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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP: AN APPLICATION
AT THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

John S. Nixon

May 2003

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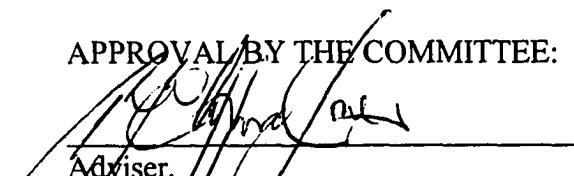
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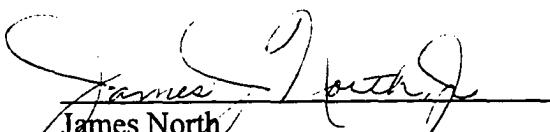
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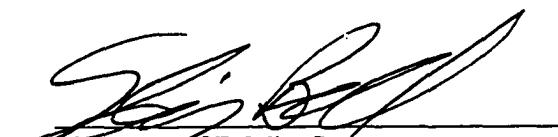
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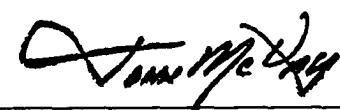
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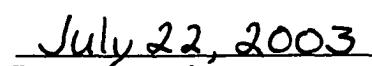

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP: AN APPLICATION AT THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

John S. Nixon

Adviser: R. Clifford Jones

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP: AN APPLICATION AT THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: May 2003

Problem

There is an ongoing conflict between the members of the Oakwood College Church regarding what constitutes appropriate and meaningful worship. The conflict is most pronounced between the church's two largest constituencies, college students and senior citizens. The lack of unity on this issue hinders both nurture and outreach efforts on behalf of the church and is a constant source of member dissatisfaction. Initial observations suggest that the problem is traceable, at least in part, to the lack of a clear understanding as to what should be the basis for determining corporate worship practice.

Method

This study presents a review of historic worship practices among Seventh-day Adventists with an interest in building upon them for further development of a biblical theology of worship. It draws on New Testament principles as revealed in the worship practices and counsels relative to the church of the book of Acts and later New Testament churches. It seeks to integrate these principles with those of the Protestant reformers in their attempts to return the church to its biblical roots, drawing principally from the theology of Ulrich Zwingli.

Conclusions

The ultimate goal of this project is to assist the Oakwood College church in the development of worship that is biblically sound and pleasing to God, and to make a contribution to the overall Seventh-day Adventist church in the area of worship theology.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1996 a new church was organized in the city of Madison, Alabama, bringing to six the number of Adventist congregations in the general Huntsville area. Unlike the five other churches, which for the most part had been started as a result of evangelistic efforts, this church was planted for the specific purpose of providing a congregation for college students. It was created for the purpose of offering to Oakwood College students a worship experience that would be relevant to their needs; a service the campus church was seen to have failed to provide. Other Adventist colleges – Atlantic Union College, Pacific Union College, even Andrews University – have experienced the development of student-led worship services on campus; but never had a new church been raised up outside of a college campus solely for the purpose of providing to students a different style of worship. More and more the institutional churches are seeing a reaction to their unofficial policy of structuring worship to suit their older community-based members. College students and young adults feel perfectly justified in pursuing their own worship interests apart from institutional life, just as the official church has historically done apart from student concerns.

The situation brings into bold relief a contemporary issue in Adventist ecclesiology: worship tailored to the preference of the worshiper. Is it legitimate to structure worship to suit the tastes of a particular interest group? Whether or not the preference can be justified is beside the point since one group naturally favors its taste above that of another. Formality, dignity, tradition, charisma, emotion, and therapy are all rationales that have been used to justify distinct emphases in worship, which remain, after all is said and done, still a reflection of personal preference.

The concern for the legitimacy of worship itself is immediately apparent since, as David Peterson observes, a subjective approach to worship that is primarily focused on the feelings of the worshiper has little to do with any biblical teaching on the subject.¹ Marva Dawn adds that true worship cannot be based on human preference but should revolve around the singular concern of what will be pleasing to God. “The point of worship is to recognize that ‘God alone matters.’ Many battles over worship styles would be eliminated if this answer were kept in mind as the foundational criterion for planning what we do, no matter what forms we use.”² In his article on the purpose of worship, Ralph Wood suggests that there is actually a deep atheism lurking behind the contemporary concern with personal gratification in worship. What the worshiper really needs, he suggests, is not to have his tastes satisfied but to have them refined in the presence of God.

We seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God in worship. Our own benefit is but the by-product, not the avowed intent. . . . When we have been both formed and transformed by true worship, we will seek not to ‘get something out of it,’ but to

¹ David Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 16.

² Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 130, 80.

honor God by offering Him what the Book of Common Prayer calls ‘a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.¹

In his analysis of the trend toward pluralism in Christian worship, James F. White observes three developing forms: (1) eclectic worship carefully planned to reflect a cross section of the congregation; (2) occasional special services given over to the style of a particular segment of the congregation; and (3) multiple services in several different styles offered frequently in different spaces within the church and at different hours.² While this approach to worship formulation shows a greater respect for the diversity of the body of Christ, it also tends to fragment the congregation into competing communities and to suggest legitimacy for particularity in worship in a way that may be unwarranted. The question stands, Is corporate worship subject to popular opinion? Should worship be formulated to suit the taste of the worshiper, or should some other standard be the controlling factor?

For many believers, clergy included, worship appears too self-evident to require a specific theology. Churches tend to follow traditions in worship, often uncritically, continuing to observe what has been handed down from previous generations. “Most of us are more conditioned by custom and personal preference in this matter than we would care to admit,”¹ writes Peterson. When worship innovation does occur it is often based on institutional priorities, like increasing church attendance or bolstering failing tithe. Such an aim may or may not have anything to do with the primary goal of pleasing God, the One who is being worshiped. Too often worship is formulated with little

¹ Ralph C. Wood, “The Fallacy of ‘Getting Something Out of Worship,’” *Ministry*, February 1998, 7.

² James F. White, *Christian Worship in North America: A Retrospective 1955-1995* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 73, 74.

comprehension of the prerogatives or purposes of God. A theology of worship, therefore, must first be concerned with meaning related to God; not the rituals of worship but the beliefs on which the rituals are built, not the forms of worship but the concepts that the forms seek to inculcate.

The present study does not attempt to determine whether or not the Madison church should have been organized in the way it was, nor does it seek to evaluate whose worship tastes should prevail on a college campus – those of the younger more vulnerable students or those of the older more stable adults. The initial reaction to the Madison church of the Oakwood community, one of feeling threatened and rivaled, has settled into a comfortable appreciation of another sister communion. The proliferation of places of worship on a campus or in a city, after all, can be a positive development for the overall mission of the church. Crucial to that mission, however, of making disciples of all nations (Acts 1:8) is a genuine worship life in accordance with God's purposes for His people. Mission cannot be accomplished simply by multiplying institutions that bear the name Adventist. If discipleship is to be authentic and the mission of the church fulfilled, worship must be responsive to its original purpose as outlined in Scripture, a purpose that calls for critical analysis and careful study.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this study is to begin to develop a theology to be used as a basis for worship formulation in the Oakwood College Church. The specific problem to be addressed is the ongoing internal conflict between the members of the Oakwood College Church regarding what constitutes appropriate and meaningful worship. The

¹ Peterson, 15.

conflict is most pronounced between the church's two largest constituencies, college students and senior citizens. The lack of unity on this issue hinders both nurture and outreach efforts by the church and is a constant source of member dissatisfaction. Initial observations suggest that the problem is traceable, at least in part, to the lack of a clear understanding of what should be the basis for determining corporate worship practice.

Justification

The Oakwood College Church has experienced a fracture in its communal life based on the conflict over appropriate worship practice. The division has revealed itself in competing worship values, statements of distrust, and rivalry over positions of authority within the church. There have even been public outbursts of anger over differences of opinion regarding worship. Biblical and theological data confirm the central importance of worship in the life of the individual believer and the corporate body. Current literature on worship by Adventist authors reveals that there is some disagreement with regard to what constitutes the appropriate basis for worship practice.

In addition to Oakwood, other Adventist college churches have encountered similar problems and conflicts over corporate worship practice. Several have addressed the problem by dividing Sabbath worship into two or more segments meant to meet divergent expectations of competing constituencies. While this may be an adequate pragmatic solution to the problem, a harmonious and unified worship life, if it can be achieved, would be more consistent with the ideal of Christianity expressed in the prayer of Christ in John 17:21, "that all of them may be one." United harmonious worship would also be a more powerful expression of the unifying love peculiar to Christians as

stated in the appeal of John 13:35, “by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Limitations

This study is not primarily concerned with the style of music that is appropriate to worship; with whether or not worshipers should clap their hands or say “amen”; or even with the appropriate day for worship as commanded in the Decalogue. The approach taken to the subject here is not liturgical in this sense. Historic elements of Christian worship, like proclamation, will be examined, while other traditional parts of the service, like hymnody, will not be mentioned at all. Liturgical elements have their importance in this study only as they illuminate the theological principles behind them. The church’s theology determines its belief in the appointed day of rest and the soon return of Christ; its ecclesiology will determine which liturgical elements it adopts, which it excludes, and which should be left to freedom of choice.¹ When the worthiness of God is uppermost in the minds of the worshipers, it serves as a hedge against inappropriate worship practice.

Expectations

This project will help me, as the person principally responsible for planning and implementing corporate worship at the Oakwood College Church, to better serve my congregation. It will lead to better understanding and cooperation between church members, young and old, and will contribute to the ongoing dialogue within the Adventist church relative to meaningful and appropriate worship practice. This project also intends to provide a resource for other pastors who face similar problems.

¹ Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, trans. M.H. Bertram (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishers, 1968), 24.

Method

This study attempts to get behind the order and forms of worship to expose their meaning as revealed in the unselfconscious faith of the New Testament believers and the recovered identity of the Protestant Reformers. There is no doubt, based on its history and theology, that the Seventh-day Adventist church counts both these communities crucial to its own distinctiveness. Adventism professes to be singular in its adherence to the Bible as its only creed, harkening back to the Protestant Reformation. As in all churches, however, it is through worship and not rhetoric that Adventism exposes its true identity and reveals its true priorities to the world. If the worship of the church is spiritual and edifying, lifting up Christ and forming disciples in His image, then the Adventist church is a New Testament community faithful to the spirit of the Protestant Reformation. If the worship of the church is something less than spiritual and Christ-centered, then Adventism is not a true New Testament community no matter how many doctrinal creeds it may boast. The questions to be pondered are, How faithfully has Adventism reflected Jesus Christ in its worship in the past? and How may it better do so in the future?

While the issue of worship has received ample attention in Adventist literature in general, no official theology of worship has ever been developed by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The focus of the church has tended to be on establishing ecclesiological uniformity through a standard order of service.¹ *The Seventh-day*

¹ An important marker of which appears to be the service described by H.M.J. Richards in his book *Church Order* (Denver, CO: Colorado Tract Society), 1906. On p. 64 he writes, “The minister enters the pulpit and kneels for a few moments in silent prayer to God. All the people bow their heads and unite with their minister in silent prayer. . . . Then the minister announces the opening hymn, when all stand and

Adventist Church Manual, for example, presents general principles of worship encompassing such topics as, “reverence for the house of worship,” “arrangements for church meetings,” and “the place of music in worship.”¹ As helpful as this information may be, it does not provide a theological basis for formulating worship that is consistent with Scripture and the mission of the church. The purpose of this study is to make a contribution in this specific area.

join in the singing. After this the minister and all the people kneel in prayer, while he leads them in a public extemporaneous prayer of moderate length.”

¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 16th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 2000), 67-72.

CHAPTER 2

WORSHIP PRACTICE AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Historical Sketch of Worship Conflict in the Advent Movement

The strongest common sense of identity held by the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church was that of mission. Early Adventists viewed themselves as having been “set in the world as watchmen and lightbearers . . . given a work of the most importance – the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages.”¹ Because of the emphasis on true worship in the message of the first angel, this awareness set an immediate priority for the early Adventist believers. Just as important was the Adventist interpretation of that message stressing a return to the original seventh-day Sabbath of creation. This aspect of true worship, the seventh-day Sabbath, was always the most studied and highly emphasized feature of the worship call among Adventists. In fact, the Adventist interpretation of the first angel’s cry to “worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7) has sometimes been reduced to little more than a command to assemble on the correct day of the week. The stress of that message on the unique identity of the One to be worshipped has received little attention by comparison. While it is understandable that in the early days of the Advent movement the Sabbath emphasis should stand out, especially since little else about Adventist

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:19.

worship was distinctive from other Christian churches, later years have made it obvious that a more developed Adventist worship theology is called for and perhaps overdue.

At the time of the birth of the Advent movement in America seventh- day Sabbath worship was a Jewish phenomenon largely forgotten in the Christian churches. Most churches applied the name “Sabbath” as a misnomer to the first day of the week. The one Christian group that most notably observed the original Sabbath of creation was the Seventh Day Baptist church. Seventh Day Baptists trace their U.S. origins to the colonies in America going as far back as 1661 when one of their ministers, John James, “was dragged from his pulpit . . . and publicly hanged in a brutal manner, his preaching of the kingdom of Christ being misunderstood as treason.”¹ It was a Seventh Day Baptist in fact, Rachel Preston, who introduced the Sabbath to the Adventist pioneers in 1844. She thought it a shame that the Millerites should have so much fervor for the advent message and yet be ignorant of the Sabbath truth.² With the exception of Joseph Bates, James and Ellen White,³ and perhaps a few others, most of the Adventist pioneers did not embrace the Sabbath truth until the 1850s,⁴ by which time the Millerite movement had been around some twenty years. When the Sabbath doctrine was embraced it became the cardinal teaching of the Adventist believers.

¹ R.D. Bradshaw, ed., *Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups*, 4th ed. (Fairview, OK: The Bible Sabbath Association, 1974), 154.

² Henry J. Westphal, “Denominational History Data,” Heritage Room, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³ Westphal cites 1846 as the year the Whites started keeping the 7th day Sabbath, confirmed for them the following year in April when Ellen White had her first Sabbath vision. The year following, 1848, Joseph Bates accepted the Sabbath.

⁴ Bradshaw, 91. The first Sabbath school was organized in Rochester, New York, by James White in 1853. The name Seventh-day Adventist was adopted in 1860.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that much of Adventist identity in the early years was completely tied up in a single emphasis. It is interesting to note that the pioneers first considered “Holiness” as a name for their new church because of its emphasis on the true spirit of worship, but settled on Seventh-day Adventist because it expressed in more detail the unique mission of the movement.¹ As reflected in the writings of Ellen White, Adventists considered the Sabbath teaching to be all-important: “The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. . . . The name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front and will convict the inquiring minds.”²

The seventh-day Sabbath was the crucial difference of Adventism with its focus on the worshiping community gathered on the day set aside by God from the foundation of the world. The spiritual meaning of the Sabbath, however, is holiness, so that Adventist worship in particular should always reflect this important feature.

Traditional Worship as Developed in the Adventist Church

Other than the observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, the worship of the Adventist pioneers was not distinctive from that of other Christian denominations, Methodist and Presbyterian in particular. It included worship practices that have since fallen into disrepute with most of Adventism. In particular, early Adventist worship embraced ecstatic and charismatic elements that are seldom seen in the Adventist churches of today. This is not to say that ecstatic exercises characterized every

¹ J.N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: General Conference Association, 1892), 221.

² White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 1: 223, 224.

gathering among early Adventists, but along with the Protestant churches of the time in reaction to Catholic ritualism, Adventist worship showed an aversion to formal liturgy. The accent was on informality in worship in harmony with the freedom of the Spirit. The services were flexible and participatory, including song, prayer, testimony, and the teaching and preaching of the Word. A service in 1853 described by James White gives the idea:

A prayer meeting was appointed for First day morning at nine o'clock, and at the hour more than three hundred people were assembled. Two or three prayers were offered, then the time was occupied by different brethren who spoke to the point with freedom and power till half past ten when we took the stand and spoke nearly two hours on the first and second angel's messages of Revelation 14:6-8.¹

At times the worship was permitted to progress spontaneously without a formal sermon at all. This was the case in another service conducted by James White in August of the same year: "There was no preaching on the Sabbath but the time was all occupied by the brethren and sisters who spoke freely of their faith, hope, trial, and joys."² In these early years the spontaneity of worship sometimes resulted in ecstatic experiences among the worshipers that included shouting, speaking in tongues, and falling out. James White described a certain service in the following way, "we all shouted and praised the Lord as much as we were a mind to. In this state of feeling among us, Ellen was taken off in vision."³ In another letter written the same year, Ellen White described a gathering this way,

Sunday the power of God came upon us like a mighty rushing wind. All arose upon their feet and praised God with a loud voice; it was something as it was when the

¹ James White, Editorial, *Review and Herald* July 7, 1853, 3

² James White, Editorial, *Review and Herald*, August 4, 1853, 4.

³ James White to Bro. Hastings, January 10, 1850, quoted in Ronald D. Graybill, "Glory! Glory! Glory! When Adventists Shouted for Joy," *Adventist Review*, October 1, 1987, 13.

foundation of the house of God was laid. The voice of weeping could not be told from the voice of shouting. It was a triumphant time; all were strengthened and refreshed. I never witnessed such a powerful time before.¹

Such experiences in worship were not uncommon in the early years of the movement. Ellen White alluded to the spiritual victory inherent in such worship demonstrations as she described another service in which she was struck down unconscious in vision. The shouting and celebrating were so loud in this 1845 meeting in a crowded farmhouse in Atkinson, Maine, that the sheriff, who was called in to break it up, arrested the worship leader for disturbing the peace. Undaunted by this embarrassing turn, Ellen White extolled the benefits of this kind of worship: "I saw that singing to the glory of God often drove the enemy, and shouting would beat him back and give us the victory. I saw there is too little glorifying God in Israel and too little childlike sympathy."²

Worship of this kind was not unique to the Adventist pioneers by any means. Ecstatic responses were a staple of worship in several Christian denominations in the 1850s - Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and others. In a letter written in 1996, C. Mervyn Maxwell critiques an article on Adventist worship written by Ronald Graybill by suggesting that the author should have contextualized the early practices of Adventists by comparing them with the contemporaneous worship practices going on in the Methodist church:

It was not uncommon for people to get down on all fours and bark like a dog. Quite common was the custom of developing the 'jerks.' If a woman had her hair tied in a

¹ Ellen White to Bro. Hastings, November 11, 1850, quoted in Ronald D. Graybill, "Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Worship," *Ministry*, October 1991, 12.

² Ellen White to Arabella Hastings, August 4, 1850, quoted in Ronald D. Graybill, "Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Worship," 13.

braid and wrapped up in a bun when she began to jerk, the bun would come undone and her long braid would whip about in the air. If the braid were long enough, it would actually snap as it changed directions. Can you imagine a revival meeting reaching its climax with a crack of whips all over the congregation?¹

In his commentary on early Methodist worship, Henry J. Westphal adds, “Sometimes they would get a limb of a tree cut down and holding onto it would jump up and down, jerking away.”² Maxwell’s observation points to the fact that Adventist worship in the early years was significantly influenced by the worship practices of Methodism, the church out of which many of the Adventist pioneers had come. Ecstatic activities in worship were considered manifestations of the Holy Spirit and were greatly treasured by early worshipers in both denominations. Enthusiasm in worship was encouraged by the Adventist leaders but never for its own sake as though it possessed some inherent virtue. There was not the confusion between spirituality and emotionalism among the Adventist leaders that sometimes characterizes charismatic thought today. James and Ellen White endorsed charisma in worship as the sign of genuine faith and devotion toward God. It was the devotion that was important, however, not a specific expression of it, so that when faith was seen to be threatened by an overemphasis on the ecstatic, the Whites were able to reverse their endorsement and begin to counsel caution in charismatic expression.

Because of abuses and the fear of an unbalanced emphasis in worship, Ellen White began to soften her support for charisma and counsel the church against leaving

¹ C. Mervyn Maxwell to Ronald D. Graybill, May 10, 1996, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

² Westphal, 64, 65.

the Word of God and trusting in “exercises.”¹ In his biography on Ellen White’s life, Arthur L. White attributes the change of emphasis to a vision concerning the holiness of God that Mrs. White received in December of 1850.² It was around this time that her counsel began to be modified. On Christmas day of that year she wrote, “I saw that God had moved by His Spirit upon your company in some of their exercises and their promptings; but I saw danger ahead.”³ In another testimony from the same period she wrote, “Lest His people should be deceived in regard to themselves, He gives them time for the excitement to wear off and then proves them to see if they will obey the counsel of the True Witness.”⁴ A concern for the effect of charisma on true devotion had begun to surface in her writings. Forty years later Mrs. White’s counsel on charisma in worship looked like a complete reversal of her early position. Commenting on a service in which she had participated she wrote: “There were no wild demonstrations for the praise of God does not lead to that. We never hear of any such things as that in the life of Christ, as jumping up and down and around and screaming and hollering. No. God’s work appeals to the senses and reason of men and women.”⁵

¹ Henry J. Westphal, “Campmeetings 1799,” Heritage Room, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, identifies “spiritual exercises” as a common term of the era also known as “falling exercises,” in which a worshiper would collapse and lay unconscious anywhere up to 24 hours. Whole families sometimes experienced this falling out, including those who were not present at the meeting, such as children at school or home in bed. When consciousness was regained the person would either express exhilaration at the experience or despair at feeling lost.

² Arthur L. White, *Ellen White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1986), 196-203.

³ Ellen G. White, “On Depending On Exercises,” *Manuscript 11, 1850*, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴ White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 1:187.

⁵ Ellen G. White, “Sermon at Ashfield Australia Campmeeting,” November 3, 1894 (Manuscript 49, 1894), 12.

The fact is Ellen White's writings on worship embrace both the conservative and the charismatic, depending on the era to which one appeals and the context of the particular counsel. Those looking to endorse a certain point of view on one end of the spectrum or the other will find support for their preference. A sampling of excerpts from her writings alternating between charismatic and conservative serves to illustrate this point.

Charismatic:

In the meetings held, let a number be chosen to take part in the song service. And let the singing be accompanied with musical instruments skillfully handled. We are not to oppose the use of instrumental music in our work. This part of the service is to be carefully conducted; for it is the praise of God in song.¹

Conservative: "Sometimes a person would jump up and down on the floor with hands uplifting praising God . . . [but] we are to strengthen our position by dwelling on the Word and by avoiding all oddities and strange exercises. . . . It is through the Word, not feeling, that we want to influence the people."²

Charismatic: "Tame, formal discourses have in them very little of the vitalizing power of the Holy Spirit; and the habit of preaching such discourses will effectually destroy a minister's usefulness and ability."³

Conservative: "It is God's will that all parts of His service shall be managed in an orderly, becoming manner which will impress those strangers who may attend, as well as

¹ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1946), 507.

² Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), 371, 73, 75.

³ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are "Laborers Together With God"* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1948), 165.

regular attendants with the elevated, ennobling character of truth and its power to cleanse the heart.”¹

Charismatic: “Here is a theme, poor formalist, which is of sufficient importance to excite you. Eternal interests are here involved. Upon this theme it is sin to be calm and unimpassioned. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotions. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest emotion.”²

Conservative: “Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ.”³

Charismatic: “The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted, but no words can properly set forth the deep blessedness of genuine worship. When human beings sing with the spirit and the understanding, heavenly musicians take up the strain and join in the song of thanksgiving.”⁴

Conservative: “In this stage of our history we must be very careful to guard against everything that savors of fanaticism and disorder. . . . Let us give no place to

¹ E.G. White, *Evangelism*, 207.

² E.G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 2: 212, 213.

³ *Ibid.*, 1:412.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9:143, 44.

strange exercisings which really take the mind away from the deep movings of the Holy Spirit. God's work is ever characterized by calmness and dignity."¹

By focusing on only one portion of this dual emphasis from Ellen White's writings, the impression can be created that she endorses one kind of worship expression against another. Thus Mrs. White's writings may be enlisted in the ongoing war between liberals and conservatives in Adventist worship. Consideration of the entire body of her writings on this topic, however, does reveal a trend toward moderation of ecstatic elements in worship as the years progressed, but never an abandonment of the idea of joy and enthusiasm as appropriate expressions of devotion to God in the corporate gathering.

Adventist Worship in Later Years

Along with the Methodists, Adventist leaders began to downplay the charismatic in worship and settle into an ecclesiology that relied on preaching as the main feature of the corporate experience. In an early testimony Ellen White described a particular worship service as an assembly for the purpose of "present[ing] the truth to those who would come to hear."² The unique message of the Adventist church became the center around which all other worship elements revolved. Says Eoin Giller,

Our denomination has worshiped mainly in the tradition of the sermon as the 'great event,' with other elements in worship considered "preliminaries." This emphasis in worship should never be denigrated. It has served several denominations for several generations with a simple, warm, and genuine vehicle for worship and religious communication."³

¹ E.G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 2:41, 42.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1962), 26.

³ Eoin Giller, "Worship Renewal in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Ministry*, October 1991, 17.

In his article on Adventist worship, C. Raymond Holmes also points to proclamation as the chief element, which serves as a regulating factor for the entire worship service.

The two major focuses are proclamation and acclamation, both vital elements in authentic Seventh-day Adventist worship. While urgency provides motivation for both preaching and praise, a balance between proclamation and acclamation is necessary to avoid distortion in worship. A congregation's praise is always in response to God's speech in Scripture and sermon. God speaks; His people respond.¹

In this analysis the proper balance between preaching and praise is achieved by prioritizing the proclamation of "the old gospel doctrine, sorrow for sin, repentance, and confession."² Everything is determined by the preaching of the Word. Holmes adds another important factor for Adventists, the order of worship. The preaching of the Word takes place, he writes, "within the context of worship governed by order, discipline, and dignity."³ Holmes alludes to the fact that over the years order has played an important part in the development of Adventist worship tradition. The Word of God preached within a certain order of service has become a staple of Adventist ecclesiology.

At a point in time Adventist worship throughout America began to take on a familiar form, one that was popularized through denominational meetings such as General Conference sessions, camp meetings, and Sabbath conferences.⁴ These gatherings always included times of corporate worship, a fact that helped to establish a general pattern for Adventist worship services. It came to the place where one could

¹ C. Raymond Holmes, "Authentic Adventist Worship," *Ministry*, October 1991, 13.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Loughborough, 122, reports that seven camp meetings were conducted by Adventists in 1869. By 1890 the number had grown to 48.

attend worship on Sabbath morning almost anywhere in the country and not be surprised.

