God, Paul called for order (v. 40) let all things be done unto edifying (v. 26), and said the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets, (v. 32). **Team** effort (collective action) is “opposed” to independent action (see dictionary); which means that when the church worships together there must be *some* regulation. This will not restrict sincerity for those who are *truly* spiritual.

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294203