POSTS FROM THE PAST: GLOBALISED WORSHIP

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Category: Observations

This post is from 2009:

Imagine the scene; itâ€™s just after midnight and there are two hundred or so young people who have just drifted together sitting on the floor and enthusiastically singing worship songs. That was the scene atÂ Mission NetÂ a couple of days ago. For me it had been a long day, including a successfulÂ seminarÂ and a spectacular failure of a Wycliffe presentation and I was ready for bed. Mind you, the kids had just gone through just as long a day but they looked settled in for a long night of singing and praising.

Even for someone as tired as I was, the sight of all these people from all round Europe singing praises to the Lord was uplifting and encouraging. Germans, French, Swiss, Czech, Italian, Hugarians; playing guitars, drumming drums and enthusiastically belting out the words â€“ it was quite something.

Then something struck me. I knew all of the words! This disparate group of believers from all over Europe (with hardly anyone from the UK among them)Â were singing the same worship songs that I sing in Church in England, and whatâ€™s more they knew the words too. I have to admit that I was slightly saddened. Iâ€™d love to have heard some Latvian or some Dutch being sung. What does authentic Ukranian worship music sound like?

The Christian community worldwide has two great things going for it. The unity that we have in a common faith and the diversity which comes from the Gospel being authentically expressed in our different linguistic and cultural contexts. I can understand that at an International gathering there is a need for some commonality and it makes sense to choose some English language songs. But it was sad that they did the same thing when they gathered together informally. But it goes further than mission net. Iâ€™ve sung the same songs with the same words in churches and meetings all round the world. It seems that Christians around the world are adopting a common set of soft-rock songs as a quasi-universal language of worship and sadly, we may be losing indigenous and traditional forms of worship which are a rich part of the Churchâ€™s heritage. At a time when more Bible translation is going on that ever before and the diversity of the Church is being celebrated, it would be a shame if we drifted into a hooked-on, soft-rock worship conformity.