The liturgy could be predicted almost to the letter, from the introit to the affirmation of faith, to the hymns sung from the Seventh-day Adventist hymnal,¹ to the Scripture reading, prayer, and sermon. Even the offering call became regularized into a certain formula of words anchored in a particular text of Scripture;² and as Adventism was exported worldwide through an active and successful mission service, the patterns of worship became not just national but international. Observes Holmes,

Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Far East, for example, are often similar to those of the upper Midwest in the United States. It makes little difference whether one worships in the Pasay SDA Church in Manila or the Pioneer Memorial SDA Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. The worship rituals are similar. In most cases the Far Eastern service is a direct transplantation of the American Adventist form and liturgy.³

In a sense the form of the worship service, which was adhered to fairly strictly, became the substitute for an official ecclesiology. If Adventist worship could not be grounded in a coherent biblical thesis it could at least be safeguarded by a strong organizational formality, and this is exactly what came to pass. Uniformity of practice developed into a worship tradition that eventually became the established orthodoxy, and worshipers in the pews learned to identify a particular order of service as constituting authentic Adventist worship. In the more conservative congregations, deviation from this order came to be looked upon as heretical. A minister could incite a riot by moving the

¹ Robert G. Wearner, Term Paper "Worship in the Early Life of Ellen G. White", Andrews University Theological Seminary, A560, Worship, May 1967, p. 11, observes that the church produced its first hymnal before it had ever published a book on doctrine. It was titled "Hymns for God's Peculiar People That Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus."

² Though innovation has come in recent years, some Adventists still feel strange if the offering call does not include the exact words of Mal 3:8-10.

³ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song: Worship Renewal for Adventists Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1984), 146.

Scripture reading to another position in the service or ending the offertory without calling the deacons forward with "bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." The early preference for freedom in worship as a Protestant reaction to Catholic ritual was reversed, and Adventist worship fell into a formal liturgy of its own. And as is the case with all formality, the tendency was to follow the established order unquestioningly, without an idea of any biblical significance to the traditions that were being followed.

In spite of all this, however, worship practice for Seventh-day Adventists never became so rigid as to develop into a standardized published order, as it did in other Protestant denominations.¹ This left some freedom in the Adventist ranks for worship innovation to occur. As new ideas on worship have come into the church, however, they have often been met with debate and controversy. This was the case in the late 1980s and early 90s when celebration worship grew up on the West Coast and incited a virtual firestorm in the White segment of the church, which was most affected by it.

Celebration worship in Oregon and California introduced a decided break with traditional Adventist liturgy. The worship style with its emphasis on contemporary Christian music and congregational charisma prompted a flood of articles and books on the issue of appropriate Adventist worship, and since the change was based on imitation rather than theology, it became an easy target for theologians and writers. In the Black Adventist church at about the same time worship change was evolving around the debate over the place of the emotive and the rational in worship. It is a debate that has continued

¹ Which did occur, for example, in the Methodist church. "After a time the church began to drop into a regular pattern of worship and at length worked out what we now call our 'orders of worship.' These are published in the Hymnal, in the book of *Discipline* and in the *Book of Worship*." Nolan B. Harmon, *Understanding the Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1955), 136.

to the present time. The discussion has gone beyond a mere disagreement over worship styles and turned into a dispute over cultural integrity in worship. The impact of culture as a legitimizing influence on the worship service is receiving new scrutiny in Black Adventist literature. Though published documents on the subject are still relatively few, recent works in African American Adventist literature present the relevant arguments. As representative of these works, a book on cultural worship by Dr. Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid will be examined.

Analysis of Cultural Worship Among Seventh-day Adventists

A recent publication on the topic of cultural worship in Adventism comes from a theologian whose cross-cultural experience as student, pastor, and professor gives him a unique perspective on the issue. Pedrito Maynard-Reid studied and taught in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and “throughout Hispanic America” before becoming a graduate student and university professor in the United States.¹ His theology of cultural worship brings into the Adventist church a discussion that has been ongoing in the Christian world for several decades.²

Like most theologians on the subject, Maynard-Reid develops his Black theology of worship through a historical analysis that begins with the slave experience. The now familiar label “invisible institution” describes the plantation religion that was the first Christian experience of Africans in America. From the beginning it was marred by

¹ Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean and Hispanic Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 14, 15. A Jamaican native, the writer has been on the faculty of Walla Walla college since 1990.

² Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, 3rd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 23, points to the early 1960s as the beginning of the discussion among Blacks as to what constitutes a distinctively African American religion.

hostility and segregation. Slave religion was called invisible because it was practiced in secret against prohibition. Religion was forbidden by slave owners who feared the independence and sense of entitlement Christianity might bring.¹ Of necessity, therefore, worship among the first Black Christians in America developed in the crucible of suspicion toward and independence from the White church. It was the recollected religious forms of Africa that had the primary impact. The imprint of African culture on the Christian slave experience has been widely attested in Black scholarship.² As Maynard-Reid observes, “the African religious heritage survived in its primal form, almost wholly untouched by European American Christianity for approximately 150 years.”³

The slaves who practiced this early religion did so under great duress. They were forced to resort to clandestine rendezvous and secret meeting places in the woods or in slave cabins. Out of necessity slave religion relied on its own invention. Guided by the memory of worship forms from Africa adapted to the new situation, slaves constructed a liturgical tradition of their own. The secrecy under which they assembled contributed to the worship form. Slaves hung wet blankets from trees to absorb the sounds of praise and used inverted pots placed in the center of the gathering to deaden the voice of the preacher.⁴ The danger and deprivation of the entire enterprise rendered its object all the

¹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4.

² See for example, George Ofori-atta-Thomas, “The African Inheritance in the Black Church Worship,” in *The Black Christian Worship Experience*, ed. Melva Wilson Costen and Darius L. Swan, Black Church Scholar Series 4 (Atlanta: ITC Press, 1992), 25.

³ Maynard-Reid, 54.

⁴ Ibid., 55.

more valuable to those who risked their lives to experience it. This high value placed on Christian worship has never completely left the Black church. To this day the most significant African American leaders in the country are those who first gained their prominence in the Black church.

It was not until 1701 and the formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel of the Anglican Church that colonists turned from their former indifference toward the souls of slaves and began to teach them the gospel.¹ It had been nearly one hundred years since the first Africans were brought to America in chains. In the years that followed, other Christian churches formed societies for the “Christianization” of slaves. Christian reformers began calling for the evangelization of the slaves’ souls. Puritans in New England began teaching slaves to read based on the conviction that every Christian must be able to read the Bible; and the Abolitionist movement began calling for an end to the slave institution altogether. Carried to its logical conclusion, the gospel of Jesus should have led to the complete liberation of Africans in America without the need for force of arms; but there was ambivalence in the slave evangelization movement.

Even the church with its clear message of freedom in Christ and the value of all people as beings made in the image of God did not offer equality to its new dark members. The attempts of White preachers and missionaries to Christianize slaves relieved Blacks of the need to worship separately and in secret, but it did not redress the problem of segregation in the church. As Wilmore observes, “there was interracial worship before the Civil War, but it was never intended to suggest equality.”² This led to

¹ Wilmore, 27.

² Ibid., 99.

a situation in which Christianization produced a detrimental effect on the general society in spite of its intentions to the contrary. Wilmore explains,

Blacks enjoyed no real freedom or equality of ecclesiastical status in either the North or the South. It never occurred to white Christians that the equality that was denied to their brothers and sisters in civil society should at least be made available to them within the church. As a matter of fact, the relationship pattern of whites and blacks in the household of God made it difficult for Americans to perceive that there was anything wrong with inequality in the household of Caesar.¹

Racist and segregationist practices in the church also had an effect on Blacks. Slaves accepted the message presented by White missionaries while recognizing the failure of the church to enact the very message it presented. Slave worship continued to have its own expression as Blacks rejected imitation of European worship forms.² The religion that was taught and practiced by Whites was not undiluted. Because they feared that religion and education would lead Blacks to think of themselves as equal to their masters, slave owners taught their slaves a distorted version of the gospel. Religion was used as an instrument of constraint to render the slave more loyal to his master and generally more pliant and manageable. The Bible was used to indoctrinate the slave to submission and the acceptance of his subjugated state. “The slaves were taught that the God with whom they became acquainted in the Bible was the ruler of the universe and superior to all other gods. . . . Black men were expected to accept their lot in this world and if they were obedient and honest and truthful they would be rewarded in the world after death.”³

¹ Ibid.

² Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African Americans, 1619 to the 1990s* (New York: Penguin Publishers, 1995), 117, 162.

³ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1963), 11.

In spite of the intent of slave owners, however, Christianity had the opposite impact on Blacks of what was intended. Slaves adapted the religion they received to meet their own situation. They took the gospel “not so much as it was delivered to them . . . but as its truth was authenticated to them in the experience of suffering and struggle.”¹ The importance of this lies in the early discontinuity it established between the Christianity of Whites and Blacks in America. In a sense it is hardly surprising when one considers the opposite conditions under which the two communities lived. Whites were interested in a version of the gospel that preserved and promoted their hold on power, while Blacks were looking for a message that would justify and help facilitate their desire for liberation. That Blacks found what they were looking for began to be evident in the growing independence of Black Christians even before there was an official independent Black church.

Wilmore reports on a group of slaves in Georgia that was said to have their own religion based on their personal experiences with God and various revelations and visions. They could not read and were not permitted to learn, so while they tended to respect the Bible they put more confidence in the impressions they received from “the Spirit within.” In one incident a large gathering listened to a sermon on Philemon in which the preacher commanded fidelity and obedience toward the slave master and condemned the practice of running away. To his surprise one half of his audience promptly got up and left the meeting while those who stayed behind murmured among

¹ Wilmore, 25.

themselves that the preacher spoke to please the slave masters and there was no such epistle in the Bible.¹

The less than ideal situation in which Christianity in America developed produced a church that was a mere shadow of what the Christian church was meant to be. It was not until recent advances in social relations brought the spotlight on cultural issues in religion that the church has become attuned to how ethnic factors affect Christian worship. James White observes,

It is only in recent years that large numbers of Christians have become sensitive to the injustice of worship forms that marginalize large segments of worshipers because of gender, age, race, or other human distinctions. The result has been efforts to change the language of liturgical texts and hymns where they have tended to make women invisible, to redo buildings that have excluded the handicapped, and to open new roles for those who were previously not welcome to serve in them.¹

The legitimate concerns of cultural worship in this regard can hardly be denied by a church long dominated by a White male perspective. Early attention to cultural concerns in worship and church life might have precluded the development of independent churches by African Americans. It is important to notice the effect of this on both the Black and White churches. Not only did the Black church in America develop a necessarily independent nature in response to White oppression and tyranny, it also came to possess a self-consciously defensive one. Under slavery and later under segregation, Blacks learned to shape Christian belief to deflect white criticism and serve their own survival needs. Christianity has always functioned closer to the survival level of the Black experience in America than the White experience. As a reaction to the belittling of African culture many Blacks have tended to defend and promote the culture

¹ Ibid., 30.

indiscriminately. This presents a challenge to African-American faith since the denigration of African culture by the White church cannot truly be remedied by the reification of African culture by the Black church. One exaggeration is just as false as the other. Black Christians cannot legitimately critique the historic European particularity of the church by replacing it with an African bias of its own. It is cultural particularity itself, in worship and church life, which denies the universality of the gospel. James White's question puts it succinctly, "How far do you go in worship in reflecting a culture without simply being a mirror of it?"² This is an important question for the contemporary Black church.

In his analysis of the struggle of Black theology to reconcile itself to the authority of the Bible, Itumeleng Mosala presents an important historical analysis. The unique status of the Bible as the universal Word of God was the liberating factor for African slaves that enabled them to put limits on the slave master's authority. The God of the Bible was the God of the universe; the God who would judge both master and slave by His own independent authority. God would have the final word, not the slave master. Having been so liberated the slave was not free to occupy the place in relation to the Word of God that the slave master had sought to hold.³ There was a fundamental universality about the message of the Bible that made it equally valid for all people. The implication of this fact for the Black church today is obvious. "The Gospel is true, it is good news for all men. And no theology, Western or African, has the right to equate

¹ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 31.

² James F. White, *Christian Worship in North America: A Retrospective: 1955-1995*, 59.

³ Itumeleng J. Mosala, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 2:247.

itself with the Gospel. The entire theological enterprise is concerned with the interpretation of the one Gospel for all sorts of conditions.”¹

If it is true, as Maynard-Reid says, that the unique nature of the church as the only institution in American life that Blacks truly own has caused a “sense of possessiveness, pride, and power . . . [that is] unparalleled in other places in American life,”² then African American Christians have something to fear that is potentially more dangerous than Eurocentrism in the church. At this stage in world history with its profound prophetic significance, the church cannot afford to pattern its solutions to problems after the principles of the world, especially in matters as spiritually crucial as personal relationship and racial reconciliation. The analysis of Maynard-Reid in this regard is therefore disturbing: “Since Stokely Carmichael’s galvanizing cry of ‘Black Power’ and the advent of the motto ‘Black is beautiful,’ African Americans have more pride than ever before in their worship service and their church. The secular value of pride in one’s blackness has spilled into the sacred space and time of worship and church life.”³

The necessity to fight for survival was thrust upon Blacks in America through no choosing of their own and Christian religion has been at the center of that struggle. If the church is to be true to its calling in Christ, however, it must seek solutions that are consistent with its identity in Him. The question to be examined for African-Americans is how the crisis of survival has affected Black faith. To what degree has religious practice been determined by political exigency? Is there a point at which African-

¹ S. Dwayne, “Christology and Liberation,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 35 (1981): 30.

² Maynard-Reid, 60.

³ Ibid.

American Christians should become concerned about repeating the fatal flaw of Israel under Roman bondage in which the nation's preoccupation with temporal deliverance caused it to miss the golden opportunity of spiritual deliverance? This question should stand at the center of debate as the Black church attempts to discover a worship expression that is more concerned with the glory of God than it is with cultural particularity.

Maynard-Reid's Theology of Worship

Like other theologians before him, Maynard-Reid's analysis of African American worship embraces values that may be seen to be at odds with each other when viewed from a more objective perspective. On the one hand the writer makes observations regarding Black worship that may be categorized as *ego-centered* and on the other hand there are those that may be labeled *community-conscious*. These are not the categories of the author himself nor can they be found in the literature of other Black theologians. These categories are the invention of the present writer who uses them as an evaluative tool in the context of a theology that does not consider culture to be formative for Christian worship. Though Black theologians have shown differentiation in consideration of cultural values in worship, the ideas have not been distinguished in this particular way. It should also be noted that the evaluations *ego-centered* and *community-conscious* are not intended to be descriptive of the original Africans who first practiced Christianity in America. What this categorization does attempt to do is describe the difference between worship practices that are valued because of their cultural authenticity and those that may be upheld because of their usefulness in Christian community in

harmony with biblical principles. The position of this volume is that no practice in worship is valid for believers based on cultural authenticity alone.

To say that a worship practice is genuinely African (or for that matter, Polish, Italian, or Nordic) is to say nothing concerning its spiritual worth as an act of worship toward God. As will be shown later in this chapter, God has a criterion for acceptable worship that is unrelated to human cultures. What makes a cultural worship practice valuable for Christians is its relationship not to the originating culture but to biblical principles. The Bible, as the unique revelation of God's will for His people, must stand alone as the authoritative source for legitimate Christian worship. Whenever particular cultural norms harmonize with biblical principles they may be received and celebrated by all Christians across every cultural line; but whenever such practices promote behaviors or attitudes in worship that are not consistent with Scriptural principles, they must be rejected by all believers, including those of the culture from which the practice comes. In this way human cultures of every kind maintain their appropriate place within a diverse community, that of subjugation to the authority and witness of Scripture and the culture of Jesus Christ.

African-American worship practices that may be categorized as *ego-centered* bear no validity to the Christian church, Black or White; while African-American worship practices placed in the category of *community-conscious* commend themselves to the church, Black and White, as the embodiment of biblical principles that are valued by God. Carlyle Stewart writes concerning the positive norms of African American culture,¹

¹ Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *African American Church Growth: Twelve Principles for Prophetic Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 39. His list includes such values as developing positive relationships, improvisation, innovation, and spirit-centered reality.

implying that all tendencies of Black culture are not necessarily positive. An elaboration on the differences between these two emphases is in order at this point.

The African cultural tendencies that promote holistic, family, and communal values serve as the embodiment of the New Testament principals of mutual love and oneness in Christ. These cultural tendencies reveal themselves in many of the worship practices of African American Christians. With regard to the holistic worldview Maynard-Reid makes the following observation,

Worship for blacks in America is not merely a ‘spiritual’ exercise unrelated to the rest of life. Historically, church and its related activities were not disconnected from other aspects of African-Americans’ daily life. . . . African Americans refuse to adopt the Western dichotomous view of life. They have maintained and perpetuated the traditions of their ancestors who saw life as a whole.¹

On the subject of communal and family relatedness Stewart comments,

Relational norms of black culture include the following: Valuing and respecting others as persons; developing relationships of mutual concern and trust; caring for and responding to the needs of family, extended family, and community; raising and caring for elders, children, and adults; respecting the eminent domain of matriarchal and patriarchal authority; reverence for God and those spiritual sources which confer value upon human life.²

Stewart goes on to comment on how these cultural tendencies work to enhance church life. Churches that are strong and experiencing great growth exemplify familial traits in their worship and interrelatedness. Maynard-Reid remarks on the same cultural value in the African-American church:

African cultural tradition sees every woman, for example, as mother, aunt, grandmother, sister or daughter. All are family. Africans and African Americans view life as one-in-community. Life is a two-way relationship, not individualistic. Africans and black Americans define themselves by a sense of belonging – belonging to a community. This cultural worldview of necessity is carried over into worship.

¹ Maynard-Reid, 60.

² Stewart, 44.

Worship therefore is a community happening in which kinship and mutual interdependence are affirmed.¹

Both these values of African and African-American culture are also Christian values. The holistic view of life and the communal nature of worship were principles taught by Jesus, and not merely as an aspect of His Jewish heritage. Jesus taught these principles as part of the heritage of the kingdom of God.² Indeed, Jesus in His teachings again and again went against the traditional norms of Hebrew culture. His use of the formula “you have heard it said . . . but I say to you” gave emphasis to the manner in which He opposed the established orthodoxy.¹ In the same way, the Christian today must be willing to oppose practices of her own culture when they are shown to be inimical to the principles of the kingdom of God; just as she must be willing to accept the values of any culture that are shown to be in harmony with those principles. It is the kingdom of God that is the legitimizing factor, not the particular culture.

Another example of an African American cultural value that commends itself to the church is sympathy with the plight of the poor and oppressed. As a people whose history in America has been characterized by oppression of the most brutal kind, African Americans have developed a particular sensitivity to oppressed individuals and people groups. The Black Christian voice in America has historically been a voice on behalf of the poor and dispossessed. This cultural bias has validity for the entire church, but not because it is an African-American value. It is spiritually valid because it is a Christian value. The same sensitivity was reflected in the ministry of Jesus Christ who identified

¹ Maynard-Reid, 61.

² The holistic and communal nature of true worship was a central theme of the Sermon on the Mount. See Matt 5:23, 24, 27-30.

Himself and His kingdom with the plight of the poor and oppressed.² Blacks are right in continuing to express this concern, as James Evans observes,

In a world where black people, people of color, and poor people, are continually frustrated in their attempt ‘to have life, and have it more abundantly,’ black theologians must speak to those systems, persons, and conditions that impede the worship and adoration of the God of the Gospel and the living of a just life.³

The obligation of the church to hear and respond to this emphasis from its Black members is not a cultural responsibility based on respect for the Black experience, but a theological duty based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. African-Americans in upholding this principle should point the church not to Africa but to Jesus, for His words alone carry an authority that is universal, having significance for all cultures and all people in every era of time.

When Maynard-Reid commands to the church an African-American way of viewing the world and relating to others in worship, he is expressing Christian values that are held in high regard within black culture; but when he commands to the church a particular way of expressing itself in the worship service based on black culture, he is on much less solid ground. The promotion of ecstatic responses in worship as an objective value for the entire church is a difficult thing to establish in Scripture. By Maynard-Reid’s own admission the Bible presents no prescriptive worship form or practice.⁴ While it may be legitimate to identify a particular genre of music with a cultural group and attest to its historic value to the church (such as spirituals and gospel), it is a different

¹ Matt 5:21, 22, 27, 28; 33, 34.

² Luke 6:20, 21; Matt 25:35, 36.

³ James H. Evans, Jr., “Toward An African-American Theology,” in *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, 2:27, 28.

⁴ Maynard-Reid, 19.

thing to suggest that people of varying temperaments and experiences, even within the same cultural group, can all benefit from practicing “‘call and response,’ antiphony, the shout, [and] the falling out.”¹ The particular merit of these practices in Maynard-Reid’s assessment appears to be the fact that they have been bequeathed to American society from Africa. By itself this is a weak recommendation vulnerable to the criticism that it may be ego-centered, that is, esteemed by virtue of its connection to a particular cultural group and nothing more. To say that these practices in worship are of African origin neither commends nor condemns them. “Call and response,” antiphony, shouting, and falling out, must be evaluated based on their actual use in worship not based on their cultural origins. As it happens, all of these practices have been part of the worship experience of the Adventist church at some point in time, as has already been shown in this chapter, but their evaluation as useful or not useful for worship should be made on the basis of Scriptural principles and concrete outcomes, not cultural or sociological ideals.

Dr. Maynard-Reid has contributed a volume of great worth to the church that deserves to be studied further than space here will permit here. Before leaving this important work, however, a further probing of it with regard to the author’s assumptions will be helpful.

Examination of the Presuppositions of Maynard-Reid

Maynard-Reid’s arguments with regard to cultural worship suffer from a premise that is founded on questionable priorities. From the beginning of the book the author

¹ Ibid., 54.

undermines the authority of the Bible for establishing ecclesiology. Referring to the early Christian church he writes, “We do not find any liturgical order or obligatory form for Christian worship in the teachings of Christ or the writings of the New Testament. It was a matter of course for each group to worship in a style and environment that met their felt needs.”¹

Maynard-Reid does not present a historical basis for these conclusions regarding New Testament worship, and one is led to suspect that he may have gotten his eras confused. While it is clear that Scripture does not prescribe any set worship formula that can be called obligatory, to say that early Christians practiced worship based on the experience of their own “felt needs” sounds suspiciously anachronistic. Maynard-Reid’s position on this question leads to a thinning of Scriptural authority for determining worship practice, as this comment reflects: “We must therefore be careful not to simply reach back to the worship of the primitive early church or Old Testament Hebraic practices as appropriate for today.”² Having virtually dismissed the biblical witness the author establishes a social-humanist one in its place, one that is anti-White and decidedly non-European.

My research and experience have shown that the liturgy incorporating indigenous elements produces a more wholistic worship than liturgy with a cognitive focus alone. Much of traditional Western worship has been one dimensional, with emphasis on the rational. Eastern cultures – Middle Eastern (biblical world), African, Indian and others – do not dichotomize the human person the way Western thought does.³

¹ Ibid., 19.

² Ibid., 20.

³ Ibid., 16.

Thus Maynard-Reid makes the human experience the starting point for determining worship practice, and in this case, the human experience as viewed through cultural particularity. In order to sustain such a position he must elevate culture to a place of high significance. This he does by setting up culture as the foundational and universal norm for all human behavior, including worship.

We are creatures of culture. As Cyprian Rowe notes, ‘culture is what people are. We cannot talk about human beings in the abstract. We do not exist in the abstract.’ Culture is therefore not something ‘out there,’ quite apart from one’s social existence. We cannot run away from it. It is inextricably bound up with who we are.¹

Maynard-Reid leaves no place for even a single human experience outside of cultural conditioning: “just as we cannot live without earth’s atmosphere, we cannot live apart from culture. . . . In a sense, it is our essential selves.”² He certainly does not exempt the spiritual realm from this evaluation: “I’m convinced that worship practices are as culturally conditioned as any other aspect of the human experience.”³ Culture for Maynard-Reid is, in fact, all encompassing: “culture therefore is not optional. It is life itself.”⁴

The veneration of culture is in a sense the natural result of an existential approach to worship. Once you begin worship analysis from the human standpoint you naturally make the human condition the standard of evaluation. This is a crucial issue for our further study. The significance of human culture for establishing Christian worship must be addressed. The position taken here is that while human culture is inescapable in our

¹ Ibid., 17.

² Ibid., 18.

³ Ibid., 14.

⁴ Ibid., 18.

horizontal relationships, it cannot be the foundation of Christian worship that is directed toward God.

A Response: Spiritual Worship as Taught by Christ

While it is true that on the horizontal level it is difficult to conceive of human relationships outside of cultural influence, just as one cannot conceive of breathing without the atmosphere, the analogy itself presents the possibility of an exception. Human beings have been known to escape the atmosphere altogether in search of something beyond the limits of their earthly habitation. Space travel may be made to represent that experience for which humanity seeks in the uplifting of the soul to God in worship. This involves the spiritual nature of mankind, which the Bible presents as probing of the inner self: “for who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him?” (I Cor 2:11).

Here is presented a hidden aspect of human nature that evades the knowledge of outsiders, including those of one’s own cultural group. To ask, “for who among men knows?” is to imply rhetorically that no one knows the inner workings of another. Whatever a person’s culture may be she possesses an inner aspect called spirit that is conversant with her most hidden self. It is at just this place that the potential for a meaningful encounter with divinity appears, “In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” (I Cor 2:11, 12).

Here is the secret unknown to the world of human cultures that the apostle would have believers understand: God has shared His mind and His thoughts with those who

have put their trust in Him. God has initiated the most radically intimate act imaginable by giving to human beings His Spirit. God has revealed His innermost self to mankind, for “the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (vs. 10). There is a level of communion that runs deeper than human culture and it is at this radical level that the believer encounters God in the most meaningful way. It is because of this intimate connection between God and the believer that the Holy Spirit is able to mediate human thoughts in prayer beyond the limits of cultural expression “with groans that words cannot express” (Rom 8:26). This is possible only because “He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (vs. 27). This is the same Spirit who enables the believer to cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15).

