



JOHN BELL

There are two key issues regarding music and spirituality. The first is that of all the art forms, music is most synonymous with faith. It is invisible, it does not depend on the given world for its inspiration, it appeals to the mind, the heart, the body, and the imagination. It can therefore nourish devotion in a more all-pervasive way than art or literature. It also, as music therapists prove, has an ability to engage people irrespective of their intellectual and physical abilities, or their state of mind. God, through the psalmist, does not command the people to perform a play or read a book in honour of their Maker, but to make music. The second key issue is that song is largely definitive of what and how we believe. The images of God and discipleship, the range of “*legitimate*” Christian interests, the way in which we regard ourselves as worms or apprentice angels is in no small way determined by what we sing. Hence a diet full of “*soldier hymns*” can be as bad for the spirit as too many helpings of “*Jesus and me*” egocentric choruses. Perhaps that is why the psalms deal with joy and justice, delight and depression, personal faith and corporate witness.



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A CASE FOR CONGREGATIONAL SONG*”**