In extolling spiritual perception beyond the limits of common human experience Paul is explicit about crossing cultural boundaries. Neither the wise man (Jew), the scholar (Greek), nor the philosopher (Roman) of this age understands the wisdom of God; but when Jesus Christ is proclaimed and believed in by His Spirit, the power and wisdom of God are bestowed regardless of cultural particularity: “but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (I Cor 1:20, 24). None of this appears to the unaided rational mind regardless of culture, because it is spiritual reality. “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor 2:14).

While this truth concerning spiritual communion with God does not alleviate completely the cultural issues related to corporate worship since culture remains a factor

for human interrelationships, Paul's teaching clearly shows that human culture can never be the starting point for Christian worship. Christian worship is both a vertical and a horizontal phenomenon, but the vertical connection is primary. Though on the horizontal plane cultural realities appear to be inescapable, when the horizontal is mediated through the vertical another possibility appears. God is not limited in His self-revelation to the social conditions of human beings, and when the approach to worship begins with the divine initiative the way is opened for an expression in worship that transcends the limits of human cultural experience. Christian community is capable of creating a culture of its own not based on nationalities or clans, but based on the new humanity in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:17). It is a new humanity in which not only cultural distinctions are abrogated, but gender and social ones too. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27, 28).

At the very least it must be admitted that a primary focus on culture in worship undermines the spiritual priority expressed in Paul's writings. To make a bid for one cultural expression over another in worship is to limit the work of the Holy Spirit within the gathered community. The new community based on the new creation in Christ cannot be defined merely within the constraints of human culture, whatever culture that may be. Worship that begins with divinity cannot have its basis in humanity or the limitations of the human experience. Such worship would be something less than spiritual, thus something less than true worship.

This was the essential argument Jesus employed in refuting the worship assumptions of the Samaritan woman. She had reduced true worship to one of two

options, Samaritan or Jewish: “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is Jerusalem” (John 4:20). She recognized the animosity between the two nations, which was indeed very real, and shaped her worldview around it. The feud between the Samaritans and Jews was acrimonious and of long standing. It included controversy over proper worship but also took in other aspects of social relations. By the time of this exchange between Jesus and the woman, the mere sight of a Jew in conversation with a Samaritan was a remarkable thing. The fact that in this case the conversation involved a male and a female made it more remarkable still. This was a social reality of which Jesus was fully aware, yet in His worship analysis He gave it no credence.

Jesus declared, “believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:21-24)

The disciples would have been shocked to hear this declaration. To think that Jerusalem could ever become irrelevant as *the* place for the worship of the true God never entered their minds, but it was in the mind of Jesus. When it comes to true worship Jesus declares that cultural preferences have no validity. In so doing He does not deny the significance of His own culture. On the contrary, He affirms His culture and its significance in the carrying out of the plan of salvation. When God chose Abraham and his descendants to be the recipients of the covenant promise, He gave to Israel a unique status among the nations of the world. The divine intent from the beginning was that the benefits of the covenant should flow to all people. Israel was never meant to be a stopping place for the blessings of divine grace. Yet it was Israel that was chosen to be

the channel of that flow, not Egypt, not Babylon, and not Samaria. If an argument is to be made for a cultural approach to the worship of the true God, the logical choice would be Jewish culture, but Jesus does not make this argument.

The great Gift of divine grace came through Hebrew lineage: Jesus Christ was a cultural Jew, yet He Himself asserts to the Samaritan woman, in no uncertain terms, “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” The Jews and their culture have no claim on God, anymore than the Samaritans and their culture do. Jesus proclaims another reality in worship totally apart from the two competing sides envisioned by the woman – “a time is coming and has now come,” He declares, “when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (vs. 23). Not “in culture and in truth” does the Master proclaim, but in spirit and in truth. Jesus excludes all cultural norms, including His own, as the ground for approaching God in worship. It is not because of the inferiority or superiority of the culture itself; the validity of the particular culture as a societal expression is irrelevant. It is because God transcends all human cultures and God is the Object of worship that no culture can be the norm for approaching Him. Humanity has been given a means of reaching divinity and realizing oneness with God, “they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth” (vs. 24).

When Jesus responded to the Samaritan woman from the divine point of view, He showed that God does not regard cultural issues the way humans do. “A time is coming and has now come,” (vs. 23) was an allusion to the fullness of time in which the Messiah is introduced to the world. That the woman understood the allusion is shown by her response in vs. 25, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming.” What she did not

understand until He told her was that Jesus was referencing Himself with this statement, offering Himself as the means of escape from the mundane world of competing cultures.

Jesus was aware of the issues with regard to worship that existed in His time but His evaluation of them differed from that of both Jews and Samaritans. In the final analysis He dismissed cultural worship as something irrelevant to divine concerns. God is not interested in Samaritan worship or Jewish worship, however sincerely it may be offered. God's interest is in true worship and neither Jews nor Samaritans (nor Europeans, African-Americans, Caribbeans, or Hispanics) have it within their cultures to deliver all that God requires. God calls for spiritual worship and all nations that seek to please Him must discover what kind of worship that is. It is not that which consists only of its own devices, but is open to a variety of expressions from diverse sources receiving spiritual things with a spiritual mind. This approach bears a greater affinity to the true relationship between culture and worship, which James White describes this way:

There is a persistent tension between worship and culture in which worship both affirms and criticizes the culture with which it must live. I am convinced that Christian worship has functions and forms that are distant from any given culture yet adaptable to all. If it could survive nearly twenty centuries and exist in nearly all countries of the world, surely it can adapt to many, if not all, cultures yet be identified with none. There is, then, a constancy in Christian worship that is not culturally contingent, and yet a dependency upon culture in order to minister to people.¹

The communal implications of spiritual worship across cultural lines are therefore made apparent. Authentic Christian worship cannot be contingent upon a single culture but must be able to speak to all cultures. The way this relates to the personal relationships between diverse worshipers both in and outside of the place of worship is the final point to be made in this section.

¹ James F. White, *Christian Worship in North America: A Retrospective 1955-1995*, 74.

Ellen White and Worship Beyond the Sanctuary

The various statements of Ellen White concerning worship practice show a variety of emphases relative to the concerns of the church of her time. Her writings show both communal and individual values in worship as reflected, for example, in the question she put to the Bible Training School members, "Are we not going to meet with God and His people? Fellowship with one another should make us glad."¹

One of the important emphases of Ellen White with regard to true worship embraced the idea of the consummation of worship outside of the church meeting hall. She gave great stress to the necessity for continuity between ritual and practice; a life lived in harmony with the worship one offers. When she expressed this value positively it was with an appeal to the great commandment: "In order for worship to be acceptable it must be offered in faith and hope and the life must be in harmony with it. God requires the devotion of heart, mind, soul, and strength."² When she expressed this value negatively it was with a reminder of the great failing of ancient Israel:

Thus by precept and example the Jews tore down what they were trying to maintain by outward ceremonies. So enveloped were they in darkness and unbelief that the influence of their words and offerings of thanksgiving were destroyed by their example. The principles represented were not accepted by God. Their offerings did not bear the divine credentials; for they were neutralized by a wrong practice. While they praised God with their lips, they pledged themselves with the same mind to murder His Son. Their hearts were devoid of the spirit of true worship and were filled with wicked purposes, hypocrisy, and all manner of corruption.³

¹ Ellen G. White, "Bible Training School," October 1, 1908.

² Ellen G. White, "Heart Worship Required." *Manuscript Releases*. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 9:386.

³ Ellen G. White, "The Right Use of God's Gifts," *Review and Herald*, November 24, 1896, 7.

The inescapably practical nature of true spiritual worship is revealed in these words. Worship that is personal and not merely ritualistic will never lose sight of the vital link between sacrament and life. What this implies for church life with regard to communal diversity (gender, age, ethnicity, social status) is challenging to realize. Perhaps the trend toward a variety of worship services to suit different interest groups reflects a breach in church life that runs deeper than the eleven o'clock worship service. Perhaps the solutions toward exigency in worship reveal an unwillingness to deal with the uncomfortable and difficult claims of the gospel relative to oneness in Christ.

In light of the church's remarkable multicultural origins it would be ironic for a theology of cultural particularity to come from Christians. The great inaugural event of the Christian church was the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost signified by the miraculous gift of tongues. The worshipers in Jerusalem from many nations heard the gospel declared in their own languages and a great harvest of souls was the result: "Three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41). The theological significance of this occurrence harkens back to the tower of Babel when the human family was first divided by the confusion of tongues (Gen 11:8, 9). Now God signals through the gift of tongues that all people are being called back into oneness through Jesus Christ. Every breach has been healed in Him; every aggression, every antagonism between cultures has been brought to an end. "The mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ," is now made plain – "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:9, 10). Here the unique identity of the people of Christ is shown. It is an identity that is universal in its scope and inclusive of

all people of all cultures, and nowhere is it to be more apparent than when the body of Christ gathers together for corporate worship.

CHAPTER 3

WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christian church was born in a burst of activity that became the signature of its unique place in the world. As a radical new community never before seen, it defined itself by its communal life centered in its expressions of worship. The worship activities of the church reveal the marks of authentic calling through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Here is the worship that sets the bar for Christians in every generation. “The foundations for all subsequent Christian worship were laid in the decades in which the New Testament books were being written. . . Every period of renewal since then has aspired reach back to the principles and practices of the first Christian century.”¹

The worship life of the church is meant to express the salvation of Christ not only in words and deeds but also through its internal relationships. The church embodies the kingdom of God on earth and nowhere is this more evident than in its worship. The love of God for the church is thus returned to Him in adoration and praise.

The New Testament uses many different words to signify worship. Many of them like *lutreo*, emphasize the religious rites performed to pay homage to or venerate God. Others, such as *proskuneo*, which means literally ‘to kiss toward’ or ‘to bow down,’ focus instead on the expression, by attitude or gestures, of allegiance to or regard for the deity. These words convey a profound sense of humble and loving adoration along with appropriate gestures.²

¹ James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 13.

² Dawn, 81.

Biblical sources for the investigation of early Christian worship are limited. There is no explicit description given in the New Testament concerning the details of a Christian worship service. In the description of the communal life of the believers, however, worship activities come into view. As the story of the church is first presented in Acts and elaborated on in the epistles, particularly the writings of Paul, certain worship principles emerge. This section examines worship from the historical record of Acts, which describes the first Christian church born on the day of Pentecost; and in the first Corinthian letter, which records Paul's corrective to the believers at Corinth some twenty years after the day of Pentecost.

The Prototypical Church of the Book of Acts

With the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ (Acts 1:8), the disciples began to proclaim the gospel in a public display of unusual influence and power. The hearers of their message were said to be “amazed and perplexed” at the miraculous gift by which the proclamation came, and even more impressively, “cut to the heart” by the gripping content of the proclamation itself (Acts 2:12, 37). The Holy Spirit revealed through Peter that Jesus of Nazareth, not two months out of the grave, had indeed been the promised Messiah of Hebrew prophecy; the One, according to Peter, “whom you crucified.” The three thousand who were baptized on the Day of Pentecost came into the church awestruck by the demonstration of the Spirit’s power through the apostles, and overwhelmed by a sense of repentance toward God who had demonstrated magnificent grace in the giving His Son. The believers’ first day as Christians was a day of contrition, baptism, forgiveness, thankfulness, joy, reverence and deeply felt emotions.

In Acts 2:42 the believers' worship activities are described with these terms: *devotion to the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread, prayer, and fellowship.* Vs. 43 adds that all the believers were filled with awe. A closer look at these actions helps to define the worship priorities of the original church.

Devotion to the Apostles' Teaching

Only later does the church begin to develop a written corpus, what Paul refers to as the "standard of teaching" (Rom 6:17) and the "pattern of sound words" (2 Tim 1:13). Bernhard Lang attests to the significance of the written text in the history of Christianity.¹ At this early stage, however, the apostles' teaching probably consisted of personal stories concerning Christ's words, deeds, and lessons.² No doubt Christ's reinterpretation of Old Testament Scripture based on Himself was a central feature of this teaching (see Luke 24:27). The traditional Hebrew doctrine was transformed through the interpretive key of Jesus of Nazareth, God's true Messiah. Everything previously understood about the meaning of the Scriptures now required reexamination through the lens of the life and teachings of Jesus. Christian worship was unwaveringly focused on Him.³ In a very real sense then, "Jesus Christ was the *content* of the primitive church's preaching: the Proclaimer had . . . become the Proclaimed."⁴

¹ "Christianity . . . like its parent religion, . . . never ceased to be a textual community, centered around sacred literature and its interpretation." Bernhard Lang, *Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 144,145.

² "Only when the Parousia was delayed . . . was the oral tradition of Jesus' life and teaching reduced to writing." W.H.C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 24.

³ Ronald P. Byars, *Christian Worship: Glorifying and Enjoying God* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2000), 23, 24, observes that Christian worship developed its unique shape around Scripture and the meal, both of which are centered in Christ.

⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 46 (italics original).

David Peterson emphasizes the force of the believer's adherence to the apostles' teachings based on Luke's use of the verb προσκαρτερεῖν, meaning, "to persist obstinately in." The word signifies a preoccupation with something and in this case a preoccupation with the apostolic teaching.¹ The believers persevered in the teaching and preaching of the apostles, listening whenever they spoke and obeying everything they said. The later Acts record emphasizes the persistence of the apostles in presenting Christ's teachings: "day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

In his analysis of Christian worship in the early years, Hughes Old calls apostolic teaching and preaching the primary feature of the life of the church, something more than just one ministerial function among many.² As one evidence of this he points to the fact that as the church grew, deacons were appointed to take over certain administrative functions so that the apostles would be free to pursue prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). He also observes that the content of the preaching was not general: "The central emphasis of the preaching was kerygmatic; it was proclaiming the good news of the resurrection; it was giving the apostolic witness that indeed Jesus was risen from the dead."¹

The importance of these observations lies in the fact that they establish a priority for Christian corporate worship. The church possessed from its inception a fundamental

¹ Peterson, 152.

² Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 164, 166.

truth, a common teaching, an objective standard of instruction by which belief and practice were defined. Christian gatherings were characterized by a particular mode of expression for transmitting this truth, namely, preaching and teaching. The truth itself, centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ, begins in Acts and the epistles to take on the nature of a formula or a system of belief.² As the church developed, an identifiable orthodoxy developed with it, one that was defended by church leaders.³ Rather than relying on the continuing influence of the charismatic experience of Pentecost, or attempting to recreate it in their gatherings, the church sustained and nurtured itself through διδαχή', the teachings of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the apostles.⁴ The church grew by continuing to search out what had already been revealed. This was its primary program of internal preservation, the main means of its maturation toward a more rooted and grounded existence.⁵ Ironically, this might be called a “non-Pentecostal” orientation based on the modern interpretation of the meaning of Pentecost. William Willimon makes this observation: “The church is not to drift from one momentary emotional outburst to the

¹ Ibid., 165.

² Acts 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10: 36-43; 26:22,23; Rom 10:8ff.; I Cor 15:3-6.

³ For examples of New Testament writers defending the established teachings see, Heb 4:14; I John 2:18-23; 4:2, 3; 2 John 7; Jude 3.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 79. There is no doubt it was Christ’s teachings the apostles taught and not their own; “the apostolic teaching was authoritative because it was the teaching of the Lord communicated *through* the apostles” (italics original).

⁵ In Eph 4:11 ff., Paul mentions the establishment of spiritual gifts in the church as the vehicle of growth and maturation. The principle arena for the operation of these gifts was corporate worship (see I Cor 14:26).

next, to resuscitate Pentecost on a weekly basis; rather, the church moves immediately to the task of teaching, keeping itself straight about what it is and what it is about.”¹

In contrast to this emphasis, modern Pentecostal theology relies on the ecstatic experience of the gift of tongues and other charismatic demonstrations. Focusing more on the upper room than on the newly formed community, Pentecostalism pursues an outward manifestation of the Spirit as the authentic sign of being in Christ. Pentecostal theology presents an emphasis on display in worship as the sign of spirituality: the shout, the lifting of the hands, etc. It is an emphasis that values individual expression and spontaneity as the heart of the worship experience. “Spontaneity in worship is a Pentecostal trademark. Rightly so, for that was the order of events at the first Pentecostal service recorded in Acts 2:1-4. No pre-planned program predicted the rushing mighty wind, the tongues of fire, or the utterances in other tongues.”²

The danger of such an emphasis is in its reliance on ritualism, not of a formal and conservative kind, but of an informal and charismatic kind. Worshipers may tend to get caught up in acts of outward demonstration in worship simply because they are viewed as “Pentecostal.” Thus worship may degenerate into puppetry. Actions may become antics. Outward form may overwhelm inward sanctity and consecration of heart and undermine a genuine worship experience. The appeal to the necessity of spontaneity, on the other hand, implies that the Spirit of God directs only at the precise moment of inspiration and not at other times. This may lead to a lack of preparation for worship that could easily undermine the order inherent to all the acts of God (see I Cor 14:33). Most perilously of

¹ William H. Willimon, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Acts* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 40.

² Cecil B. Knight, ed., *Pentecostal Worship* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1974), 17.

all, the Pentecostal imperative may lead to a lack of emphasis on the priority of teaching and preaching through which the church has been built up since its inception.

Salvation once gained may be lost. There is need for preserving the faith once apprehended so that in spite of temptations, trials, and suffering, which are sure to come, the believer may be kept in the way of eternal life. The success of the preservation of faith depends on the Christian's constant abiding in Christ and in His Word, and this is not to be done only privately. There is a necessary communal dimension to the preservation of faith. The Word of God must be studied by the believer, but also, it must be addressed *to* the believer. Since man is by nature a social creature he needs to worship communally as well.¹ As Brunner observes, "the saving word is vibrant in what takes place between persons. There must be a person who addresses this Word to me in the name of God."² This need is fulfilled in the acts of teaching and proclamation in community, the live transmission of the Word of God.

In this particular New Testament emphasis the influence of synagogue worship can readily be seen. Though in Scripture the temple court is mentioned as the place of daily gathering for the Christian believers (Acts 2:46), and the temple service was the premier cult of Israel; the temple was only one, while the synagogues were many. The Greek word συναγωγή became the Christian's term for church. This word means 'gathering together' and in its simplest form synagogue worship was a gathering of a local group of people to hear the Scriptures read aloud and explained. It is even

¹ J.D. Crichton, "A Theology of Worship," in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. Cheslyn Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7.

² Brunner, 112.

suggested by one scholar that the disciples formed themselves into a synagogue in accordance with Mishnah law that permitted any ten male Jews anywhere to do so.¹

The synagogue service consisted of three corporate worship acts: praise, prayer, and instruction, with the last being the most important. The heart of synagogue worship was the public reading and exposition of the Scriptures. The service began with the reading of the *Schema* followed by a series of liturgical prayers and responses called the eighteen benedictions. Next came the reading of the Torah and Haftorah which concluded with the ceremonial kissing of the scroll and more liturgical responses by the congregation. The worship service culminated with the exhortation or exposition based on the Scriptural readings.²

As the worship of the synagogue revolved around the reading and exposition of the Law and the Prophets, so New Testament worship was anchored in the Apostles' teachings. These teachings were the *raison d'être* and the focus of the early Christian community. They did not so much replace as recast the teachings that had anchored the former ritual. The Law and the Prophets took on new meaning in the knowledge of their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This early priority of the church, establishing a basis for the formulation of Christian worship, remained important as the gospel continued to spread. When the church in Corinth got into controversy over how worship was to be conducted, Paul emphasized the importance of the goal of edification. His argument on this subject can be read as a comparison between χαρισμα and διδαχη' as priorities for Christian worship.

¹ Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 26.

² R. J. Gore, Jr., *Covenantal Worship: Reconstruction the Puritan Regulative Principle* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2000), 104.

The Breaking of Bread

Though it is clear that this was a common Jewish idiom for the eating of an ordinary meal,¹ in the context of the Acts description, the breaking of bread also refers to the special ordinance of the Lord's Supper instituted by Christ. "That the cup is not mentioned in connection with the bread does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the Lord's Supper is here referred to."² Furthermore, the breaking of bread is mentioned in the context of other religious activities, baptism, teaching, and prayer. It may even be that the distinction between the ordinary meals of the believers and the Lord's Supper meal was less pronounced in the first century than it is today; "each Jewish meal was a holy event shared only with family or close friends."³ As Barrett observes, "the one description covers both a common meal and the Lord's Supper."⁴

The Lord's Supper in the early church was by all indications a solemn remembrance of the ultimate sacrifice made by Christ, and a joyful looking forward to His promised return. The emblems of the bread and wine reminded the believers of the physical reality of the Incarnate Christ, even though He was hidden from their sight. He was the reason for their gathering and the bond of their oneness.⁵ Jesus instituted the

¹ Matt 14:19; 15:36; Mark 8: 6,19.

² "Acts," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1953-57), 6:149.

³ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 231.

⁴ Barrett, 165.

⁵ 'The breaking of bread' reminded them of the crucified and risen Christ who had called their community into existence." E. Glenn Hinson, *The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 42.

Lord's Supper, not as a means of initiation into the church, but as a continuation in the faith already received; "do this in remembrance of me" (I Cor 11:24).

Just how often the believers observed the special meal is unclear. There is certainly no evidence that it was eaten every time they gathered for worship, nor is there any indication that the bread and wine used in the meal were regarded with supernatural fascination. This was the development of a later time. The Hebrew cult was accustomed to using common food items in the practice of worship: grain, wine, herbs, etc.; but never do we read that the items themselves were invested with any mystical significance. They functioned in every case as symbols for the purpose of accommodating devotional activity based on faith and obedience.

Prayer

Though without doubt the believers' lives were filled with times of personal prayer, this prayer is a reference to the specific times of united prayer appointed within the community,¹ something akin to prayer meeting in the modern church. The use of the plural with the definite article suggests that the reference is to specific prayers rather than to prayer in general. In the context this most obviously points to the continuing participation in set times of prayer.² By this analysis it is also possible that the use of the Lord's Prayer in worship is here alluded to. This worship activity, like διδαχή', was continuous with the Hebrew cult as practiced in the synagogue but, also, discontinuous with the old covenant economy in a specific and significant way.

¹ Bruce, 80.

² Peterson, 158.

The further Acts record reveals how much the activity of prayer became integrated into the communal life. When Peter and John returned to the group after having been threatened by the Sanhedrin, they shared with the community the news of what had happened to them. The response of the church was a joint outburst in prayer: "When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God" (Acts 4:24). The believers participated in the experience of Peter and John, not only identifying with it, but also taking it upon them and together lifting it to God in prayer. It was not a formal worship service but it became one on the spot. Prayer was the communal language through which they together sought the will and strength of God.

In the ancient cult, prayer was not connected to community to this same degree. The temple economy called for intercession by the priest on behalf of the supplicant. The Urim and Thummim were the means of determining the mind of God for His people. When Joshua was installed as the successor to Moses he was directed to "stand before Eliezar the priest, who [would] obtain decisions *for him* by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord" (Num 27:21, emphasis mine); and at the time of the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple the people were restrained from reinstating the sacred cult "until there should be a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim" (Neh 7:65). The Jewish ritual called for a mediator between God and the people but in the New Testament church no such necessity is seen.

In the believer's prayer of Acts 4 no particular leader is identified as the one offering the prayer. It was not an apostolic prayer offered by Peter or John for the people. The community itself interceded. The prayer is presented as a communal act whose validity was verified by the divine response to it, which was also communal:

"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31). The Urim and Thummim had been replaced by direct access to the throne of God through Jesus Christ, and this access was available to all the people of God.

Having said all this, the one activity of worship most typical of the New Testament church has yet to be examined. There is one concept that dominates the Acts' description of the believing community and their gatherings. It is coined in a single word and described in a variety of activities. The activities include daily meetings in the temple courts, eating together in each other's homes, praising God together, and enjoying each other's favor. The New Testament word that coins it is κοινωνία.

Fellowship

Unlike the other communal acts that may be interpreted as liturgy, fellowship in the early church was characteristic of more than just the elements of worship. With the use of the term κοινωνία, the Acts record becomes descriptive of the community itself in an ontological sense. The believers' worship is here described in terms of the church's identity as a new community. It is the nature of the church that is being revealed in the togetherness and oneness of heart and mind that existed between the believers. C.

Welton Gaddy notes the organic relationship between fellowship and worship:

Any attempt to separate the worship of God and the fellowship of the people of God is nothing less than a lethal assault on the nature of the church. . . . Biblically and historically, worship and fellowship are inseparable. A fellowship of believers cannot exist apart from regular experiences of corporate worship. In like manner, forms of worship that do not contribute to the realization of community are inadequate. Divine worship strengthens human fellowship. Authentic fellowship shapes obedient worship.¹

¹ C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 34.

The outstanding characteristic of the new life in Christ is expressed in this term κοινωνία, ‘common.’ The ruling idea of this word is ‘sharing’, and this became the prominent distinction of the new community. Κοινωνία may be attributed to everything having to do with the life of the church, but especially its worship. It is in the act of corporate worship that the church is most genuinely itself, displayed before God and the world in its communal splendor. The early church was inseparable from its depiction as a worshiping community. “Worship in the sense of the assembly of the Christian congregation in the name of Jesus is virtually the dominant mode of the manifestation of the church on earth.”¹ The Christian church, therefore, was defined by its worship life; known to the world and to itself by the character of its corporate gatherings.²

Unlike the failed social concept of communism in modern times, the focus of κοινωνία was not basically economic. The believers in Acts did not have their properties confiscated as a condition of entry into the new community. The sharing they engaged in was completely voluntary based on a sense of freedom and a new sense of identity.³ The shared “object” in the κοινωνία of Acts was not possessions but persons. The believers gave themselves to the community to participate in a newly shared life. It is on account of this familial sense that possessions came to be shared, or to express it

¹ Brunner, 18, 19.

² Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 146, calls the perceived division between the corporate body and the individual believer a false one.

³ Frend, 26, contrasts the Qumran community, contemporary with the early church, that inflicted severe penalties upon its members who failed to contribute all of their possessions to the common pool for the poor.

from another perspective, private ownership came to be repudiated.¹ So profound was the sense of family among the believers that the astounding declaration could be made, “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34). It is in this context that the total worship life of the church is to be understood. Everything in corporate worship was grounded in the new identity established in Christ and in κοινωνία.

Κοινωνία signifies something more than a new social arrangement. It is not just shared time and shared material goods that are here referred to, but a shared life, a new sense of self based on community instead of individuality. To be sure the new identity finds its impetus in the union between the individual and Christ, even to the extent that the believer becomes indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (Acts 2:38); but this is not to be conceived of as something different or separate from the believer’s union with the body of Christ. There certainly was no such distinction in the mind of Jesus Himself, as is explicitly shown by His teachings and by the prayer He prayed before going to the cross: “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

Κοινωνία was not fellowship for its own sake or for the purpose of social expression; neither was it based on gender, culture, race, or the goal of achieving diversity. The fellowship of the early church was completely unselfconscious in this sense. It was the natural and inevitable result of what one theologian called the hallmark of Christian worship that has no parallel in any other religion - the presence of the living Christ.² Where Christ is present and believers are in Him, people are brought into a

¹ Bruce, 81, interprets “had all things common” as the believers giving up the idea of private property.

² Martin, 130.

unique oneness with each other based on His person. The remarkable nature of this aspect of church life from its inception is illustrated in a side-by-side comparison of two key passages in Acts:

“Now there was staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” (Acts 2:2)	“All the believers were together and had everything in common.” (Acts 2:44)
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The national distinctions of the hearers of the Pentecost message were rendered insignificant by the presence of Christ in His Word so that a new nationality was created – the kingdom of God. Though bodily absent, Christ was spiritually present and His presence was transforming. So unusual is the Acts depiction that some scholars dismiss it as a romanticized picture of the church,¹ but nothing in the narrative gives the indication of myth. It is a historical account by all evidence, naming the specific countries from which the worshipers came, quoting excerpts from Peter’s sermon, and so on. Combining the meaning of the term κοινωνία with the idea expressed in the word προσκαρτερεῖν used in connection with the apostles’ teaching, Barrett comes up with this description of the church, “they continued in *faithful adherence* to the newly formed *community* of those who had accepted the Messiahship of Jesus and the belief that God’s salvation of His people was being put into effect through Him.”² The combining of the ideas of believing in Christ and being in community makes this depiction significant, giving further credence to the concept of Christianity as a new identity and Christian worship as a shared, fellowship experience.

¹ See for example Gerhard Krodel, ed., *Proclamation Commentaries: Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 25.

² Barrett, 164 (italics mine).

Acceptance by Christ necessitated acceptance of those whom he had already welcomed (Rom. 15:7); reconciliation with God entailed reconciliation with others who exhibited the character of gospel preaching (Phil. 4:2,3); union in the Spirit involved union with one another, for the Spirit was primarily a shared, not individual, experience.¹

Awe

Notice must be taken here of the important role of a particular demeanor that characterized the gatherings of the early church. The Acts account reads, “everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (vs. 43). The miraculous gift of tongues through which the church was initiated was in itself an awe-inspiring event. The sense of the divine presence was intensified by the medium through which the message came. The importance of this for worship is obvious as it relates to the divine nature. Even in His Self-revelation, God maintains a transcendence and mystery that is innate to Himself, what the theologians call incomprehensibility.² Worship includes a certain respect toward God in accordance with this transcendent mystery, not a phobia as might be suggested by the form of the Greek word,³ but a fear and respect appropriate to the divine nature. “Our fellowship with God in worship is not in servile fear, but in filial fear which leads to a holy boldness and enduring love, but which never forgets who God is and what we are in His sight.”⁴

From time to time certain interventions served to remind God’s people of the differences in the divine nature, even during the time of Christ’s sojourn on the earth.

¹ Robert Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 26.

² Job 11:7-9; Isa 40:25-28; 55:8, 9.

³ Acts 2:43 uses the word φοβος which may be translated, “fear, terror, affright,” but also, “respect, deference, reverence.” The latter seems more appropriate to the context of the passage here.

⁴ Martin, 15.

There were intervention experiences at the baptism of Jesus and on the Mount of Transfiguration that left observers in speechless wonderment (Matt 3:16,17; 17:1-8). In the time of the New Testament church the judgment against Ananias and Sapphira produced the same response (Acts 5:1-11). One writer suggests that the mysterious wonder of redemption itself is preserved by the attitude of reverence and awe in worship.¹ Awe in worship also preserves the mystery of the doctrine of grace that attributes salvation to the supernatural intervention of God and results in a transformation of the believer, the meaning of which lies beyond the capacity of ordinary speech to describe. Human language can only describe it in paradoxes and metaphors.² The believer is overwhelmed by the realization of all that her redemption entails, and the result is awe.

When we are truly conscious of the divine presence in worship and the divine activity in redemption it becomes impossible for us to maintain any sense of our own self-esteem. The worshiper is overcome by the holiness and majesty of God and in His presence loses all sense of pride and all desire for sin. This fact is evident in various biblical accounts of epiphany.³ “The interesting thing about the experience of God’s otherness is that it not only makes us aware of our sinfulness, but also when we hear that we are accepted and loved by the Holy One, there is an overwhelming desire to respond to the Holy One in joyful abandonment.”⁴ This is tribute to “the holy ‘apartness’ of God,

¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 238.

² John 6:48-51; Rom 8:11; Gal 2:20; Col 1:26, 27; 2 Pet 1:3, 4.

³ Gen 18:27; Job 42:5, 6; Isa 6:5; Ezek 1:28-2:2; Luke 5:8.

⁴ Robert E. Webber, *Learning to Worship With All Your Heart: A Study in the Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 59.

His greatness and His glory, His might and His majesty, so that we bow down before His presence and humble ourselves as those who recognize that there is an immeasurable distance between ourselves as mere men whose breath is in their nostrils and Him, the Eternal and Unique God.”¹ If we fail to submit to the divine holiness, which we feel compelled to do, the result can be disastrous (I Sam 6:19, 20).

Summary

Based on the worship activities of the original church as recorded in Acts, Paul Basden identifies five worship themes that are basic to Christianity: (1) the purpose of glorifying God as revealed in Jesus Christ, (2) the centrality of Christ as the pervasive element in worship, (3) the role of the Holy Spirit as the One who inspires, empowers, animates, and enlightens the worshiper, (4) the edification of believers as the result of authentic Christian worship, and (5) congregational participation in worship without division between laity and clergy.² These five principles reflect the worship priorities of the early believers and may serve as a basis for constructing Christian worship today.

Worship in the church of the book of Acts began as an awesome response to God and all that He had done through His Son, Jesus Christ. The believers came together under the influence of the Holy Spirit who, by the power of the Word, brought their hearts into full submission to God and full fellowship with one another. The act of contrition toward God produced a reconciliation, both vertical and horizontal, that created a new community among men, the Spirit-led community of the redeemed. As they took

¹ Martin, 14.

² Paul Basden, *The Worship Maze: Finding a Style to Fit Your Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 23, 24.

heed to the Word of God declared to them daily, and exemplified the love of Christ in their relationships one to the other, the early believers, like their Lord before them, “increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52; Acts 2:47).

The goal of salvation has often been interpreted individualistically, “the Holy Spirit is preparing me for heaven.” Through the New Testament church we are able to see that individual salvation does not occur apart from community. Christian religion is neither wholly individualistic nor wholly collective, it is not a case of either – or. There is nothing totalitarian in New Testament Christianity, but there is nothing based on individualism either.¹ Salvation is a case of individuals being integrated into a community, through the prerogative of the Holy Spirit, and finding new identity as parts of a whole (Acts 2:47). The people of God “is the arena in which salvation is worked out.”² It is in and through the gathered community that the individual becomes the new locus of God’s presence on earth. “This is what marks God’s new people off from ‘all other people on the face of the earth.’”³ They are a people who manifest the personal presence of God in their lives, as individuals, and, in their midst, as community.

¹ Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 6. Here I use the word in its classical sense to indicate a value system in which “the ultimate ethical rule is simply that individuals should be able to pursue whatever they find rewarding constrained only by the requirement that they not interfere with the ‘value systems’ of others.”

² Fee, 870.

³ *Ibid.*, 8.

Worship Conflict in the Church of Corinth

By the time we reach the era of the Corinthian church, about twenty years after Pentecost, ideal relationships between new believers seem to have waned. The significance of fellowship for understanding the nature of the church has not diminished with it, however. It can be argued, in fact, that the essential feature of New Testament theology, distinguishing it from that of the Old Testament, is the radical new meaning given to community in Jesus Christ. Israel was God's covenant people in whose midst He chose to dwell in the sanctuary erected for that purpose (Exod 25:8), but the New Testament church becomes God's living sanctuary in whom He dwells and through whom He reveals Himself and His salvation to the world.¹ This transfer of abode from edifice to people is emphasized by Paul's application of the building materials list from the construction of the temple (I Chr 29:2) to the spiritual construction of the believers (I Cor 3:12a).

In the Pauline epistles in general, κοινωνία is presented as the essence of what it means to be in Christ.² If Jesus Christ is the embodiment of divine love in its ultimate self-sacrificing expression, then the body of Christ must exhibit that same love in its fellowship one with the other. The bond of love that unites the believer to her Lord in such a way that nothing can separate them (Rom. 8:38, 39) is the same bond that unites believers to one another in such a way that "each member belongs to all the others" (Rom 12:5). So obvious and undeniable is this connection in Christ that Paul can state its

¹ Fee, 115, where the author notes that Israel was never called Gods temple as such, although God chose to tabernacle among them.

² See 1 Cor 1:9; Eph 4:1-6; Phil 2:1-4.

opposite as an absolute absurdity, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor 1:13).

The most remarkable aspect of this newly formed community is that it should join together Jews and Gentiles. There is no more meaningful proof of the presence of Christ with His people:

For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. . . . His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. (Eph 2:14-16)

In this passage celebrating the oneness of the believers in Christ, Paul uses two metaphors that also appear in the Corinthian letter. An examination of these metaphors helps to show the continuing priority of *κοινωνία* in the life and worship of the church. The divisions that had arisen in Corinth, prompting Paul’s letter in the first place, threatened the very existence of the church. Principles and values common to the secular culture but alien to the kingdom of God had come into the church, causing discord, strife, and division. The root of the problem as it appeared in worship was in the individualistic attitudes and actions that came into the gathering. Some in Corinth desired to be counted as spiritual and sought to achieve notoriety through a demonstrative act. A facility with the gift of tongues was thought to demonstrate an elevated state of spirituality. In this scenario, the church was recognized mainly as an arena. The worshipers became an audience and the gifted became performers before them seeking communal favor. “Christian worship at Corinth. . . involved rivalries and competition for ‘air time’ as

'each one has his or her own kind of speech' (14:26). All were speaking simultaneously and few apparently were polite enough to listen to the other."¹

From chaps. 8–14, worship is the context of all that is said to the Corinthian believers.² The two most direct allusions are to the Lord's Supper service, addressed in chaps. 10 and 11, and the tongues controversy, addressed in chap. 14. The worship life of the church continued to be the most critical indicator of its spiritual health in general and a crucial sign of its divine calling in the world.

The Church as God's Temple

Paul employs images to depict the church that have often been interpreted in an individualistic way. In spite of their thoroughly corporate meaning in the contexts in which they appear, the *God's Temple* and *Body of Christ* metaphors have sometimes received personal, pietistic interpretations. While in its official literature the Adventist church adopts the communal interpretation of the *God's Temple* metaphor,³ Adventist public evangelism has often applied the image to the physical body of the individual believer in terms of health practice. The teaching has been that the one who destroys the body temple by improper eating and drinking will be destroyed by God. Clearly this is not Paul's message anywhere in the Corinthian letter. While the individual application of the *God's Temple* metaphor has relevance in chap. 6, the context there is not healthful

¹ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 275.

² Fee, 147.

³ "Acts," SDABC, 677, points out "Paul is here speaking primarily of the church and is warning his successors at Corinth against bringing injury to the church in any way." He goes on to state that the individual application of this metaphor occurs in chapter 6.

eating.¹ The first occurrence of the metaphor is earlier in the letter in chap. 3, where Paul uses it to argue for the preservation of Christian community. Here the apostle is concerned with the splintering of the church into factions under the banner of favored leaders, “I follow Paul . . . I follow Apollos” (I Cor 3:4); a behavior he castigates as inimical to the reality of the Christian calling. The believers are rebuked for acting as “mere men,” showing their worldliness by giving room to jealousy and quarreling. Paul’s response to the situation is not merely ethical. He does not moralize that the Corinthians should know better and behave like civilized people. Such an argument would have been no different from what civic leaders or ethicists might have put forward. Paul’s assertion is something far more penetrating, having reference not only to the ways in which believers treat each other outwardly, but to the ways in which believers understand their own identity. “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (vs. 9). By the use of this metaphor Paul treats the problem at its root, within the hearts and minds of his readers. The conflict in the church does not come from bad moods or poor politics, but from a flawed self-concept. The believers are to understand the necessity of community for the church to be what it is called to be in Christ.

It is a metaphor rich in the Hebrew culture as it harkens back to the sanctuary in Jerusalem, the place where the Ark of the Covenant rested as a reminder of God’s presence. Paul uses ναοῦς to refer to the actual sanctuary, the inner compartment; not

¹ I Cor 6:19, 20 where Paul’s reference is obviously to the individual believer, though his context there is the sin of sexual immorality, not the health food emphasis Adventist evangelism traditionally brings.

ιερόν which included the outer court in its meaning.¹ Just as the earthly sanctuary had been the habitation of the living God, so the church has now become God's living dwelling place. God takes up residence in the gathered community and reveals Himself in and through Christian fellowship. The idea of superior doctrine as the distinguishing mark of God's people on earth does not appear in Paul's writings. Even the firm adherence of the believers to the apostles' teachings was meant to serve a relational and communal purpose, not an intellectual one.

The Old Testament contains many reminders that what made the temple unique was not the grandeur of the edifice or the repute of the men who erected it, but the fact that God chose to abide there. It is the presence of God that distinguishes Israel from all other people on the earth.² It is not the tables of stone in their midst, but the Living God in their midst that makes them who they are.

Even before the sanctuary and before nationhood, when God's design centered on a single individual, the covenant was always expressed in communal terms. The promise to Abram was for him and his descendants, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you" (Gen 12:2). It was not with the individual alone but with Israel as a people, located in the loins of their progenitor, that God made His redemptive pact. Indeed, the name change that the patriarch underwent at God's command served to emphasize the communal nature of his calling, "no longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations" (Gen 17:5).

¹ Fee, 114, points out that this terminology would also have had meaning for Paul's Gentile readers as the place of a deity's dwelling, though the imagery would not have been so rich as it was for Jewish believers.

² Exod 33:15,16; Deut 4:7.

The descendants of Abraham in the line of the patriarchs and prophets all held to the communal nature of the covenant. None ever tried to appropriate it to himself in an individual way, though its implications for the individual were always apparent. The community could receive the call of God but it could not substitute for the initiative of the individual member. "Individual Israelites could forfeit their position in Israel [but] this never affected God's design or purposes with the people as His people."¹ This remained true even when the majority of the people rebelled against God and abandoned the covenant. The people of God still remained His people represented by the remnant who remained faithful. They continued to be the apple of God's eye, His living temple on the earth.

Now Paul applies this image to the Christian church as God's dwelling place, but not in a building located in Jerusalem or Rome. The early church had no cathedral. The presence of God was made manifest in the gathering of the people themselves for worship, wherever that gathering might take place. It was the bond of love signified between them that revealed their unique identity as God's temple on the earth. For Paul, being in Christ was a communal reality above all else.

Whatever notice Paul takes of individuals or subgroups within the community... his primary context for thinking about believers is the community. He labors assiduously to maintain and edify the communal fellowship. The community is, after all, the matrix within which individual lives of faith are nurtured and maintained.²

Such an emphasis would not have seemed strange even to a non-Christian first-century audience. Eastern culture traditionally has been more group-and-family-centered

¹ Fee, 871.

² J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 37.

than Western culture. In fact, it may be no exaggeration to say that the interpretation of salvation in Christ as individualistic could come only from a culture alien to the one in which it was first taught.¹ Identity and unity are both affirmed in Christ, but in Scripture, unity has the priority. Those who are called in Christ are given to one another and are therefore responsible to each other. They are to actively seek the good of fellow believers who together with themselves constitute the temple of God.² Thus Paul's warning in 3:17, "if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him," is seen to be leveled not at smokers and meat eaters, but at those who by strife or any other means would attempt to dismantle the sacred oneness of the church in Jesus Christ.

The oneness of the believers as an expression of worship is an important truth for the modern church to understand and accept. The other activities of the church as organization, administrative, political, social, institutional, even missionary all flow from the one central activity of corporate worship, through which the church makes union with its Lord. While none of the other church activities mentioned comes regularly into worship, and some would be deemed inappropriate there, worship enters into all the church's other activities as formative, shaping agendas, determining priorities, and informing processes and procedures in accordance with the knowledge of Christ. The primary objective in all of the church's activities is not that it should be doing something that is considered worthwhile, or having success at doing it. The measures by which viability is determined in a human organization do not apply to the spiritual institution of

¹ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 114, argues that such an idea could only arise in a culture that was asemitic, if not anti-Semitic.

² See I Cor 10:24; Phil 2:20.

the church. The objective of the church in all of its activities is that it should rightly represent its Lord, and by this means, bring glory to His name.

Kοινωνία in Christ is inescapable as the identity of the church, and worship is meant to exhibit and nurture this truth. It is in this context that the communal obligation of being in Christ receives its proper cast; not as a distasteful duty to be endured, but as a joyful opportunity to be celebrated in total freedom from the mundane bondage of constant self-interest and endless self-serving. The idea of corporate worship as a collection of individuals, each seeking God for herself in her own private space, is rendered ludicrous by the New Testament metaphor of the church as God's Temple.

The Church as the Body of Christ

The unity expressed in *κοινωνία* and in the *God's Temple* metaphor is shown to have complexity in the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ. It was often employed by Paul to describe the nature of the church.¹ The metaphor first appears in the Corinthian letter in chaps. 10 and 11 where it is applied to another worship distortion relative in this instance to the Lord's Supper service.² The Corinthian believers were guilty of engaging in elitist practices during the sacred meal. In this, the influence of the secular culture was clearly shown.

In one sense Corinth was the most unlikely place for the planting of a Christian church. The culture of Corinth, as thoroughly Greco-Roman as it was, presented the

¹ Rom 12:4,5; Col 1:18; 3:15; Eph 1:23; 2:16; 4:3-16; 5:23.

² I Cor 10:16, 17; 11:29, where the community is corrected for elitist practices during the sacred meal. "I Corinthians," *SDABC* rightly interprets the first passage, "as all the pieces come from the same loaf, so all the believers who partake of the communion service are united in Him whose broken body is thus typified by the broken bread"; but does not carry the metaphor over into chapter 11, interpreting instead, "here the meaning may be that the Corinthians did not distinguish between an ordinary meal and the consecrated emblems of the ordinance." (746, 765)

starkest contrast to the communal values established by the Christian faith. Corinth was the most prominent city of its region, “well on its way to becoming not only the largest but also the most prosperous city in all of Greece.”¹ There was great pride in being a resident of such a city, to which people came from all over the world due to its trade, its manufacturing, its tourism, and its religious centers. “The people of Corinth had both growing civic pride and individual pride. . . . Corinth was a city where public boasting and self-promotion had become an art form.”²

Greco-Roman culture observed pronounced distinctions along social, national, and gender lines. The society was unapologetically stratified. It was divided into two classes, upper and lower, with no middle class.³ Ten percent of the population owned 80 percent of the land.⁴ The status indicators of the society included birth, wealth, education, gender (male), and ethnicity (Roman).⁵ It was an honor-shame society in which public recognition was currency and the worst thing that could happen to a person was public embarrassment. “Honor is the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her social group. In this perspective honor is the claim to positive worth along with the social

¹ Witherington, 5.

² Ibid., 8.

³ Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 88, says statistically there was indeed a Middle Class, but it was so small, less than one tenth of 1 percent, as to be insignificant.

⁴ Witherington, 22, observes that though there were probably only few in the church of the upper class, just as in secular society, their influence was no doubt out of proportion to their numbers since they could provide meeting places for the believers in their homes.

⁵ MacMullen, 122.

acknowledgment of that worth by others.”¹ This is the paramount value for understanding the people of the Mediterranean in ancient times. The patron-client relationship drove civilization in every quarter.

The patron was the private individual who held power over public institutions through influence over clerks, governors, magistrates, and procurators. The powerful received deference from all who were beneath them and exacted bribes from all who required their favor. The sense of hierarchy ruled behavior at all public gatherings and was etched into the fabric of the culture.² The Corinthian citizens who were converted by Paul’s preaching brought with them into the church many of the values of the secular culture and patronage became the driving influence of the Lord’s Supper service.

Apparently, those who had status were receiving preferential treatment in the meal, eating “without waiting for anybody else” (I Cor 11:21) and overeating to the extent that those who had little were humiliated. Patronage would have provided protection and favor to those who gave the preferential treatment while providing honor to those who received it. To this situation Paul wrote “when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat . . . for anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself” (vss. 20, 29). By following the social values of the world, the church had denigrated the spiritual significance of the meal through the denigration of its interrelationships. The body of Christ metaphor helped to point out the

¹ Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 1991), 26.

² MacMullen, 8, 45, elaborating on the symbolic force of the peasant standing before the gate of a landowner, not demanding, but appealing for an audience, writes, “On the two sides of the gate, two worlds: one with a dirt floor, one with a mosaic; one with debts, the other with property.”

inconsistency of this fatal flaw, “because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body” (I Cor 10:17).

The metaphor employed in chapters 10 and 11 finds its development in chapter 12 where it helps to formulate an argument that concludes in chapter 14. The issue here is the predominance of tongues in the corporate worship service. The allusion is to the Triune nature of divinity as the basis for understanding the true nature of the church. “There are different kinds of gifts but the same *Spirit*. There are different kinds of service but the same *Lord*. There are different kinds of working but the same *God*.” (I Cor 12:4, 5, emphasis mine). The diversity that exists in divinity, couched in perfect unity, is the pattern for the life of the church. This is demonstrated in a multiplicity of gifts, not just one gift, given to the church through the prerogative of the Holy Ghost: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, etc. (vss. 7-10). Included in the list is the gift of tongues accompanied by the interpretation of tongues. Paul’s argument redirects focus away from any specific gift to the God who is the Source of all gifts, “all these are the work of one and the same *Spirit*.” (vs. 11). The center of worship is to be God and His diverse manifestations among His people, not those who are gifted by God, however spectacular their gifts may be.

The body metaphor was common in ancient culture but Paul uses it to show specific significance for the church, “for as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (vss.12, 13 NKJV). These words aptly illustrate the uniqueness of the oneness of being in Christ. The new creation in

Christ is a relational distinction that believers must understand in order to grasp the meaning of redemption.

The apostle elaborates on the metaphor, stressing his points by the use of hyperbole. He personifies the parts of the body and permits them to express ontological absurdities in order to highlight the points he is trying to make. The first is the absurdity of uniformity. If the foot should cease its function and endeavor to become a hand, or if the ear should give up its role and try to become an eye, it would not serve the health or utility of the body (vss. 15-17). Indeed, the body would cease to be a body at all and be turned into a monstrosity. Diversity is thus shown to be an essential aspect of the nature of the church.

The body does not consist of just one organ. It is, rather, made up of a variety of interdependent parts, all of them necessary. Paul's stress here is on unity but also on the necessity of variety and diversity. It takes all kinds of parts to make up a body. To think otherwise is to criticize God, because, as v. 18 indicates, it is God who has placed the various members in the body. It is believers who are enabled and used by God; God is not used by them.¹

For Paul this has immediate application to the controversy over tongues in worship. God has gifted many members, not just a few, and appointed many gifts, not just one, and all of the members and all of the gifts must function if the church is to be the church.²

As the metaphor is further developed the parts of the body are permitted to express a second ontological absurdity, the absurdity of division. The eye cannot say, based on apparent superiority, that it does not need the hand. The parts of the body that

¹ Witherington, 258, 259.

² "Not all should be speaking in tongues when they assemble for worship. That makes all become the same thing, which is like a body with only one part," Fee, 194.

seem inferior are nevertheless indispensable to the total functioning of the body. In fact, the weaker parts of the body receive special attention so that they may be protected, an attention the more “presentable” parts do not require (vss. 21-24). Here the recasting of the popular metaphor becomes particularly pointed as Paul turns it on its head. Instead of using the body metaphor to link honor with high social status, as was traditionally done Paul uses it to assert that God bestows the higher honor on the less presentable members.¹ The traditional interpretation is countered in the community that represents God’s counter-culture in a fallen world. “Paul believes that the body of Christ is only truly strong when it gives special honor and attention to its weakest members.”² Here is what distinguishes God’s community on earth.

There is to be no division in the body such as that caused by favoritism. “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (vss. 25, 26). To be aware of this reality and live and worship in accordance with it is to know who you are as God’s church. To be unaware of this reality and live out of harmony with it is to be deceived about your own true identity.

In Paul’s corrective to the misuses of worship in Corinth, we see the needs of community based on love being consistently elevated above the self-perceived needs of the individual. “Worship is mainly meant to be a group experience where one gives worship to God and κοινωνία to others, so that all benefit.”³ The supreme goal of worship on the human side is edification, the building up of the body of Christ. This goal

¹ Witherington, 253, points to the use of the same metaphor with a different emphasis in ancient writings by Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Livy.

² Ibid., 263.

³ Ibid., 282.

relates to the nurture of believers as well as the conversion of non-believers. Both worship imperatives stressed by Paul in I Cor 14, intelligibility and order, are meant to serve these ultimate goals.

Though on the surface the issue in Corinth concerned the proper use of spiritual gifts in worship, the larger issue ran deeper and embraced a wider significance. The root of the problem was the individualistic attitudes in worship that plagued the church. “Corinthian worship was at times an exercise not of a body but rather of a collection of isolated individuals all displaying their gifts, rather like merchants at a fair.”¹ The body of Christ metaphor excludes the individualistic approach to worship based on special giftedness or preferential treatment. Not the talented or the wealthy or the socially well placed are to have distinction in worship. Titles and positions become irrelevant in the gathering of the believers who in their diversity express a singular unity as those who know themselves to be one in Christ.

That the Corinthian worshipers abandoned true worship is apparent in their motives even more than in their actions. Paul’s corrective does not exclude speaking in tongues as a legitimate gift of the Spirit, but only the manner in which the believers in Corinth had been using it. Had the believers approached worship from a communal perspective instead of an individual one, they might have come to the same conclusion without the intervention of Paul. Intelligibility is an indispensable characteristic of any gathering of people of any size if the participants are to engage in it jointly. The Corinthians lost sight of this obvious goal by losing sight of the communal priority in worship and getting caught up in an individual one.

¹ Ibid., 281.

Principles for Adventist Worship Based on the Teachings of Christ

However plain may be the teaching of the oneness of the church and however replete in the New Testament teachings of Christ, the form this teaching usually takes in Scripture is suggestive. The tone of the Bible's teaching on κοινωνία is often that of rebuke, showing that from the beginning its realization has been problematic for the church. The ideal situation that obtained on the day of Pentecost did not last long. The self-serving subterfuge of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and the internal controversy over the maltreatment of the Grecian widows (Acts 6) occurred in the church's early days. In the course of history "the difficulties of living in Christian love have proved so acute that from time to time schisms have arisen in contradiction to the deepest nature of the church."¹ Paul spent a considerable amount of time in his ministry fighting against divisive forces within the church and correcting them through his writings. In spite of his efforts, however, the church continued to acquiesce in an ongoing disunity of life.

The implications of this teaching are important for Adventist worship and life. As Jesus defined the commandments through relationship – love to God and love to others – so worship, rightly understood, is an expression of right relationship both vertically and horizontally. Worship is the gathering together of the community of love for the purpose of offering jointly to God the best devotion, attention, surrender, sacrifice, and praise it can possibly give. The result of this gathering will be an enrichment and edification in the Spirit that develops Christ's body more completely into His divine image. Paul's "with the heart and with the mind" need not be fabricated if the relationships within the

body are right. Love to God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength will produce love to neighbor as to oneself.

It takes more than doctrinal superiority to establish the identity of the church as true. If the presence of God among us is based on our relationships with each other as well as with Him, then we cannot maintain our calling by clinging to our history or boasting of our biblical knowledge. We need each other in order to be the true people of God. Just as God's nature is plural yet undivided, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so the nature of the church is diverse yet united. Division and discord not only weaken the church's witness and thwart its mission to the world, it threatens the church's very existence; in Fee's language, "dismantles God's temple."² The Holy Spirit is banished from our presence through strife and dissension. The appeal of Eph 4 is to the church as one body and the vice list that closes the chapter records only sins of discord (vss. 25-31). When these attitudes and behaviors are denounced and put aside, the door is opened for the new life in Christ to flourish in the church as prompted by the indwelling Spirit and expressed and nurtured in corporate worship.

Diversity is not presented in the New Testament as a social goal to be achieved, but as a state of reality already accomplished in Christ.³ The unity in diversity of the New Testament church was not a human political construct. It was the substance of the new life in Christ which the believers discovered spontaneously as they surrendered their lives to Him. This has not changed in the two thousand-year history of the church. "God

¹ Wainwright, 123.

² Fee, 117.

³ "Paul's conception demonstrates concretely the already experienced reconciliation between the individual, God, and others." Banks, 108.

is not just saving individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather, He is creating *a people* for His name, among whom God can dwell and who in their life together will reproduce God's life and character.”¹

In the modern culture diversity has become so politicized a term as to be all but unfit for depicting the New Testament church. The church of Acts knew nothing of power politics or ethnic coalitions. When the wealthier members sold their properties for the benefit of those who were in want, they completely relinquished control, laying their gifts at the apostles' feet and leaving it to them to distribute according to the believer's needs (Acts 4:34). There was no choosing of best friends for favored treatment or lobbying for personal influence on the basis of generosity. Diversity in the early church was not about power groups consolidating their power or minority groups creating their own alternative structures. Diversity was not something to be worked out at all; it was to be lived out based on the example of Jesus and fueled by love to Him. Divinity is the catalyst of Christian unity in diversity. “God who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (I Cor 1:9). It is Christ who creates oneness among believers through the bond of His love and it is our lack of His Spirit that prompts us to attempt to achieve it on other grounds. “Efforts to build a fellowship of God's people around a center other than the worship of God – education, witness, social service (regardless of how noble and virtuous) – can build an important, respected institution, but not a Christian church.”² Willimon's picture of the contemporary church awash in good activities is striking: “As one views modern congregations, many with their hectic rounds

¹ Fee, 872 (italics original).

² Gaddy, 34.

of activities – yoga, ceramics, basket weaving, day care – one suspects that socialization is being substituted for the gospel, warm-hearted busyness is being offered in lieu of Spirit-empowered community.”¹

The work to be done by believers is not in building coalitions but in realizing them. The bond of union between us already exists in Christ Jesus and in no other person. Whenever worship is formulated around the preferences of one group over another within the church, the very nature of true worship is thereby denied. Not only is it true that worship cannot be based on human priorities, but there is a particular inappropriateness to worship being used in a political way. Worship is not a vehicle for human artistic expression or an outlet for human therapeutic needs, and it certainly is not to be a means of facilitating division within the church. Worship is first and foremost about God and God’s priorities. It is only secondarily about man.

Worship is indeed for the church. . . the time and place *par excellence* at which it finds its own deep identity; the time and place at which the church becomes what it is . . . [However] it is not by looking at itself, even washed and clean, that the church learns what it is. What makes the church first glimpse, and then clearly see its true face is meeting with Christ and learning from Him what sort of Bride it is that He loves. It is on Christ’s face that the church learns what it is.²

Thus we see that at the close of the New Testament era the church’s depiction of itself as a worshiping community was firmly lodged in its theology. As the apostles gradually passed off the scene in death, their letters and writings became more highly prized as the preservation of the record of God’s will for His people. The oral communication of that expression gave way to a formal written account and with the development of the New Testament corpus the sacred canon was closed. These writings

¹ Willimon, 42.

² Wainwright, 122.

self-attested as sufficient unto salvation (2 Tim 3:16, 17) became the treasure of all believers. The church needed only to continue in its admonition to come into the fullness of God's will for its life and destiny.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROTESTANT PRINCIPLE

Christian Worship in the Post-New Testament Era

The Reformers contended that in the generations following the patristic fathers (c. 100-400 A.D.) the church had drifted from adherence to pure doctrine by omitting important aspects of New Testament teaching, and by adding “unscripturally” to those teachings. The original intent of the Reformers was not to overthrow the church but to eliminate the distortions that came into it. They desired a return to the original Christianity of the New Testament. It is helpful to understand the development of church doctrine from a historical perspective and the doctrinal changes that effected worship.

Early Persecution and Its Impact

After the ascension of Christ the church experienced maltreatment from Rome on a continual basis. The first three centuries of Christianity saw extended periods of persecution, and in between, occasional outbursts brought on by socio-political circumstances, “a bad harvest, a barbarian attack, or a public festival of the emperor cult.”¹ Beginning with Nero in 64, who killed Christians as scapegoats for the great Roman fire, and on to Pliny the younger, Decius, and Galerius, Christianity knew

¹ H. Cha, “Christianity Before the Schism of 1054,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Benton Publishing, 1983), 4:538.

few prolonged periods of peace. One story out of the period of Diocletian's reign illustrates the trend. On one occasion the emperor became convinced that no divine answer was given to his customary sacrifice because a number of Christians from his court crossed themselves as he presented it. Diocletian then commanded all his courtiers to make the sacrifices with him; and whoever refused was to be flogged.¹ Circumstances like this led to a particular focus in Christian theology, that of apologetics—the reasoned defense of the Christian faith against the ideas of critics and heretics. There was little opportunity for the church to focus on doctrinal development because of the ongoing state of siege.²

With the conversion of Constantine and the Edict of Milan in 313, a manifesto of tolerance between the empire and the church, the situation changed. State-sponsored persecution ended and the luxury of doctrinal debate became available to church theologians and teachers. The patristic period had produced many strange and contradictory teachings that the church could now begin to address.³ It is for this reason that the fourth century saw a shift in focus from apologetics to argumentation and the church moving steadily toward theological consensus codified in its ecumenical creeds.

¹ Hans Lietzmann and Bertram Lee Woolf, *From Constantine to Julian: A History of the Early Church*, vol. 3 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), 61.

² Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), observes that with the very survival of the church at stake, there was little room for theological development.

³ It is interesting to note that the political peace which made possible the church's examination of its doctrinal positions led to the one distortion which neither the Medieval nor Reform periods ever addressed – the proclamation of Sunday as the day of rest.

In his survey of Christian theology, Alister McGrath outlines some of the most controversial doctrinal ideas that characterized the church of this time:¹

1. Justin Martyr's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* asserted that the seeds of Christian truth are to be found in the great pagan writers of ancient Greece. This led to a trend of theologians relating the gospel to philosophy, which would later produce doctrinal inconsistencies.

2. Iraneus of Lyons' *single-source* theory of theology stated that Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with church tradition, which is historically fixed and given. He also proposed the theory that led to the doctrine of apostolic succession. Iraneus asserted that "the apostles handed down the true Christian teaching to the bishops of the churches" who were appointed as special preservers of the sacred tradition.²

3. Origen created the principle of allegorical interpretation arguing that the surface meaning of a Scriptural text was different from its deeper spiritual meaning. He also adopted the idea of *apocatastasis* (universalism), which asserted that every creature would be saved, including Satan.

4. Marcion believed in a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments and argued that they related to two different gods.

As church leaders hashed out their doctrinal differences, the preferred positions gradually formulated into what would become orthodox dogma. Some of the most important issues debated were the nature of Christ, the Trinity, the doctrine of the church, and the doctrine of grace. Among the most influential thinkers of the era, whose

¹ McGrath, 10, 11, 219, 417.

² "Acts," SDABC, 40.

doctrinal positions were eventually accepted and ratified by the church, were, Tertullian,¹ Athanasius, and most influential of all, Augustine of Hippo, who is credited with giving the church its first systematic theology.

The Medieval Church

The Medieval period produced many influential thinkers and writers in the church. The major intellectual force of the period was Scholastic theology with its emphasis on making minute distinctions in theological thought. The importance of Scholasticism for this study lies in the fact that much of Reformation writing and thinking either issued from it or was in reaction to it. Though it is difficult to define, McGrath makes this attempt:

Scholasticism is best regarded as the medieval movement, flourishing in the period 1200-1500, which placed emphasis upon the rational justification of religious belief, and the systematic presentation of those beliefs. Scholasticism thus does not refer to a specific system of beliefs, but to a particular way of organizing theology.²

Scholasticism represented a new epistemology based on the emergence of science and the scientific method, especially flourishing in the sixteenth century. During this time every discipline in the West became “scientized,” theology being no exception. The empirical method, observation verified by experimentation, would soon be exalted as the most reliable way of knowing. Its fundamental principles going back to Plato included analysis, sequencing, systematizing, and interpretation through logic. Its claim to

¹ Tertullian actually died c. 225 but his influence helped to characterize the succeeding generation. For example, he invented the word *Trinity* described as “one substance three Persons,” which became normative for the church. McGrath, 11, 12, 294.

² Ibid., 34.

objectivity, which would not be seriously challenged until the early twentieth century,¹ gave it the appearance of superior knowledge in contrast to the church's claims of divine revelation, which came to be viewed as superstitious and repressive. The emergence of science as the most reliable discipline of the West, and the exaltation of reason as the light of the world were greatly aided by the fragmentation of the church and the dissolution of its authority that came with the Protestant Reformation.²

Among the theological ideas that took hold in the medieval Western church, developing into a broad theology was the immaculate conception of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Duns Scotus developed the theory that, by virtue of His work of redemption, Christ was able to keep His mother free from original sin.

Mary is saved, according to Scotus, by Christ's meriting that she be preserved from original sin. Scotus is clear that Mary is prevented from having original sin in virtue of her having sanctifying grace. On this account Mary's redemption is consistent with her never having contracted original sin.³

This teaching, which became the foundation of the doctrine of Mariology, dominated the church by the end of the middle ages. It included the idea of Mary as "co-redemptrix," a figure of redemption alongside Christ. According to one tradition, Mary never saw the inside of a grave but was translated to heaven without seeing death, although the tradition's originator, one Epiphanius, himself called the teaching highly esoteric and expressed doubts about its validity.⁴

¹ Ironically, the challenge came from within science itself in the form of Einstein's relativity in 1906 and 1916 and the uncertainty principle of Werner Heisenberg in 1927.

² Vincent G. Potter, *Readings in Epistemology* (New York: Fordham University Press), 1993.

³ Richard Cross, *Dons Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132, adds that Aquinas opposed this teaching on two grounds: (1) Mary was conceived in the natural way, and, (2) Christ's redemptive work saves us from sin but someone who lacked original sin would not need redeeming.

⁴ Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing), 1968, 18.

Another theological idea of the period found its rationale in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, the official Bible of the church. Based on the interpretation of Matt 4:17 as, “*do penance*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” the church taught that salvation for the individual believer had a direct connection to the sacrament of penance.¹ This interpretation was used to bolster the church’s theology of penance and indulgences that focused on repentance as an outward practice implemented by rituals and offerings, a mechanical act rather than an attitude of the heart. An impression of the superficial nature of this teaching is reflected in Luther’s objection, in his Ninety-five Theses, to the doctrine of contrition and attrition.² Because sincere contrition is so difficult for the human heart to achieve, the church taught that attrition, prompted by fear of punishment, could be substituted for contrition and later transformed into it by absolution in the sacrament of penance. All this is based on a Vulgate translation that the Reformers repudiated as being unfaithful to the original biblical languages.

The church also taught other worship doctrines to which the Reformers, and Martin Luther in particular, objected. His Ninety-five Theses upbraided such teachings as: Satisfaction-the act by which the worshiper pays the temporal penalty for his sins in this life and makes up the difference in purgatory; indulgence-permission to relax or commute the satisfaction or penance of a contrite sinner; and, The Treasury of Merits-a storehouse of merits of Christ and of saints who had done more than God required of them in life. The pope could draw on this treasury when granting indulgences through

¹ McGrath, 53.

² Martin Luther, *Ninety-five Theses*, trans. C.M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 4.

the power of the keys – the God-given right to forgive or retain sins.¹ At the heart of many of Luther's objections to the church's unscriptural teachings was his suspicion concerning the economic motives behind them. In this twenty-seventh thesis he abhors the teaching, then prominent in the church, that, "as soon as money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory."²

Theological ideas and doctrinal positions do not occur in a vacuum, however. Every generation of Christians is influenced by the cultural and political circumstances of its time, and the medieval believers were no exception. In the period just before the Reformation, the church labored under the burden of a folk religion and superstition that was characteristic of society in general. Pre-scientific ideas concerning the nature of the universe and the causes of life's events impacted the thinking of people everywhere, and believers in Christ were not exempt from the influence. The grace of God, for example, was conceived of as a substance, a material thing. It was believed and taught that an insurmountable gulf existed between God and man, an actual physical space, and that this chasm was bridged by the supernatural substance of grace. Grace was thought of as part of the material universe, something God made to bridge the gap between heaven and earth, "a kind of middling species."³ Mary was viewed as a reservoir of grace from whom the supplicant could obtain this vital substance necessary for reaching God.

Without the presence of the Bible in the common vernacular the laity was easily victimized by distorted teachings and superstitious ideas, in addition to being misguided

¹ Ibid., 2, 3, 4.

² Chadwick, 54.

³ McGrath, 89.

by church doctrines based on traditions that were intended to bolster the ecclesiastical economy. Situations that had developed in prior centuries of church life gave rise to reactions and tendencies that impacted theology. An example of this can be seen in the gradual development of the doctrine of transubstantiation, which was to become a major target of both the German and Swiss Reforms.

Worship as Ritual

To understand the disproportionate emphasis on ritual that characterized the worship of the medieval church, one must go back to the first ecumenical council convened in 325 A.D. and the critical doctrinal issue it addressed. The Council of Nicaea settled once and for all what was arguably the one doctrinal dispute most vital to the future of the church. The Nicene Creed employed Athansius' word, "ομοούσιον, to signify the absolute equality of the Son with the Father as "one substance," thus settling the Arian dispute.¹

We believe in one God the Father all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father . . . and those who say 'there once was when he was not', and 'before he was begotten he was not', and that he came to be from things that were not, or from another hypostasis or substance, affirming that the Son of God is subject to change or alteration – these the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes.²

¹ William H. Willimon, *Word, Water, Wine and Bread: How Worship Has Changed Over the Years* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1980), 43. Arian taught a doctrine of "subordinationism." Christ was created *ex nihilo* by the Father and therefore could not fully know or be fully equal with the Father.

² Norman P. Tanner, S.J., ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. I (*Nicea I - Lateran V*) (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 5.

While many disliked the word “ομοούσιον, because it was deemed unscriptural and highly philosophical,¹ Athanasius himself was concerned not for the term, but for the truth it sought to convey; that Jesus Christ must be as divine as the Father and as human as man or He could not be the Savior of the world. Athanasius argued that the cardinal error of Arianism was that it turned Christians into creature-worshipers, idolaters.² The church was saved from a bitter dispute, hotly contested, by the resolution of this doctrinal issue.

As a result of the dispute, however, a trend developed in corporate worship toward an emphasis on the majestic, kingly role of Christ focused on His divinity. His companion priestly role, emphasizing His humanity, was to a large degree lost sight of and Christ was made to seem distant and unapproachable. As this emphasis on the transcendent to the exclusion of the immanent continued to grow, the idea of the need for intermediaries between the worshiper and Christ came into being; and the door was opened for the doctrines of Mariology and the veneration of the saints. Chrysostom preaching to his congregation, for example, spoke of the Eucharist as the “shuddering hour,” and the table as the “terrible and awful table.”³ Evelyn Underhill describes the worship hour with these words, “hallowed and penetrated by a sense of the Transcendence of God an awful communion with the Incarnate One, holy – life-

¹ James Moffat, *The First Five Centuries of the Church* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1938), 152, 153.

² Wainwright, 52.

³ Willimon, *Word, Water, Wine and Bread*, 43, 44.

giving – and terrible.”¹ The popularity of praying to the saints steadily grew as worshipers were made to feel that Christ was too holy to be approached.

The effect of this emphasis can also be seen in the popularity of relics in worship, which steadily increased in the medieval church. The priests encouraged, as having spiritual value to believers, the prayerful consideration of the remains of holy men and women of old. This led to a preoccupation with external forms that became extreme by the fifteenth century. There were, for example, multiple claims of people possessing a piece of the original cross; others sought or claimed to have found the holy grail, a chalice containing drops of Christ’s blood from the cross. There were even claims of the possession of a part of the diaper of Baby Jesus or of Mary’s earwax. One devotee, Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony, was said to have had a collection of relics so extensive that he published an illustrated catalogue concisely annotating a total of 1,902,202 entries.² Worship was becoming steeped in ritual and worshipers turned into supplicants and spectators adoringly terrified of an awful God they could not reach.

As the trend continued the adoration of saints eventually rivaled the worship of Christ. When a particular saints day happened to fall on Sunday, the commemorations and honorifics to the human overshadowed the worship of the divine.³ The form of worship in the church became more and more liturgical, even to the extent that the words and language used in the service were predetermined. So formal was the worship that only priests could conduct it and only in strict adherence to the liturgy, a set form of

¹ Underhill, 246.

² Hans J. Hillebrand, *The Reformation: A Narrative History Related by Contemporary Observers and Participants* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 18.

³ Willimon, *Word, Water, Wine and Bread*, 158.

words in Latin read or repeated from memory that the majority of worshipers could not understand.¹ It was sometimes questioned whether the priests themselves understood it.²

The emphasis on due order befitting the majesty of Christ was the predominant idea of worship. Functional and aesthetic considerations were of first importance. The formality of the liturgy ensured propriety in worship, as well as beauty befitting its Object and this was valued above all else. There was little participation on the part of the worshipers, who did not understand what was being said and only spoke responses and prayers that were scripted for them. There was no congregational singing. The music was generally so technical and complex that only professional musicians could sing it. Thus the relational and communal aspects of worship were totally obscured. The κοινωνία so widely shared and highly valued in the New Testament church was almost completely unknown, replaced instead by the spectacle of worship: “all the ceremonial acts of reverence with which the cultus [was] surrounded – genuflections and prostrations, incense and lights – [were] merely the outward signs of this ceaseless adoration of the Divine.”³

The question of how such worship could have any positive effect on the worshiper was answered by appealing to the element of the mysterious. The worshiper may be only an onlooker in the act of worship, but she is not an indifferent onlooker. Without intelligent engagement but based solely on subjective feeling, the worshiper

¹ According to Willimon the church made the transition from Greek to Latin as the liturgical language in the fourth century, part of the “Romanizing” of the church that occurred under Constantine. *Ibid.*, 40.

² Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 170.

³ Underhill, 247.

nevertheless gains a religious experience. She may be only an observer involved in a mystery that is unfolding before her, but she need not understand it in order to benefit from it. Religious ritual possesses an innate power that acts upon the worshiper regardless of her rational participation.¹ This was the teaching of the time.

The Mass and Transubstantiation

This particular theology, of the benefit of worship to the worshiper regardless of her rational participation in worship, epitomized the ecclesiology to which the reformers so vehemently objected. The Roman Catholic Church recognized seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination, and marriage,² with the Eucharist being by far the chief of these. Worship came to center in the mass, the celebration of the Eucharist through the miracle of transubstantiation. The height of worship came each week the moment the worshiper received the communion wafer from the hand of the priest. It was believed that when consecrated by the priest the communion elements metaphysically changed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ while retaining their common appearance. Thus the Eucharist became, in the church's ecclesiology, an actual participation in the death of Jesus Christ, a reenactment of Calvary. In explaining this teaching the Council of Trent (1545-1563) stated the following.

¹ Apparently this teaching extended to the fact of participation at all, as indicated by the practice of barring worshipers from receiving the wine in communion so as to avoid spillage. This practice, known as "communion in one kind," was widespread by the 13th century and hotly disputed by the reformers. See McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 166.

² The Protestant Reformers attacked both the nature and number of the sacraments reducing them from seven to two, baptism and the Lord's Supper. These alone, they contended, could be shown in the New Testament. *Ibid.*, 161.

By the consecration of the bread and wine, there takes place the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. And the holy Catholic Church has suitably and properly called this change transubstantiation.¹

The emphatic degree to which Christ was conceived of as being really and substantially present in this change is reflected in the accompanying statement of condemnation:

If anyone denies that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ *together with the soul, and divinity, and therefore the whole Christ*, but says that he is present in it only as a sign or figure by his power: let him be anathema.²

The church's basis for this theology was not scripturally sound, finding its rationale in an allusion to its Mariology, as the following shows:

As the Logos became flesh through the Virgin Mary, so He descends from heaven to manifest Himself, not in a human body, but in the earthly substance of the bread and wine. Though spiritual, the Presence of the Logos is real and effective. This reality of the divine Presence is the essential fact as regards the conception of the Eucharist as a mystery in the ancient Church.³

In the ninth century the church became concerned with just how Christ was present in the bread and wine. Around A.D. 831 a monk named Paschasius Radbertus suggested that the body of Christ was present in the Mass by virtue of a miraculous transformation of the elements. The outward appearance was unchanged while the original substance of the bread was transformed into the substance of the body of Christ. One monk, Beranger of Tours, went so far as to assert that the presiding priest actually touched the body of Christ and the worshipers bit into His body with their teeth.⁴ This

¹ Tanner, 2: 695.

² Ibid., 697, emphasis mine.

³ R. Will, *Le Culte*, vol. I, quoted in Underhill, 166.

⁴ Willimon, 56.

doctrine was debated in the church for many years and not accepted as official church dogma until the thirteenth century.¹ At one point the church became concerned with precisely when Christ became present in the Eucharist. It was decided that Christ became present the moment the priest repeated the words, “This is my body.”²

Transubstantiation was officially defined by the church in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 A.D., based on the philosophical distinction made by Aristotle between ‘substance’ and ‘accident.’ Realism separates reality into substance, which is the aspect of a thing that participates in the universal Idea, and accident, which is the physical characteristic of a thing that is perceived. The substance of a thing is its essential nature, whereas its accidents are its outward appearances. The theology of transubstantiation asserted that the accidents of the bread and wine, their taste, smell, and feel, remained unchanged at the moment of consecration. Their substance, meanwhile, changed from that of ordinary bread and wine into that of the actual body and blood of Jesus.³ As we will see, this teaching and its practice as the center of corporate worship led the church away from its original Scriptural identity as the body of Christ on earth, God’s living temple.

Principles of Worship Advocated by the Protestant Reformers

Because of the importance of corporate worship as the public image of the church and the main point of contact between the church and the world, the reformers first

¹ Ibid., 55, 56.

² Ibid., 47.

³ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 169.

targeted this critical issue. The Reformation began with a focus on altering both the place and the theology of the sacraments, which had become the center of public worship.¹

While Luther and Zwingli, the leaders of the two main branches of the Reformation, disagreed over the nature of the efficacy of the sacraments, there was agreement between them and their followers as to the principles that should constitute the true foundation of worship. Their understanding represented such a stark departure from what the church taught and practiced that congregations began to declare their allegiance to the Reformation as a whole by instituting worship change around the communion; “the reform of the mass became the shibboleth of the Reformation.”²

The Reformers found no biblical basis for much of Catholic theology – penance, indulgences, purgatory, priestly authority for the forgiveness of sin, or the church’s authority to determine sacred canon. They also rejected the basis of worship in the celebration of the Eucharist. To the question of how God is to be worshipped, the Reformers asserted that God alone could determine His own worship.

Because of the temporal nature of the church’s worship life and the spiritual, hidden reality of worship itself, questions regarding the propriety of worship as suited to the revelation of God are constantly hanging over the people of God, even to this day. The worship of the church cannot be viewed as ultimate and self-defining. It is based on a pattern and is not that pattern itself. Even when worship is executed appropriately under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is still not ultimate and perfect because it is

¹ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 159, says that by the early 1520s the sacramental system was under attack by reforming factions.

² Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 53:xiii.

executed by human beings. It is always developing, always in need of improvement and reform.¹

The Protestant Reformers were comfortable drawing the conclusion that all elements of worship must be put to the test of Scripture. They rejected all acts of worship that were based solely on tradition. The basis of worship standards and practice was the Bible, and the Bible only. By this standard, worship could be formulated appropriately based on God's Self-revelation in Scripture and in no other way – not based on custom, tradition, culture, or any human norm. Worship could not be fashioned as a vehicle for human artistic expression or as an outlet for human therapeutic needs. Worship was not existential in this way, but theological; that is to say, it began with the revelation of God to His people and consisted of their response to Him in a way that was in harmony with that revelation. It did not begin with the worshiper and his sense of what he needed or desired to express. “The basic requirement that must be made of everything called worship reads: God must be able to give assent to everything that happens there; it must be acceptable to Him. The worship of God depends on what is pleasing to Him. . . . It is oriented neither psychologically nor anthropologically.”²

All the Protestant reformers agreed on this priority, most preeminently, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. These two giants of church history, born the same year, became the voices of the spiritual revival that swept Europe and the world, revitalizing Christianity in an exuberance that harkened back to the era of Pentecost. The movements they led, respectively called Lutheran in Germany and Reformed in Switzerland, rebuilt

¹ Brunner, 82, comments that each church service presents a crisis for the congregation in which the goal of the Spirit triumphing over the flesh either is or is not attained.

² Ibid., 25, 26.

Christian theology on the foundation of *sola scriptura*, the Bible only as the rule of all faith and practice.¹

German Reform

The political situation in Europe at the time of Martin Luther was dominated by the large monarchies of Spain, France, England, and Sweden. The Holy Roman Empire of the German nation was weak. Germany, however, was an intensely religious country, unlike Italy, which had been greatly influenced by the new discoveries and philosophies of the Renaissance.² “For example, in Cologne, a town of some 30,000 inhabitants, there were over a hundred churches and chapels, and the same number of monasteries and convents.”³ The religious bent of German society prepared it to take seriously the theological challenges to the church put forth by Martin Luther, a man who was widely attested to be a devout Christian and theological genius.⁴ His personal spiritual breakthrough in 1515,⁵ in which he made his now celebrated discovery of the meaning of the righteousness of God, convinced Luther that the church was in error in its most important teaching. This meant that strong conviction accompanied strong intellect in his

¹ James Mackinnon, *Luther and the Reformation: Vindication of the Movement (1530-46)* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 283: Luther asks, ‘how can one become a theologian. The answer is, by the study of the Bible.’

² Hillebrand, 16.

³ Ibid., 17.

⁴ Hugh T. Kerr, ed., *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), ix, quotes a letter to Bullinger (11/25/1549) in which John Calvin, who never met Luther, wrote, “Although he were to call me a devil, I should still not the less hold him in such honor that I must acknowledge him to be an illustrious servant of God.”

⁵ McGrath, *Reformation Theology*, 31, popularly known as the *Turmlebris* (tower experience), was the spark of the Reformation in Germany and influenced all of Europe.

pursuit of the truth, a combination that proved to be prevailing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike Zwingli and the Swiss Reformers whose emphasis was more practical, Luther's reform movement tended to be theological. He attacked church doctrine based on textual inaccuracies and his own reinterpretation of Pauline theology. He concentrated his efforts on the reform of church dogma and the eradication of institutional abuses.¹ First among these was the church's teaching with regard to the sacraments. We have already seen how the church regarded the Eucharist. Luther's understanding ran contrary to this.

Luther saw the church as treating the sacraments as marketable commodities with the power to bestow merit. The church taught that the priest performed a meritorious act by administering the sacraments and that the worshipper obtained virtue in receiving them. Luther vigorously objected to this teaching. The priest did not perform a good work in giving the sacraments, he contested, which contained no efficacy of their own. Luther's definition of a sacrament was a promise of God with a sign attached to it. For Luther, the efficacy of the sacrament was in the faith of the supplicant. "It is plain therefore, that the beginning of our salvation is a faith which clings to the word of the promising God who, without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy takes the initiative and offers us the word of His promise."²

Two rival theories arose regarding sacramental efficacy in relation to the morality of the priest who administered the bread and wine. The question was "What happens

¹ Ulrich Zwingli, *Ulrich Zwingli: Selected Works*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1901), vii.

² McGrath, *Reformation Theology*, 168.

when the sacrament is given by a corrupt priest? Does the worshipper receive any benefit in such a case?" To this question the church took the position of *ex opera operato* (through the work that is worked): the efficacy of the sacrament depends on the inherent quality of the sacrament itself. It bestows grace regardless of the worthiness of the priest and even regardless of the faith of the worshiper. The Council of Trent in 1547 stated the case this way, "If anyone says that grace is not conferred by the sacraments of the new law through the sacramental action itself [*ex opere operato*], but that faith in the divine promise is itself sufficient for obtaining grace: let him be anathema."¹

Luther protested this teaching as a distortion of the spiritual significance of the sacraments. His position and that of the Reformers in general was *ex opera operantis* (through the work of the one who works); that the efficacy of the sacrament is dependent on the personal moral qualities and attitudes of the participants, sincere worshipers and a faithful priest. In this understanding the sacrament contains no inherent or magical properties. It is incapable of bestowing virtue apart from the faith of the worship participants. For Luther the communion service performed three vitally important functions; it affirmed the promise of grace and forgiveness, it identified those to whom the promise was made, and it declared the death of the One who made the promise. The service at once declared the Incarnation, the death, and the grace of Jesus Christ.

For the only difference between a promise and a testament is that a testament involves the death of the one who makes it... Now God made a testament. Therefore it was necessary that He should die. But God could not die unless He became a human being. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both included explicitly in this one word 'testament.'²

¹ Tanner, 2: 685.

² Martin Luther, *Three Treatises: The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 155.

Luther spoke against the bias that today might be called spiritualizing, which denies that material things like bread and wine could have such a prominent place in Christian worship.

In the sacraments we see nothing wonderful – just ordinary water, bread and wine . . . but we must learn to discover what a glorious majesty lies hidden beneath those despised things. It is precisely the same with Christ in the Incarnation. We see a frail, weak and mortal being – yet He is nothing other than the majesty of God Himself. In the same way, God Himself speaks to us and deals with us in these ordinary and despised materials.¹

It was on the basis of its establishment in the thought of Aristotle that Luther rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, while continuing to believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. His position was that the presence of Christ did not require a “scientific” explanation, and that Aristotle had no place in Christian theology.² Notice how his theological position reverses the focus from ritual to relationship:

There are many who . . . rely upon the fact that the mass or the sacrament is, as they say, *opus grantum opere operato*, that is, a work which of itself pleases God, even though they who perform it do not please Him. . . I grant everyone his opinion, but such fables please me not. . . The more precious the sacrament, the greater the harm which comes upon the whole congregation from its misuse. For it was not instituted for its own sake, that it might please God, but for our sake, that we might use it rightly, exercise our faith by it, and by it become pleasing to God.³

The one concession Luther made to the church’s position was this, that though he could not explain how it was so, the bread of the sacrament was the actual body of Christ: “[I] firmly believe not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the

¹ McGrath, *Reformation Theology*, 164.

² Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation, and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 17, comments that Luther considered Aristotle a curse to theology, saying, “he would have held him to be the devil himself had he not had flesh.”

³ Martin Luther, ‘A Treatise Concerning the Blessed Sacrament and Concerning the Brotherhoods,’ in *A Compend of Luther’s Theology*, ed. Hugh T. Kerr, 175.

body of Christ.”¹ The Swiss reformers considered Luther mistaken on this point but Luther stuck to his belief and it became the one point of contention over which the Reformers could never agree. The Swiss reformers parted company with Luther accusing him of inconsistency in his theology. They thought him to be making concessions to his Catholic opponents, concessions which they viewed as untenable and unnecessary regardless of the condemnation of the Council of Trent.”²

Zwingli in marked contrast to Luther and complete defiance of the church held that the sacraments contained nothing of the real bodily presence of Christ. For him the sacraments were symbols that merely confirmed the faith of the worshiper and the message of the Word that needed to be preached separately. Zwingli did not believe that the mass should be the center of worship. He recommended it to be celebrated only three or four times a year. There was no such thing as transubstantiation or the real presence of Christ in his theology. Such belief was superstition. For Zwingli the real body of Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father. The Lord’s Supper served as a pledge and sign like the Vine of John 15; a visual aid which signified God’s presence among believers through the Holy Spirit during the meal, not in the meal. “The preaching of the Word of God is of central importance, and the sacraments are like seals on a letter – they confirm its substance.”³

This doctrinal disagreement between the two reform movements was viewed as a serious threat to the overall cause of the Reformation. Philip of Hesse was one of those

¹ Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” quoted in McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 167.

² “If anyone says that these sacraments have been instituted for the nourishment of faith alone, let them be condemned” Tanner, 2:684.

³ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 171.

concerned about the issue and suggested a meeting between the leaders. In 1529 the meeting that took place was named for Philip's castle in which it was convened, the Colloquy of Marburg. Luther was reluctant to attend, while Zwingli was anxious, but both came accompanied by their associates, who proved to be important voices of mediation between the stubborn leaders. On fourteen articles of faith Luther and Zwingli were able to agree. The fifteenth had six points, on five of which they agreed. Only one point in the fifteenth article could not be reconciled, "the presence," whether or not the true body and blood of Jesus Christ are present in the bread and wine.¹ This point of disagreement was kept to a subordinate clause. At the end of the conference one of Luther's associates, Martin Bucer, suggested that the differences should be tolerated provided they all agreed to recognize the Bible alone as the normative source of faith.

Swiss Reform

The reform movement of Ulrich Zwingli differed from that of Luther in that it was not primarily academic in nature. The effort within the Swiss Confederation was aimed at reforming the morals and worship of the church and transforming society to a more biblical pattern, a thrust that was institutional, social, and ethical, not necessarily doctrinal. Zwingli was ordained as a priest in 1506 at the age of twenty-two and served as a rural pastor who was very involved in the lives of his members. He accompanied his parishioners to wars in Italy in 1513 and 1515, serving as military chaplain.² His philosophy of learning was more practical than theoretical based on the notion of right

¹ W.P. Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 106.

² Zwingli, viii, ix.

ideas modified by experience and concern for others. He developed not only doctrinal changes based on Reform theology, but urban changes as well, creating a significant social impact. His Urban theocracy – the Christian city-state ruled by godly magistrates and pastors- became the pattern for towns like Bern, Strasbourg, and Geneva; and also, early Massachusetts in the American colonies. Reform theology became the basis of American Puritanism.

Zwingli first went to Zurich when he was thirty-four years old, preaching his first sermon there at age thirty-five. Eleven years later at age forty-six, Zwingli was killed in battle at the Second War of Kappel while serving the Zurich forces as chaplain. When he died it was Heinrich Bullinger who moved into the spotlight as his successor, but more influential than Bullinger was John Calvin who became the leading spokesman of the Swiss Reform in the 1550s. In England the Protestant theology that eventually gained the ascendancy was Reformed rather than Lutheran. Virtually the entire Western church, in fact, eventually accepted Zwingli's ideas of worship as developed in the writings of John Calvin. This is the reason McGrath remarks, "It is the Reformed wing which is of particular interest to the English speaking world."¹

John Calvin was born in Noyon, France in 1509. He remains a towering figure in Reform theology and the most influential voice of the movement, but the strength of his influence was not based on his personality, of which comparatively little is known. Here is a case in which the second generation of a movement proved to have a wider and more lasting influence than the first. Through his voluminous writings and his bold experiment with Christian government in Geneva, Calvin became the most prominent leader of the

¹ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 9.

second half of the sixteenth century reform. In the spread of Protestantism in France, Holland, England, Scotland, and the United States, Calvin's influence exceeded even that of Martin Luther.¹

Calvin's debt to the first generation of reformers, however, cannot be denied. As McGrath observes, ". . . Calvin shares the common Reformation emphasis given expression in the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith and the Reformed doctrine of election without reference to foreseen merit."²

John Calvin was not a debater in the manner of Luther and Zwingli. The strength of his influence on Reform theology consisted of his ideas as preserved in his writings, particularly, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, his *opus magnum* in which his religious and theological thought is most completely laid out. Following the guiding principle of the reformation, Calvin bases his theology on a return to the authentic teachings of the Bible as centered in Jesus Christ. Specifically, the Incarnation of Christ is an important unifying paradigm of his thought. McGrath goes so far as to say that in Calvin's theology "wherever God and humanity come into conjunction, the incarnational paradigm illuminates their relation. If there is a centre of Calvin's religious thought, that centre may reasonably be identified as Jesus Christ himself."³ Biblical integrity and a high Christology are principles of the reformed movement that Calvin helped to solidify. The logic and coherence of his religious thought qualify it as an outstanding systematic

¹ Clyde L. Manschreck, "Zwingli, Calvin and the Rise of Calvinism," in *The Reformation*, ed. Stephen P. Thompson (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1999), 90.

² Alister E. McGrath *A Life of John Calvin: a Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 18.

³ Ibid, 149.

theology. The origin of this emphasis, however, predates Calvin and was characteristic of the writing and preaching of others before Calvin, including Ulrich Zwingli.

Scripture in Worship

In 1525 Zwingli abolished the mass as the center of the weekly gathering in his local parish and introduced an evangelical worship service in its place. His theology of worship was based on the supremacy of Scripture and the central importance of its proclamation. His use of the sacraments in worship was as an extension of Bible study. He rejected the prepared readings of the church's liturgy altogether and employed direct explanation of the New Testament in its place. The creation of the world *ex nihilo* by God's word, and the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, in which He only had to utter the command 'be healed', or 'depart', and the miracle was accomplished, demonstrated for Zwingli the independent power of the Word of God. From these convincing proofs Zwingli deduced that all God's sayings and promises must come to pass at the appropriate time. It was for the hearer to open his heart to the redemptive power of the sure Word of God and be saved, so that he would not be overtaken by its no less certain judgments. "It is only in the Word of God that the divine nature in man can find its true life and nourishment and consolation. The Word of God inevitably meets that part of man which seeks eternal life and blessedness because it is a word of power and a word of enlightenment; it gives life and light."¹

Zwingli challenged the long-standing ecclesiastical customs of the church on the singular ground that they had no status in Scripture. His adamant word to his critics was,

¹ G. W. Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 53, from a Zwingli sermon titled "Of the Clarity and Certainty or Power of the Word of God," published 9/6/1522.

“The word of the Bible must prevail whether it suits us or not.”¹ This made him as unpopular with the leadership of the church as it made him popular with the masses. “One reason for [Zwingli’s] popularity may well have been his introduction of the practice of preaching about the text of Scripture and interpreting it directly without availing himself of the standardized readings which had long since constituted the main staple of medieval preachers.”²

When the Reformers said *sola scriptura*, they gave expression to a high view of the authority and power of the Scriptures as its own independent interpreter. For Zwingli the Bible stood alone as the revelation of God’s will, requiring no human corroboration. Once the Word of God was declared it needed no endorsement from church authorities to give it credibility. On the contrary, the Bible itself was the source of credibility determining the authority of prelates and preachers who claimed to speak for God. Ecclesiastical office was therefore subject to the endorsement of the witness of Scripture and not the other way around.

The straightforwardness of Bible teaching, self-evident as it was, did not guarantee that everyone who read it would understand, however. For that, there was a necessary inward illumination that only God’s Spirit could provide. The truth of God, for Zwingli, must not only be seen, but perceived; not only understood, but comprehended. This could take place only when the Spirit applied the Word to the heart of the penitent and faithful recipient. Christ’s words in Matt 11:25 present the paradox of this illumination, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden

¹ Zwingli, xx.

² Ibid., xviii, xix.

these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." Here Jesus confirms the unique nature of God's Word as both plain and obscure. It is straightforward enough so that any rational mind can understand it, including that of a child, but at the same time of such a spiritual nature that more than human intelligence is required to truly comprehend it unto salvation.

In this respect Zwingli has a fine apprehension of that two-foldness of the Word of God which is obscured, or at any rate misunderstood, when the truth of the Bible is thought of in terms of abstract proposition rather than dynamic truth. He sees that the Word is a word of life and light, but he sees too that the Word does not automatically give light and life to all who read and understand. It does so only where a true response is kindled. In other words, it calls for a decision of faith. And when there is that decision, as in the case of Noah or Abraham, there can be no doubt as to the inward meaning or truth of the Word. It carries with it its own enlightenment and assurance. But where there is no such decision, even if the Word is outwardly understood, it is not inwardly perceived, and that which is light and life to the believer is to the unbeliever darkness and destruction.¹

Zwingli's Epistemology

Here we see the Reform theology of Ulrich Zwingli asserting an epistemology of its own, not based on rationality or the scientific method but based on faith. It is plain to see that theology is not unreasonable, that is, it is not illogical in its formulation of ideas or in its organization. In this sense it bears an affinity to the rational mind requiring thinking, analysis, and reflection. Faith does not stand as a substitute for reason in Zwingli's thought, or as necessarily in conflict with it. On the other hand, faith is not subject to reason or dependent upon it for its validity.² It carries an authority of its own derived from the Word of God to which it clings. Even more than this, Reform theology

¹ Bromiley, 55.

² "Rather, reason becomes a reason open to the truth given in revelation, truth that comes to us in a divine self-disclosure" Jewett, 19.

shows that faith requires a discipline of its own, including, and at the same time surpassing, rational apprehension. The revelation of truth depends on a personal commitment on the part of the worshiper, a decision of the will. God reveals Himself, not as an idea or proposition but in a personal encounter, not to satisfy intellectual curiosity or philosophical musings, but to establish His reign in the life. God is Subject, not object; and while objects can be known through cognitive processes, through investigation in which the investigator alone is active, subjects can only be known through relationship. Because this is so, one who does not believe in the Bible may understand it intellectually, but the final meaning in theology can never be grasped without personal commitment. It is faith that establishes understanding unto salvation.

“Jesus answered, ‘my teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own’ (John 7:16, 17).

Zwingli’s appeal to the Word of God was not merely an appeal to replace one outward authority with another, but to a living and effective Word that verifies itself inwardly to all those who receive it in penitent faith. In the same way, the authority that governs the life of the believer is not based on any outward demonstration of power-intellectual, institutional, sacramental, ecstatic, or forensic, because it is inwardly apprehended. Zwingli used the terms “self-illuminating” and “self-attesting” to describe the sufficiency of the Word by which its inner meaning and truth are guaranteed to those who accept it by faith. He used the words of the psalmist to establish this teaching: “the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps 119:130 KJV).

The inward authority of the Word was also the solution to the confusion and contradiction Zwingli found in the academic community. There was no certainty for the believer in academia since the scholars all disagreed with one another. How could the believer know what was true and how could the reformers be certain of their interpretations? The answer for Zwingli was in the inward authority of the Word of God. The reformers were well aware that they cold not base their understanding on any claim to superior scholarship, and Zwingli never made such a claim. On the contrary, the certainty he had in the knowledge of Christ he also advocated for all who would believe in Him.

It was because Zwingli was conscious of this inward and spiritual enlightenment that he could point scornfully to the confusion which results when certainty is looked for in some external and merely human authority. . . . The certainty to which he points does not derive from an alleged superiority of either intellectual endowment or religious attainment. He has a sure and inflexible knowledge of the truth, not merely because he understands the plain statements of Scripture, but because the Holy Spirit has given him an inward apprehension of the divine teaching that Scripture proclaims. And he argues that everyone who approaches the Bible in prayer and in faith inevitably comes to the same general apprehension of its teaching as he himself enjoys.¹

To those who sought rational proof for his assertions concerning the inward authority of the Word of God, Zwingli gave not a rational but a faith response. He simply appealed to the witness of the New Testament in passages like Matt 21, Mark 11, and Jas 1. He then gave a personal testimony as to how he was at first prevented from understanding the true meaning of Scripture because of his former training in philosophy and theology, until he put these aside and permitted God to teach him directly from His own Word. It was only as the Word was permitted to stand alone in authority in his life that inward illumination came.

¹ Bromiley, 56, 57.

Finally here is the answer to any opposition. It is my conviction that the Word of God must be held by us in the highest esteem and no such credence is to be given to any other word. It is certain and cannot fail us; it is clear and does not let us wander in darkness. It teaches itself, it explains itself and it brings the light of full salvation and grace to the human soul.¹

Sacraments in Worship

Zwingli retained infant baptism in his church service but not as being efficacious in itself. He taught that it was legitimate only as a sign of public commitment to a Christian life on behalf of the participants. Baptism and the Eucharist were alone observed as legitimate sacraments of the church but their use was taught to be covenantal as well. They served as symbolic and commemorative acts finding their efficacy in the merits of Christ seized upon by the worshiper through faith. As for transubstantiation, it was completely excluded not only on the grounds that it was unscriptural but also because it belittled and degraded the commemorative act by subjecting Christ to sacrifice over and over again. Zwingli protested that for Christ to be offered up more than once made His sacrifice less than eternal, like that of the priests of the Old Testament. Such a sacrifice must be imperfect as shown by the fact of its continual repetition.

For what would it be had Christ earned salvation for all the fathers [the apostles] by his death, suffered once, if the same death, offered only once, should not be eternally fruitful on behalf of all who have come after them and satisfy the righteousness of God for all our sins. There would then have to be two Christs, one who perfectly saved the ancient fathers, the other, who less perfectly than the former, suffered death for us.²

¹ Denis R. Janz, ed., *A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 155.

² Ulrich Zwingli, *Writings: The Defense of the Reformed Faith*, vol. 1, trans. E.J. Furcha (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1984), 94.

The sufficiency and “unrepeatability” of the sacrifice of Christ made Communion a commemoration and not a reenactment. Zwingli protested that communion was not something the worshiper offered to God but something God offered to the worshiper. He did not deny the true spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper or the possible conjunction between the symbol and what it signified. “What he did deny was a corporeal presence of Christ after His humanity and a necessary conjunction of sign and thing signified by virtue of the valid administration of the rite.”¹ This would turn the symbolic rite into a mechanical observance and rob it of its significance as an act of faith.

The once-and-for-all quality of the sacrifice of Christ symbolized in the sacraments of the church was the foundation of the new covenant in Zwingli’s understanding. Both the singularity of the establishing event, the death of Christ, and the memorializing of it in the symbolic forms, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, were fixed stars in the reformer’s constellation of theological ideas. The symbols found their utility in their visible and substantive nature providing for believers a tangible aid, and their efficacy in the faith of the worshiper by which he took hold of the merits of Christ. It was specifically in the symbolic status of the elements that the spiritual reality was seized upon. Zwingli contended that it was the idea of the literal consumption of Christ’s flesh that made the disciples first balk at His words “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). When Jesus corrected their cannibalistic assumptions to show them that His meaning was spiritual, they were able to receive His words with the proper understanding.² Thus the sacraments are shown to

¹ Bromiley, 39.

² Zwingli, *Writings*, 114, 115.

have their meaning in symbol, not in literalism, and their effectiveness in faith, not in works.

Zwingli's greatest concern over transubstantiation was for how the teaching imperiled salvation by promoting a religion of externals, causing believers to trust in something other than the all-sufficient work of Christ.¹ The necessity of the symbolic understanding of the sacraments was crucial for another reason as well. Zwingli was against transubstantiation because it obscured the New Testament teaching of the church as the body of Christ. By giving the literal interpretation to the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, transubstantiation diluted the spiritual interpretation contained in Paul's corrective to the Corinthians (I Cor 10:16,17; 11:17ff.). Several points in Zwingli's 67 Theses allude to his ideas in this vein:

From this follows first that all who dwell in the Head are members and children of God, forming the church or communion of the saints, which is the bride of Christ, *ecclesia catholica*. . . All Christian men are brethren of Christ and brothers to one another: and the title Father should not be assumed by anyone on earth. This includes orders, sects, and factions. . . . A man should be willing to die rather than offend or disgrace a fellow Christian.²

Contrary to the teaching of the church, the words "this is my body" do not miraculously turn the bread into Christ's actual body but are a figure of speech pointing to the link between signifying and remembering. "The bread represents Christ's body in that when it is eaten, it calls to remembrance that Christ gave His body for us";³ but also, and not separately, the bread points to Christ's body as it exists in the fellowship of His followers, the saved community of saints whom He has joined together in love. The

¹ Stephens, 95.

² Ulrich Zwingli, *Ulrich Zwingli's 67 Theses January 27, 1523*, quoted in Janz, 156.

³ Stephens, 99.

symbolism is all-important since salvation has been promised through faith and not through bread. Commenting on Paul's meaning in I Cor 10:14 ff., Zwingli writes,

He argued in light of the following ('we who are many are one bread and body') that the communion of the body of Christ must mean that those who believe testify by eating the bread that they are members of the same body. What is fundamental therefore is not the eating, but faith, so that we become one body as soon as we believe in Christ.¹

Zwingli's interpretation is shown to be highly spiritual in comparison to the theology of the church. The Eucharist as a corporate act distinguishes his thought from medieval theology and practice. The sacrament testifies that all believers are one body and one brotherhood in Christ. Christ's desire is "that His own shall be one, just as He is one with the Father and for this reason He has given us the sacrament. And as He gave Himself for us, we also are bound to give ourselves one for another."² By preserving the symbolic significance of the sacrament Zwingli came to an understanding that was biblically superior. The communal meaning of the sacrament is a truth Luther never came to as Zwingli had. It was the spiritual interpretation, not the literal one, which shed the greater light. "For as the bread comes from many grains, so the body of the church is joined together from many members. The fact that the sacrament is an oath stresses this unity."³

¹ Ibid., 99.

² Ibid., 107.

³ Ibid.

Zwingli's Worship Theology: The Protestant Principle of Christian Worship

Here we see the central issues for the reform of worship in Zwingli's theology: the elevation of the preaching of the gospel directly from the Bible, and the institution of baptism and the Lord's Supper as covenantal signs with no inherent efficacy of their own. They function as another expression of God's Word in visible tangible form. The common denominator of all worship acts, then, was their basis in the divine revelation in Scripture. Here is the Protestant principle of worship that transcends all historical times and circumstances and all cultural perspectives. Zwingli believed, and the other Reformers with him, that God was worshiped aright whenever He was worshiped with those acts expressly sanctioned in Scripture and not forbidden by Scripture. Only God could determine what constituted true worship. Worshipers must discover what kind of worship God requires and offer it humbly on God's terms. The heart of true worship was the desire to please God, as the worshiper understood Him from His Word. For Zwingli, this imperative applied as equally to heads of states and heads of churches as it did to individual believers.

The great fervor with which Zwingli held to these beliefs is reflected in all of his writings, especially those of rebuke. One example of this is his impassioned vitriolic against a monk he refused to name publicly, but threatened to name later unless he mended his ways. The monk had in a public meeting disparaged the word "consecration" as an appropriate description for the Lord's Supper. Zwingli wrote,

Dear brother, I praise God that your awkward and blasphemous words have first revealed your own inept nonsense and have further shown what kind of person he is whose vicar you claim to be, if he allows you, as ignorant of Scripture as you are, to

lie so shamelessly in the presence of God-fearing people without punishing you for it but allowing you again and again to babble out your devilish endeavors.¹

Zwingli defends the personal nature of his theology in which he defines religion as “a relationship between God and man.”² The external form of his theological argument was reasoned, but his sources were always biblical. Zwingli believed that reason by itself was incapable of giving a clear picture of God, even as being monotheistic, but could only establish an intellectual apprehension of His existence. Reason was powerless to form the inward relationship to God without which salvation could come to no person. Zwingli’s ecclesiology was based on his understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ that the church had settled centuries before. For Zwingli, the church had its divine-human side and also its human side, just as does the incarnate Christ – with a fundamental unity between the two, though not a complete identity. The same was true with the word and sacraments which formed the content of worship; duality – the external form, on the one hand, which had its meaning on the human level; and the inward content, on the other hand, the divine message which is life and salvation to the lost. “Here again there is a fundamental unity between the divine-human and the human aspects, for it is the external word of the Bible which is also the internal word of God. But the identity is not absolute in the sense that everyone who receives the external word or rite receives also the internal word or grace.”³

For Zwingli, salvation was based on justification and justification was grounded, not in human works or even human faith, for that matter, but in the life and death of Jesus

¹ Zwingli, *Writings*, 122.

² Bromiley, 32.

³ Ibid., 36.

Christ whose merits the believer apprehended by faith. This is an important distinction in Zwingli's thought for even faith itself was considered to be the direct work of God by the Holy Spirit. "For if salvation is by election and grace . . . there can be no place for schemes of religious life or thought which allow either for the merit of human works or for the *ex opere operato* efficacy of sacramental observances."¹

Good works had their place in Zwingli's theology only as the necessary and spontaneous fruits of true faith. Of themselves, good works had no power to justify. Just as sin, in the beginning, led to spontaneous deeds of deceit and treachery, so the grace of Jesus Christ, received into the heart, leads to spontaneous deeds of love and self-sacrifice. The law of God remains as the permanent expression of the divine will for humanity, a guide to the believer and a warning to the evil-doer; but legalism is completely negated – especially as practiced in the corrupt and fictional notions of purgatory, indulgences, the power of the keys, the treasury of merit, prayers for the dead, and the merits of supererogation. These held no place whatsoever in Zwingli's worship theology.²

Zwingli and the Invisible Church

Zwingli also rejected the authority of the pope and bishops to speak for God and asserted another church that Rome refused to recognize, "no other than all right Christians, collected in the name of the Holy Ghost and by the will of God, which have

¹ Ibid., 34.

² Ibid., 35.

placed a firm belief and an unhesitating hope in God, her spouse.”¹ Here is the notion of the invisible church, the body of Christ universal, not co-terminus with any visible organization or complex of organizations. This did not mean for Zwingli that the church finds no visible expression in the world, but rather, that membership in it could not be known merely by the external tests which can be applied by man. The election of God is His secret known by those who possess the inward working of His Spirit in their lives. The church consists of the whole company of the redeemed as called out from every age and nation. True believers belong both to the invisible and the visible church, while some who are false belong to the visible church alone.² “It is in the heart of the believer or unbeliever that it is decided whether at this or that point the external church is co-extensive with the internal, the letter of Scripture is also the living Word of God, the sign is conjoined with the thing signified.”³

In such a church it is not the pope or the bishops who rule but the Spirit of God Himself. Salvation is not determined by synods or councils but by true faith expressed in deeds of love. The truth is not meted out by church leaders in an unintelligible language or obscure rites executed by the purse for the enriching of the ecclesiastical coffers, but by direct access to the Holy Scriptures that possess live-giving power.

The essential message of the Bible is within the grasp of any ordinary rational intelligence. For that reason the lay Christian may understand the Bible just as well as the learned exegete or theologian, although, of course, the work of the scholar is useful and necessary in order to elucidate more difficult passages and to fix precise meaning of individual words or sentences.¹

¹ Zwingli, 85.

² Bromiley, 35.

³ Ibid., 36.

In the worship theology of Ulrich Zwingli the church is returned to its truest Pentecostal roots, not merely in charismatic expression or the demonstration of spiritual gifts, but in strict adherence to the teachings of Scripture and the realization of Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the body, God's kingdom on earth.

¹ Zwingli, "Of the Clarity and Certainty or Power of the Word of God," quoted in Bromiley, 55.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIES FOR REVITALIZING WORSHIP IN THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE CHURCH

The Oakwood College Church

The Oakwood College Church on the campus of Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, is unique as belonging to the only historically Black college of the SDA church in North America. The history of the founding of this General Conference institution gives it its particular sense of identity. It was Ellen White herself, says the lore, who chose the land on which Oakwood was to be built after receiving a vision. In 1896 Oakwood Training School was born. Since that time thousands of Black Adventists have received their education at Oakwood, including the majority of the church's current Black clergy. Thus Oakwood Church has become the house of worship for college employees, as well as a laboratory for young ministers in training. The influence of the church on the Black Adventist membership in general magnifies the importance of establishing worship practice on a sound theological basis. The greater percentage of the future worship leaders of the Black Adventist church will undoubtedly pass through Oakwood's corridors and worship in its pews.

The current membership of the Oakwood College Church exceeds 2,500, a figure that does not include the more than 1,800 fulltime students registered at the college. Many of these 1800 become part of the official Oakwood College church family, while

others join churches in the community. The college's weekly religion and theology forum and its Adventist Youth Society services take place on campus while the weekly chapel service occurs in the sanctuary of the college church. Most of the college's special worship events, such as president's day, student week of prayer, and international student's day, take place in the church sanctuary as well. Thus the Oakwood College Church is intimately involved in the worship life of the college community and in the shaping of the worship values of the next generation of leaders for the Black church in particular and the Adventist community in general.

In addition to college faculty, staff, and students, the Oakwood College Church contains a large retirement community. Former college and denominational employees find the Huntsville area an attractive place to spend their retirement years. At the time of this writing the current church membership includes retired denominational workers from every level of church governance, as well as professors, schoolteachers, authors, musicians, and others. Invariably these members come to the college community with a strong sense of nostalgia for the church they have known and a healthy respect for Adventist orthodoxy. They are fiercely loyal to the denomination and jealous for the national and international reputation of Oakwood. Their support for the church is steadfast and loyal, making their expectations in worship and church life all the more impossible to ignore.

Principles of Meaningful, Appropriate Worship for the Oakwood College Church

Based on the results of biblical study and historical review and with the specific mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church in mind, principles of Christian worship for the Oakwood College church may now be defined. These principles will serve as the foundation for worship practice in the various corporate gatherings of the church, Sabbath school, prayer meeting, and the divine worship service. They will have their basis in Scripture and reflect the important Protestant emphasis of worship from the top-down; that is, worship that begins not with the human condition or human felt needs, but with the divine reality and prerogatives as revealed in Scripture. In this way, worship will find its goal and purpose in the sole objective of pleasing God, an objective which alone leads to the highest human satisfaction and fulfillment as the worshiper receives the gracious approbation of the One being worshipped. The principles that will form the basis for worship development at Oakwood, along with some guidelines for implementing the principles, are these.

1. *Proclamation.* The preaching and teaching of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ as the central act of corporate worship. This will include the presentation of the final-hour message which the Adventist church has been especially commissioned to give. Other liturgical acts of worship will be built around this foundational activity based on the exposition of Scripture.

Proclamation will not be limited to the formal sermon alone. It will include a variety of communication forms, all of which will seek to expose and apply from the Bible God's meaning in Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this understanding, and in accordance with Reformation theology, the sacraments of the Foot

Washing, the Lord's Supper, and Baptism come under the heading of proclamation. They are visible signs of the Word of God proclaimed and apprehended by the believer based on faith in Christ.

As a word of consolation, admonition, correction, warning, and judgment, proclamation takes the Word of God as it is and applies it to the contemporary situation and to present human need. It will result in conviction, conversion, encouragement, and edification of the worshiper.

As proclamation from the standpoint of Adventist mission, the preaching and teaching of the Word in worship will have an evangelistic thrust built around the final warning message and appeal to spiritual renewal that is an integral part of Adventist eschatology (Rev 14:6-12).

2. Corporate Prayer. As the opening of the heart to God in praise, thanksgiving, confession, and petition from the standpoint of a devoted community, corporate prayer includes the sacred trust of mutual intercession by believers on each other's behalf (Eph 6:18). This important aspect of communal prayer will be all the more crucial in a community where generational differences are an issue of great significance.

Intercessory prayer will need to be encouraged across generational lines without engendering the guilt or fear that would make prayer something other than voluntary, and therefore, something less than genuine. The desire to participate in communal prayer that is intercessory, modeled on the example of the early church (Acts 4:24-26; Acts 12:5), will be developed in the other aspects of corporate worship that present the opportunity for instruction and relationship building: Bible study, testimonies, personal interviews, etc.

3. *Participation.* As a communal act, corporate worship calls for every-member participation with understanding and fullness of heart (Eph 5:19, 20). In worship that has its center in proclamation, the danger exists that worshipers will become spectators who gather each week for a preaching event. Other liturgical acts may become routine, necessary preliminaries to be expended as quickly as possible so that the main event can occur. Preachers may be viewed as performers whose reputations as public speakers become the main attraction of the service. To avoid this distortion of worship, congregational participation must be fostered. Some of the ways in which this may be done include the following:

- a. Build the worship service around the music of the congregation instead of responses sung only by the choir.
- b. Recruit members of all ages to take part as worship leaders from week to week.
- c. Integrate into the service testimonies from members of all ages who have had personal experiences with God.
- d. Interview before the congregation new members, students, retirees, etc., who can share their stories of their personal walk with the Lord.
- e. Arrange for families to lead out as a unit in the act of congregational prayer.
- f. Employ the small-group prayer gathering in which members are encouraged to share prayer needs with each other in a small circle that will pray together.
- g. Institute the “family on the altar” service in which entire families are brought before the church, introduced individually to the congregation, and then prayed for by the pastor or worship leader to launch the corporate prayer time.

h. Use responsive readings in worship that may be projected on a screen worshipers read from in unison.

4. *Praise.* Worship that begins with God cannot be devoid of that heartfelt praise that a realization of the divine majesty and grace always prompts. This will be spontaneous and free as the Spirit of God moves the worshipers, but it will also be planned and ordered as in the songs of praise offered by choir and congregation (I Cor 14:15). In order for communal praise to be genuine and edifying, it must be encouraged without being prompted, permitted but not required, giving respect to the differences in temperament, experience, culture, and age that will have an effect on the way an individual expresses herself in worship.

The praise of God in communal worship should always be a response to God and to God's doings and should never degenerate into a mere effect calculated to create a sense of excitement. Not only does such an approach to worship shift the primary focus from the divine to the human, but it also tends to create a reliance on emotional expression as the sign of genuine spirituality. Praise in worship should be encouraged based on an understanding of and appreciation for the gracious acts of God in the life of the believer, in the community of the saved, and in the world for which Jesus gave His life.

5. *Reverence.* With a deep appreciation for the sacred "otherness" of God, corporate worship will exemplify the reverence and awe that always distinguishes the sacred from the profane (I Tim 6:15,16). In worship communities that include a significant number of young people, such as Oakwood, careful instruction will need to take place with regard to the necessity for reverence in worship. The holy transcendence

of God as an aspect of the divine nature alongside immanence may be taught in the church's times of gathering for instruction. In order for reverence in worship to be a heartfelt act not just a required behavior, worshipers must understand and appreciate the difference and distance of God as well as God's intimate nearness to the one who trusts in Him. Prayer and instruction will combine to create an appreciation within the congregation for this divine paradox.

6. *Generosity.* With the reality of spiritual oneness in view, corporate worship calls for the giving of oneself to Christ and to His people in ways that include but also transcend the giving of material gifts (I Tim 6:17-19). The believer's consciousness of himself as a member of a worldwide community will prompt him to be generous in giving. As much as seems practical and beneficial, the pastor and officers should emphasize the communal and relational obligations of giving above the institutional ones. The believer must also be conscious of himself as a steward of God's property and not the outright owner of anything in his possession. This will help the believer maintain the proper relationship toward material things.

7. *Fellowship.* In full discernment of the significance of Christ's body as the kingdom of God on earth, corporate worship will take time for recognition and appreciation of fellow worshipers, not merely as a social act but as the expression of a deep love and concern for all those whom Jesus has made one with Himself (Eph 4:28; I Thess 5:11). Fellowship in worship gives the congregation the opportunity to become acquainted with each other, to become friendly, become friends, and finally bond as brothers and sisters in Christ. The pastor and worship leader who understand the

essential nature of κοινωνία will want the membership to experience all the stages of relationship leading to bonding.

Many of the activities already suggested in this section under prayer and participation will enhance the fellowship aspect of communal worship. In addition to these, members may engage in a brief and reverent greeting time with each other as an aspect of worship. Careful instruction with regard to the importance of building Christian community will alleviate concerns that greeting other worshipers may be disrespectful to God.

Process for Implementing Worship Change

In the interest of consistency any process for implementing corporate change must adhere to the principles of the system it seeks to reform, in this case, Christian worship. Worship renewal, therefore, must have as its goal not merely the transformation of outward forms of expression, but the inward attitudes and expectations of the worshiper herself. It is a process from the inside out. Change of practice must come from change of heart and mind, thus the necessity of involving the worshiper in the transformation of worship. This section proposes a *participatory* process that moves from *evaluation*, to *education*, to *implementation*.

In order for members to fully embrace worship change they must participate in the process by which the change comes about. Worship habits become firmly rooted over years of observance. Even when people lose the meaning of a long-held practice and no longer understand why it is observed, they tend to cling to it. There is a sense of “rightness” that adheres to long-standing traditions, and the sense of a thing being right conveys feelings of security. In order for people to let go of old habits and embrace new

ideas they need to understand the principles upon which a practice is based, not just the practice itself. This can be accomplished through worshiper participation in the development of new worship practice. Additionally, a process of development in which people take part over a period of time creates a sense of gradualness to change, which helps to soften resistance and alleviate feelings of trepidation.

Leading the Church to Revitalized Worship Through The Worship Task Force Methodology

While it is impractical because of its size to involve the entire Oakwood College church congregation in a complete revitalization process, an evaluation of worship that is truly participatory must include representatives from the various interest groups of the congregation. In selecting representatives who truly “represent” the entire church family, attention must be given to diversity in the areas of age, culture, education, and gender.¹ A worship task force made up of representatives from all categories was selected to engage in an evaluation of worship and to make recommendations for positive change. The task force was commissioned to identify specific areas of weakness in the present worship practice of the church by using an evaluative tool adapted from the business world and with specific reference to worship survey results compiled from congregational responses to the general worship survey.²

It is important to note that while congregational involvement in this process must aim for a balanced representation of the church family, the revitalization of worship should not be determined politically. It is sound biblical theology that should govern

¹ See Appendix B.

² See Appendix H.

worship practice, not popular opinion. The reason for adherence to diverse representation on the task force is not to build a strategic political base, but to hear from all segments of the congregation in the evaluation process so that the knowledge of worship principles may be advanced through as many relevant channels as possible.

In order to facilitate the process of evaluation and create a skeleton upon which worship revitalization can be constructed, a strategic analysis format adapted from the business world was used.¹ This format as modified employs ten key steps in conducting the strategic evaluation of worship. The results from the use of this instrument by the worship task force are summarized below.

1. *Organizational Mandates: External authorities.* The external authorities by which worship must be guided in formulation and practice are: (a) God, (b) Scripture, and (c) SDA Church Doctrine.

2. *Organizational Mandates: "Must Do's" of Worship.* The activities of corporate worship that commend themselves as mandatory to a genuine worship experience are as follows: (a) prayer and meditation; (b) music, such as congregational singing, choirs, special selections from groups and soloists, instruments; (c) acts of communal praise such as thanksgiving, testimonies, and others; (d) proclamation, the Word of God preached and taught; (e) giving of tithes, offerings, and gifts; (f) the reading of Scripture; (g) the call to personal commitment based on the gospel of Jesus Christ; (h) fellowship; and, (i) Christ-centeredness as an intentional aspect of all worship planning and implementation.

3. *Stakeholders: Internal Authorities with Legitimate Expectations.* The internal authorities of whom the church must be cognizant as it plans worship are: (a) students

and college community; (b) youth; (c) families of both the general congregation and the college community specifically; (d) single adults, keeping in mind the special needs of those who live alone; (e) children, both in church school and public school; (f) senior members; (g) retirees; (h) young adults beginning at ages 25-30 years, including those who are not part of the college community; (i) diverse cultures within the congregation; and (j) the disabled.

4. Legitimate Expectations of Stakeholders: (a) to be treated with dignity and respect; (b) to be made to feel welcome in the house of God; (c) to be permitted to become involved in worship, not mere spectators but participants; (d) tolerance for all, visitors, new believers, elderly, disabled, etc.; (e) comfort and cleanliness of the worship facility; (f) orderliness and order in the worship service, efficiency, timeliness, reverence; and (g) a Christ-centered, biblically based worship service true to the claims of the gospel.

5. Worship Mission Statement. The members of the Oakwood College SDA Church are committed to making worship first. This we accomplish by giving praise to God, studying His Word, submitting to the will of Christ, and serving all humanity in love.

6. Identifying Internal Strengths. The internal strengths of the Oakwood College Church are invariably related to its status as an institutional church. They include: (a) congregational size, embodying a diverse pool from which talent and inspiration may be drawn; (b) available professionals within the membership; (c) a strong Adventist heritage based on the long-standing history of the institution; (d) trained, talented musicians; (f) relative financial strength of church; (g) physical plant of the church itself; (h) diverse

¹ See Appendix C.

programs within the community; (i) a talented, spiritual pastoral staff; (j) talented and spiritual church members; (k) a vibrant student body; (l) experience and spiritual maturity, particularly among the senior members; (m) abundant resources of the college, both human and otherwise; (n) location on college campus; (o) the strong institutional structure of the Seventh-day Adventist church; (p) the universality of Adventism, a world church widely known and respected; and (q) the sense of family within the congregation.

7. Identifying Internal Weaknesses. The internal weaknesses of the church are also related to its institutional status to a large degree. They include: (a) a lack of cultural diversity within the membership of a church located on the campus of a historically Black college; (b) the lack of stewardship commitment from some members who perceive the church because of its size to be adequately funded without their help; (c) church traditionalism; (d) the lack of sense of family among some members who may feel isolated in a congregation so large the individual can often be over-looked; (e) mean-spiritedness and the judgmental attitude of some members; (f) bathroom facilities in need of renovation and repair; (g) the public address system which many members feel is inadequate to the needs of a large sanctuary; (h) the absence of clear criteria regarding appropriate music for worship; (i) the frequent use of the sanctuary for non-worship functions; (j) congregational size; (k) the lack of intimacy and participation in church life due to congregational size; (l) the lack of decorum and appropriate reverence in worship on the part of some; (m) not enough use of college students in all facets of worship; (n) a lack of commitment on the part of church officers; (o) accessibility of the sanctuary and general physical plant for disabled members; (p) the performance mentality on the part of

some worship participants; (q) fanaticism within the community; and (r) parochialism and provincialism on the part of some.

8. *Identifying External Opportunities.* (a) The prestige of the institution of Oakwood in the Huntsville community; (b) expectations associated with a college church; (c) the small-town family orientation of the city of Huntsville; (d) the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of Huntsville; (e) government support of faith-based organizations; (f) freedom of religion in the United States of America; (f) the institutional resources of Seventh-day Adventist church; and (g) access to talented and spiritual area musicians and speakers; the media, including the internet, radio, and television.

9. *Identifying External Threats.* (a) The sometimes confused public image of the Seventh-day Adventist church; (b) socio-cultural expectations of the general community that do not match the mission of the church-political endorsements, historic Black church activism, etc.; (c) secularism propagated in the media; (d) security concerns of the church and campus, particularly in light of the recent racial threats toward historically Black institutions; and (e) the threat of natural disasters.

Educating the Church on Appropriate Worship Practice Through Teaching and Preaching

The education phase of worship transformation will consist of more than just one or two isolated seminars or workshops. It will present an edification process that is patiently woven into the overall learning life of the church. It will take advantage of all the corporate meeting times of the church schedule-Sabbath school, Adventist Youth Society, prayer meeting, and divine worship service.

Education that is re-education involves both learning and unlearning. It must take into account preferences based on tradition that may present obstacles to the learning process. For this reason, the education segment of the worship transformation process must be patient and methodical. It must penetrate the congregation from the leadership down, and make use of all available modalities. Repetition and reinforcement will be important elements in this process. The strategy outlined below is to be implemented over a period of at least one year.

Implementing New Worship Practice – A Strategy

Modality #1: Administrative, led by pastor. Board and business meetings will be used to begin the implementation of worship transformation. The church will be encouraged to commit to a year of prayer, education, and preparation for change starting with a church board recommendation that the church in business session will be asked to corroborate. Have prepared a recommendation for a budgetary allotment to fund the education process. Use the opportunity of these administrative meetings to articulate the vision of revitalized worship based on Scripture, and to answer questions from the congregation. Once the church has agreed to make worship renewal the focus of church life for one year, a worship committee can be appointed to draft a detailed strategy and oversee its implementation.

Modality #2: Teaching, conducted by pastors and officers.

a. Pastor's Workshop: Begin the education process with a workshop conducted by the pastors to equip officers and leaders to become educators of the people. All leaders who hold key positions in the congregation should be included – Sabbath school superintendents of all divisions, Personal Ministries leaders, AYS leaders, lay Bible

instructors, and all church elders. The workshop should educate the leaders as to the results of the task force evaluation and instruct them in the theology of worship.

b. Curriculum development: Working with curriculum specialists in the congregation, each Sabbath school superintendent will be asked to produce a curriculum on worship for its own division. All divisions, including Cradle Roll, will be involved. The curriculum should be designed to be taught on a weekly basis at Sabbath School time over a period of one quarter.

c. Sabbath school teachers' retreat: A weekend seminar on worship theology will be conducted for all Sabbath School teachers. The time will be used to familiarize the teachers with the worship curriculum that will replace the official Sabbath School quarterly for one quarter. The materials for each week of that quarter will be presented to the teachers and reviewed during this time.

d. Wednesday night prayer meeting: Prayer meeting services will be used as educational opportunities through homilies and media presentations. Conducted by the pastors and church elders, brief biblical lessons may be given on topics such as, *The spirituality of worship, the place of fellowship in worship, the Protestant Principle of worship, and, worship in the church of the Book of Acts*, for example.

e. Adventist Youth Society: These meetings, which occur both on Friday night (college students) and Sabbath afternoon (community youth) in the Oakwood community, can be used for worship education in a variety of formats that will engage young people. Skits, rap sessions, interactive role play, media presentations, and question-and-answer sessions may all be used over the course of the year.

f. Music Committee: Because of the critical importance of music to the worship life of the church, an additional seminar, or group of seminars, will be conducted specifically for the musicians of the church. Suitable persons with training in music ecclesiology will be brought in for this purpose by the pastoral staff. Because music taste is so varied and personal, the goal of these seminars will focus, not on producing uniformity of music expression, but on developing a consistent theological approach to the music of worship.

Modality #3: Preaching, conducted by pastors. The divine worship service, which is the weekly gathering for the proclamation of the Word, will be one of the most important times for accomplishing worship transformation. The revitalization of worship will here be established on a firm foundation in Scripture. The community will be given opportunities to make public, corporate commitments to worship change based on personal conviction, with the Holy Spirit at work to seal the commitment to every believing heart.

During the course of the year of prayer and education, the worship committee will monitor the progress of the strategic plan and suggest various incremental changes in worship as it senses readiness within the church family. In this way, the transformation will not be sudden and abrupt at the end of a year, but gradual and seamless. The main focus of the change will be the two main worship services of the church, Wednesday night prayer meeting and the divine worship hour. From the influence of these two services the entire corporate worship life of the church will be transformed.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study is not intended to be exhaustive in its exploration of worship either in historic Christianity or the Adventist movement. In an attempt to produce something of value for Oakwood College Church and Adventism in general, this study has assessed some of the issues in worship that have occupied the attention of Adventist thinkers.

In chapter 2 a brief overview of worship ideas in Adventism were presented and analyzed for the purpose of examining the attitudes regarding worship that have characterized Adventist thought. Here an attempt was made to raise questions and formulate issues that are relevant to the current life of the church. The concluding section of this chapter was an attempt to present the ideal of worship as depicted in the teachings of Christ. This area of the study was mostly descriptive and analytical.

Chapter 3 presented a critical analysis of worship in the New Testament and sought to provide a biblical foundation for a basic ecclesiology. The premise of this chapter and of the entire document in general is that Christian worship, in order to be authentic, must be rooted in the origins of worship as presented in the New Testament. The prototypical church of the book of Acts and Christian worship in its later development as reflected in the epistles was the model of this investigation. This portion of the study attempted to engage in biblical exegesis and analysis.

This was bolstered in chapter 4 by a review of worship as reformulated by the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century in their attempt to return to the original Scriptural roots of Christianity. The major focus of this historical portion of the study was the German Lutheran and Swiss Reformed branches of the Reformation, as led by Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, respectively. The more radical Anabaptist movement of the Reformation and the response of Catholicism in the Counter Reformation were not a part of this study. The relevance of this section for Adventist worship relates to the Protestant emphasis of *sola scriptura*, the Bible only, as the basis for authentic worship. It also relates to the Adventist view of its own movement as a continuation of the Protestant Reformation, calling all Christians back to complete compliance with all that Jesus Christ said and taught.

Finally, chapter 5 presented principles of worship with suggestions for implementation for the Oakwood College Church. The education process included in this chapter made use of evaluative, task force, and teaching strategies in a variety of modalities to implement worship revitalization. The methods and strategies developed, it is hoped, will be useful for future projects at the church and for other Adventist churches that may seek to accomplish similar tasks.

Conclusions

The root of the English word “worship” has to do with worth. Worship is the outgrowth of a recognition of and submission to the inherent worthiness of God. Its only proper starting point is divinity, a “top-down” experience. If there is any other being equal to God in worth, then that one is to be worshiped. Otherwise, worship belongs to

God alone. Beginning with this we recognize the meaning of worship from both the negative and positive perspectives.

Worship is not performance. Performance is enacted for the benefit of an audience. It is a presentation or exhibition. Its focus is the gathered people and its aim is to satisfy their needs and expectations. When worship is enacted as a performance it is a distortion, a “bottom-up” experience.

Worship is not therapy. The focus of therapy is to relieve some disorder in a person or persons. It centers in the emotional condition of the client. While worship is therapeutic, bringing healing to the soul, therapy is not its starting point. When worship is done as therapy the human being becomes the focus instead of the divine. God becomes a means to an end.

Worship is not cultural expression. Culture is the creation of human communities based on conventions of social interaction. There is no virtue in any particular cultural expression; rather, all human cultures are fallen (Rom 3:9-12). True worship cannot be based on culture; worship is based on God. If worship could be based on culture, the logical culture to use would be Hebrew culture.

Worship is not emotionalism. Emotion is part of everything in human life, including worship, but it is not the aim of worship. Spirituality cannot be reduced to or measured by emotional response. God is interested in worship that is spiritual and that produces holy living (John 4:24; Isa 1:10-20).

Worship is not formalism. Ceremonies and rituals help to give form to a community’s worship expression, but these are meant to assist, not stifle, genuine

worship expression. When form precludes heartfelt expression, genuine heart worship has been compromised.

Worship is biblically based. Worship and all of its elements must be based on divine revelation. That is to say, God is worshiped appropriately and aright whenever He is worshiped with those acts expressly sanctioned in Scripture and not forbidden by Scripture. This principle transcends all historical times and circumstances and all cultural expressions.

Worship is spiritual. Spiritual worship means to receive the mind of Christ and conform to His mind. The worshiper is brought into perfect submission to Him so that His life may be exhibited in the life of the believer. Thus the worshiper comes to know the One who is worshiped and the entire life becomes an expression of worship at all times. Spiritual worship that is based on Christ is that in which He is Source and Goal of everything that is thought and done (John 4:23, 24; I Cor 2:10-16; Gal 4:19).

Worship is communal. Corporate worship recognizes the body of Christ and orders itself so that God's purposes for His people in worship may be realized. Worship is meant to result in the edification of God's people, the building up of the church into the fullness of the stature of Christ. Through appropriate worship the church is to mature in the grace of Christ and develop the fruit of the Spirit. Self-seeking of any kind is inappropriate to the true worship of God.

As the heart of a total spiritual experience, worship emphasizes both the nearness and transcendence of God, prompting responses of thankfulness and awe. Human beings are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), yet God is unique in nature, thought, and action (Isa 55:8, 9). Worship is the manner in which the human approaches, encounters,

and communes with God. It is through the worship experience that the believer receives the mind of Christ (I Cor 2:16), discerns His purpose, glories in His presence, learns His ways, and offers praise, thanksgiving, and obedience.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have resulted from this project:

1. The establishment of the worship task force as a permanent department of the church will facilitate the systematic review of worship practices. This group can engage in periodic evaluations of the worship life of the church that includes focus groups, congregational surveys, and other evaluative instruments. This group may report its findings to the church board and/or the worship committee of the church.
2. A worship column can be started as a regular feature of the church's monthly newsletter. Information on worship practices in the local church and elsewhere can be reported. Inspirational articles and quotes can be used to keep the church focused on positive worship values. Instructional information regarding worship can also appear.
3. A training program for new church officers regarding biblical worship values can be conducted by the church in its annual officer's meeting or in specially scheduled seminars or retreats. As part of the leader's continuing education, worship training and instruction can produce long-term benefits in both the personal and church life.
4. As part of his mentor function toward the pastors, the conference ministerial secretary can supply helpful materials and resources for pastors seeking to improve worship in their local churches. These the pastors may pass on to their officers and members in an effort to keep true and meaningful worship practice a high priority of the church.

5. Periodic Sabbath School and Wednesday night prayer meeting gatherings may be planned to focus on the subject of biblical worship. In this way a positive emphasis on worship may be kept alive and new members may be kept abreast of the worship principles the church is attempting to develop and build on.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

Candidate's Statement

In the five years I have served as senior pastor of the Oakwood College Church I have wrestled with the problem of appropriate and meaningful worship. On the one hand, the dissatisfaction and conflict over worship within the congregation has been a source of personal consternation; while on the other hand, the realization that worship is more than just a cultural or social function, but an act of devotion to God, has been a reminder of my solemn responsibility. On more than one occasion after a particular worship event of a controversial nature, the attention of the entire congregation has been focused on the unresolved issues in the church. That which God intended to promote unity and harmony between His people has been turned into an instrument of discord.

I have also observed that within the Religion Department of Oakwood College, divergent views on worship are held among the faculty. This often results in confusion among ministerial students, who are training to become the leaders of the church in the next generation.

This study will result in a theology that can be used to construct corporate worship that is biblically sound and consistent with the mission and ministry goals of the Oakwood College Church in particular, and the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in general.

APPENDIX B

WORSHIP TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Oakwood College Church Worship Task Force**Membership**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Office/ function</u>	<u>Culture/gender Category</u>
Cheryl Galley	first elder	African American female
Morris Iheanacho	deacon	African male
John S. Nixon	pastor	African American male
Marilyn Murrell	secretary	Caribbean female
Beverly McDonald	member	African American female
Carrie Roddy	college student	Caucasian female
James Wilson	minister of music	Caribbean male

APPENDIX C
WORSHIP TASK FORCE DOCUMENTS

WORSHIP TASK FORCE DOCUMENTS

Mission Statement Guidelines

Mission statements are typically no more than a brief paragraph. They should be inspiring.

Who are we? Question of identity. Don't make the mistake of thinking you are what you do. A railroad company is not just in the railroad business, but the transportation business. So when cars and trucks began to emerge they missed the opportunity.

Why do we exist?

What do we exist to do? This, together with the organizational mandates, provides the justification for the organization's existence.

How do we function? What key services do we provide?

What are our philosophies, values and culture?

What makes us distinctive or unique?

The statement should consist of thirty words or less. It should be reexamined as the process progresses.

Ten Criteria For Evaluating a Mission Statement

1. It is clear and understandable to all personnel
2. It is brief enough for most people to keep in mind
3. It clearly specifies what business the organization is in
4. It has a primary focus on a single strategic thrust
5. It reflects the distinctive competencies of the organization

6. It is broad enough to allow flexibility but not so broad that it lacks focus
7. It serves as a template for decision-making within the organization
8. It reflects the values, beliefs, and philosophy of the organization
9. It reflects achievable standards
10. It serves as an energy source and rallying point for the organization

Mission Statement Work Sheet

A mission statement should clarify an organization's purpose and indicate why it does what it does. By using the following questions a draft can be formulated.

1. Who are we?
2. Why do we exist (purpose)?
3. Who or what do we exist for (who we serve)?
4. How do we function (key services we provide for our constituents)?
5. What makes us distinctive or unique?
6. Examine the answers to the prior questions and draft a mission statement.

OAKWOOD COLLEGE CHURCH
SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS:

-
-
-
-
-

OPPORTUNITIES:

WEAKNESSES:

-
-
-
-
-

THREATS:

INTERNAL STRENGTHS

Internal strengths are resources or capabilities that help an organization accomplish its mission (e.g., professional staff, adequate resources, leadership).

Discuss each of the 8–10 strengths you consider to be of highest priority.

<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>HOW TO KEEP OR BUILD ON</u>
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INTERNAL WEAKNESSES

Internal weaknesses are deficiencies in resources and capabilities that hinder an organization's ability to accomplish its mission. (e.g., lack of effective communication, lack of clear vision, flawed structure). Discuss each of the 8-10 weaknesses you consider of highest priority.

<u>WEAKNESS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>HOW TO MINIMIZE OR OVERCOME IT</u>
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EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES

External opportunities are outside factors or situations that can affect your organization in a favorable way (e.g., outside funding, a chance to modify an outdated mandate).

Discuss the implications for the strategic planning process of the listed opportunities.

<u>OPPORTUNITY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>OPTIONS FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF IT</u>
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EXTERNAL THREATS

External threats are outside factors or situations that can affect your organization in a negative way (e.g., loss of funding, increased demand for specific service). Discuss the implications for the strategic planning process of the listed threats.

<u>THREAT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>HOW TO MINIMIZE OR OVERCOME THREAT</u>
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APPENDIX D

CURRICULUM OF WORSHIP FOR
THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE CHURCH

CURRICULUM OF WORSHIP FOR THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE CHURCH

Over a period of three months the Oakwood College church will devote its Sabbath school time in all divisions to the study of Christian worship. The Sabbath school quarterlies will be replaced by a worship curriculum specially geared to the age group for which it is intended; cradle roll, kindergarten, junior, primary, earliteen, youth, and adult. The curriculum processes and activities, especially for the younger age groups, will be worked out in consultation with the trained teachers assigned in each group. The curriculum core will be based on the subjects outlined in this section using the Bible as the main text and drawing from the writings of Ellen White. They will cover the following content areas:

- Introduction: *Worship as the Center of the Believer's Life*
- Worship in the New Testament – I: *The Teachings of Jesus*
- Worship in the New Testament – II: *The Church of the Apostles*
- Worship in the New Testament – III: *The Corinthian Community*
- Worship in the New Testament – IV: *The Three Angels' Messages*
- Worship in the New Testament – V: *Worship in Heaven*
- Worship in the post- New Testament era
- Worship and the Protestant Reformers - I
- Worship and the Protestant Reformers – II
- Worship and the Adventist Movement

Introduction:**Worship as the Center of the Believer's Life****Main Texts:**

Genesis 4,12; Exodus 36-40; I Kings 6-8;

Patriarchs and Prophets chaps: 5, 11, 30,

Prophets and Kings chap: 2

Essential Questions:

What was the nature of the world's first worship dispute between Cain and Abel?

What was the importance of worship in the life and spiritual journey of Abraham?

How was worship shown to be central in the life of Israel during the wilderness years?

What lessons of true worship do we learn from the sanctuary and its services?

How does the building and dedication of Solomon's temple reflect the central importance of worship?

Worship in the New Testament – I:
The Teachings of Jesus

Main Texts:

Matthew 5; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 18:10-14; John 4:1-42;

Desire of Ages chaps: 31, 67

Christ's Object Lessons 150-63

Essential Questions:

In what ways does the Sermon on the Mount reinterpret worship ideas and values that were held in first century Israel?

What does the incident of the widow's offering of two mites suggest regarding God's view of true worship?

What does the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in the temple teach regarding true worship?

What can be learned regarding spiritual worship from Christ's teaching to the Samaritan woman?

Worship in the New Testament – III:

The Church of the Apostles

Main texts:

Acts 2-6

Acts of the Apostles chaps: 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

Essential Questions:

What are the lessons regarding New Testament worship that may be learned from the Day of Pentecost experience?

What activities and attitudes formed the center of the worship life of the first Christian church?

What is the place of the teachings of Christ in the worship experience of the early Christians?

In what ways was fellowship (*koinonia*) shown to be crucial in the worship life of the new community?

What worship priorities emerged when the early church had to deal with conflict?

- The sin of Ananias and Sapphira
- The arrest of Peter and John
- The Grecian widow's controversy

Worship in the New Testament – III:***The Corinthian Community***

Main texts:

I Corinthians 1, 2, 10-14;

Desire of Ages chap: 72

Essential Questions:

How is the subject of spiritual worship further developed in the Corinthian letter?

What may be understood regarding the relationship between worship and culture from the Corinthian letter?

What role do spiritual gifts play in the corporate worship experience?

What principles of Christian worship are emphasized in Paul's response to the tongues controversy in Corinth?

- Worship “with the spirit and with the mind”
- The goal of edification
- All things done in decency and order

Worship in the New Testament – IV:***The Three Angels' Messages***

Main texts:

Revelation 14:6-12;

***The Great Controversy* chap: 38**

Essential Questions:

What is the essential content of the first angel's message?

What priority of worship is revealed in the first angel's message?

What distortion of worship does the second angel's message warn against?

In what ways does the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan culminate in issues related to true and false worship?

Worship in the New Testament – V:***Worship in Heaven***

Main texts:

Revelation 4, 5, 12, 19;

The Great Controversy chaps: 29, 40

Essential Questions:

What principles of worship are exposed in the “throne in heaven” scene of Revelation 4?

How does the worship of the 24 elders and heavenly angels expose the inner nature of true worship?

What may be learned about the nature of true inner worship from the negative experience of Lucifer’s rebellion in heaven?

How does the ultimate worship of the redeemed saints magnify true worship?

Worship in the post-New Testament era

Main texts:

Revelation 2, 6

The Great Controversy chaps: 2-6

Essential Questions:

What lessons regarding worship are exposed in the persecution experiences of the early church?

What historical events contributed to the compromise of worship in the experience of the early church?

What are some of the distortions of worship that came into the church in the period of the Dark Ages?

How is the true nature of the church revealed in the wilderness experiences and persecutions of the Dark Ages believers?

Worship and the Protestant Reformers - I

Main texts:

Revelation 6

The Great Controversy chaps: 7-10

Essential Questions:

What were the main issues of contention regarding worship for the Protestant Reformation?

What were the major issues relative to worship of Martin Luther's reform movement?

What were the major issues relative to worship of Ulrich Zwingli's reform movement?

What principles of worship did the Protestant Reformation uphold and seek to reestablish in the church?

Worship and the Protestant Reformers – II

Main texts:

Revelation 6

The Great Controversy chaps: 7-10, 17-20

Essential Questions:

How do the principles of Protestant worship conflict with the teachings of the Mass as the center of worship?

How does the Protestant position on the sacraments of the church differ from that of Catholicism?

What was the Scriptural rationale for the central place of preaching in the Protestant teaching regarding worship?

What were the central issues in the reform movement in America?

Worship and the Adventist Movement

Main texts:

Revelation 10:8-11

The Great Controversy chap: 20

Essential Questions:

What were the essential issues regarding worship for the early Adventists?

How did early Adventist worship mirror the worship of early Methodists and other Christian groups?

How did the seventh-day Sabbath play a crucial role in the formation of Adventist worship?

What place did order and form play in the development of early Adventist worship?

What role did mission play in the development of early Adventist worship?

APPENDIX E

**WORSHIP PRACTICE SABBATH FORMAT FOR
THE OAKWOOD COLLEGE CHURCH**

OAKWOOD COLLEGE CHURCH
Learning To Worship Together

Worship Practice Sabbath
September 14, 2002

Format

- Instruction and practice of elements of worship in Sabbath liturgy
- Practice service in four segments
- Worship participants rotate

Personnel

- All elders on rostrum, upper and lower
- All instrumentalists in pit rotating
- All choirs rotate, and choristers, and praise teams
- All deacons, deaconesses, ushers, sound personnel

Preparation for Worship/Logistics (movement of people and objects for worship)

Before Sabbath school:

- Doors, environmental, microphones and monitors, instruments, pulpits, envelopes,

After Personal Ministries:

- pulpits, microphones for choirs, monitors, praise team,

During Divine Worship:

- children's story, baby blessing, seating worshipers,

After Divine Worship:

- exiting worshipers, manning doors, cleaning up, collecting equipment, turning off lights and power

Preparation for Worship/ Spiritual (attitude of worshipers)

Before Sabbath School:

- Prayerfully prepare for worship at home – attitude adjustment, punctuality

After Personal Ministries:

- Enter sanctuary aware – God's presence, timing, other worshipers, reverence

During Divine Worship:

- Jesus/angels as holy audience, fellow worshipers, especially visitors, be prayerful as we execute liturgy, do not let your children be irreverent or destructive

After Divine Worship:

- Exit cheerfully and reverently, pick up area around you, greet one another in the name of the Lord

Preparation for Worship/ Practice (worship participants)

Wednesday night participants prayer and practice meeting (Three P's),

- one hour before prayer meeting,
- prayer and run-through for divine worship,
- Required: all platform participants, instrumentalists, praise team, chorister, choir leader, soloists, deacon in charge, deaconess in charge, usher in charge, sound room engineer, children's story teller

Musicians practice songs and instruments during the week

- Be aware of dress
- Be aware of timing when you are to sing
- Don't talk or explain, don't perform, just sing to the glory of God

Liturgy in Four Segments (Instruction and Practice)

Each element of worship has content, timing, and logistical aspects. Leader should understand the element and bring the right spirit to its implementation. Be alert, aware, and prayerful.

Segment One: Introit, Call to Worship, Response, Invocation

Segment Two: Opening hymn, Scripture, Prayer / Responses

Segment Three: Offering Call/Prayer, Collection, Music, Children's story

Segment Four: Meditation, Sermon, Closing Hymn, Benediction

APPENDIX F

VALUES OF CORPORATE WORSHIP FOR CHURCH ELDERS AND WORSHIP LEADERS: “MAKING WORSHIP FIRST”

“MAKING WORSHIP FIRST”
Oakwood College Church

I. WORSHIP VALUES – based on the SDA Church Manual

1. Spirituality

We enter worship as those who are conscious of the divine presence. The God who is always with us reveals Himself in a special way when we come together in His name – “for where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20). Spiritual worship is intelligent, but also, it is driven by inspiration--the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit and holy angels (see I Corinthians 2:14). This spirituality is not other-worldly, but very practical, transforming every aspect of the believer's life, including self-awareness. To come into God's presence is to be transformed from self-conscious to God-conscious. Self-esteem, title, position, personal rights and claims all come to an end in the act of worship.

2. Reverence

As an attitude of honor and deference to God, reverence centers in a humble and worshipful frame of mind. This mindset reveals itself in habits of punctuality, attention, orderliness, participation, and response. A certain decorum will be observed in worship, as exemplified by worship leaders and assisted by church officers. The needs of fellow-worshippers will be respected; late-comers, for instance, will prefer to inconvenience themselves in being seated rather than inconvenience others by conspicuous movement at inappropriate times. Silence is observed at appropriate times, and full participation when

it is called for. "But everything should be done in a decent and orderly way" (I Corinthians 14:40).

3. Congregational Participation

As a communal act, worship is something we enter into, not just observe. We come together as participants, not spectators. In hymn singing, Scripture reading, prayer, communion, tithe and offering, and fellowship, we join in the activity with vibrancy and fullness of heart. Our worship will include the diverse expression of all worshippers, taking in all ages, genders, and cultural groups. It will be open to a variety of creative ideas as a dynamic and growing worship. Every expression will not represent every person, but each expression will be sincere, appropriate, and centered in Christ.

4. Music

As a unique form of communication and expression, music has an indispensable place in worship. The foundation of musical worship for the Oakwood College Church is congregational singing. From the youngest to the oldest, we encourage the opening of the heart to God in song with both spirit and understanding; never as performance, but always as genuine worship – “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” (I Corinthians 14:15).

Our music will embrace a variety of styles and formats of only the finest quality. It will not be limited to any particular cultural or historical expression. It will include traditional

hymns and anthems, as well as more contemporary expressions. It will involve many instruments, all ages, and various sized groups, from soloists to choirs.

5. Mission

Worship, as directed toward God, is a response to His grace. It includes the responsibility of representing Him lovingly, both within and outside the church. As mission, worship means:

- proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and His soon return,
- leading worshippers to decisions of personal commitment and renewal in Christ,
- bringing the body of Christ into full unity and harmony,
- teaching Bible doctrines from a Christ-centered perspective, and,
- reaching out to humanity in acts of love and disinterested service.

II. ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP - The Liturgy

INTROIT is the entrance into the sanctuary of the officers and worship leaders accompanied by communal song. All worshipers are to raise their voices in oneness of praise to Jesus Christ who is Lord of all.

CALL TO WORSHIP is the Scriptural proclamation intended to generate a sense of the divine presence. As the words of Scripture are read, the worshiper is moved with a sense of the holiness of God and motivated to respond in reverent awe.

DOXOLOGY, from the Greek δόξα meaning “glory” or “splendor”, is a liturgical expression of praise to God. It is a joyous response to God’s goodness and love.

INVOCATION is a brief prayer of praise inviting God into our hearts and into our midst. It is not an intercessory prayer for the sick, etc. It should not exceed 20 seconds. A well thought-out invocation can easily be offered in 10 seconds.

HYMNS should be sung by all worshipers with both fervor and intelligence - “I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind” (I Cor. 14:15). Hymns are announced by the worship leader with reference to the hymn number, *not page number*. Page and hymn numbers are usually different. Also, hymns have stanzas, not verses. The worship leader will announce the hymn, repeating the hymn number once, and then be seated.

The organist will begin to play the hymn, at which time the chorister will signal for the congregation to stand. The chorister will conduct the hymn.

SCRIPTURE READING may be responsive or may be read by the worship leader. It is to be announced clearly, giving all worshipers (including radio worshipers) time to find the passage so they may follow along. The worship leader must *always review the passage prior to worship* so that he/she may read it flawlessly. The reading should be clear, distinct, and meaningful.

So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading . . . all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. (Nehemiah 8:8,9)

PRAAYER is the entrance into the divine Presence in which one intercedes for many. It is a vital part of worship that demands careful thought and preparation. The one offering the prayer must first enter into the spirit of prayer if she/he is to lead the congregation into the presence of God. The prayer should be thought out so as to avoid wordiness, rambling, and needless repetition. It should be offered in simplicity and sincerity. The supremacy of God should be recognized by using God's name respectfully. Street language and colloquial expressions are to be excluded.

Because it is a formal, public prayer, it usually has a basic structure. This should include: (a) *praise and thanksgiving*, (b) *confession*, (c) *dedication* (d) *petition* (on behalf of the church and the community), and (e) *should always be offered in the name of Jesus*. The congregation may then be lead in the Lord's prayer. (Matt. 6:9-13)

OFFERING is the tangible act of giving in which we demonstrate our trust in God and willingness to sacrifice for His kingdom. It is the safeguard in the Christian life against covetousness and selfishness. Both tithe and offering are holy unto the Lord (Malachi 3:8). The offering call should be spiritual and based on principles of stewardship. It should add dignity and grace to the service. It should be brief and timely, not exceeding two minutes. It is always appropriate to use Scripture references and point the worshipers to Jesus. Giving an offering is not paying dues or taxes to the church. Giving an offering is an act of worship to God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Texts: Prov.3:9; Isa.40:3; Mal.3:6- 12; John 14:12,13; 15:13; II Cor. 8:9; II Cor.9:6; James.1:17. Church hymnal #'s 894-906.

CHILDREN'S STORY is the time set aside for special ministry to the children. It does not imply that the rest of the worship service is not for children. The children's story is to be meaningful, interesting, and brief. It should not exceed 10 minutes (including the time for the children's movements). Although the entire congregation will benefit from the story, it is to be geared to a child's level. It will be helpful, when possible, to employ a visual aid of some kind in telling the story. Point the children to Christian principles that they can understand and put into practice in their own lives.

SERMON is the moment of proclamation in which God's Word is delivered to His people, churched and un-churched. Its basis is the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Its intent is to lead worshipers to Jesus Christ in fullness of surrender. It is literally true that eternal destinies hang in the balance in the preaching moment - "faith comes by hearing,

and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The sermon is not a time for speculative theories or private interpretations. It is Jesus Christ who is to be lifted up as He is proclaimed in the Word. All worshipers should listen intently for God's message to their own souls.

When the sermon appeal is being made, the entire church should engage in silent prayer for their souls and for the lost. At this time especially, nothing of a distracting nature should be going on. The congregation must cooperate with the Holy Spirit and holy angels who use this time to convert souls to Jesus Christ. Remember the promise of God through Isaiah – "so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return unto me void, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

BENEDICTION is not another intercessory prayer or a repetition of the main points of the sermon. If the one praying feels so lead, he/she may offer a brief thanks for the morning message, but the benediction should then follow. The benediction is *a blessing pronounced upon the people in the name of God*. It is the crowning act that enables the worshiper to go away feeling blessed. Pastoral benedictions in the Bible include: Num.6:24; Rom.16:27; I Cor.16:23; II Cor.13:14; Gal.6:18; Eph.6:23; II Tim.4:22; Heb.13:20,21; Jude 24,25; Rev.22:20,21. Church hymnal numbers 907-920.

APPENDIX G

**CONGREGATIONAL HANDOUT ON
PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP**

PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Before coming to God in worship we should prepare ourselves for the encounter just as musicians and worship leaders do. Here is a personal checklist based on Hebrews 10:22:¹

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”

1. Sincerity (your heart) – be sure your heart is fixed on God and His glory, not on yourself, your appearance, your prestige, your position, or any other distracting thing.
2. Fidelity (your faith) – come with full confidence in your access to God through Jesus Christ. Be sure your trust is in faith alone as the means of salvation, not augmented by any works of your own.
3. Humility (your unworthiness) – know that you have no right to appear before God at all without the purification of the blood of Jesus Christ.
4. Purity (your confession) – confess your sins before you enter the sanctuary in order to be spiritually purged from guilt and sin.

If we are willing to pass through these checkpoints we may come before God in full confidence that He will receive us and draw near to us as we worship Him.

¹ Adapted from John MacArthur Jr., *The Ultimate Priority*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1983.

APPENDIX H
GENERAL WORSHIP SURVEY

GENERAL WORSHIP SURVEY**Oakwood College Church****Purpose**

Our church is conducting an evaluation of our total worship life with the intention of making worship more vital, more spiritual, and more meaningful for all worshipers. Your help is greatly needed in this evaluation effort.

Task Force

A worship task force has been formed to review and analyze your responses to this survey. Using this and other tools that will be at their disposal, they will make recommendations to the church board for worship revitalization. The pastors and the worship committee are charged with implementing the recommended improvements.

Task force members: Cheryl Galley, Morris Iheanacho, John Nixon, Marilyn Murrell, Beverly McDonald, Carrie Roddy, James Wilson.

Survey Instructions

The following questions and statements refer to the Sabbath morning worship service. Please circle the response that best reflects your honest opinion. Use the write in section for your additional comments. Thank you.

About you:

1. Age: under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59
 60-69 70 or older

2. Gender: Male Female

3. Are you a member of OC church? Yes No

4. If yes, for how long? less than 2 years 2-5 years 6-10 years
 11-20 years 20 + years

5. Marital status: Married Single Divorced Widowed

6. Are you an employee of Oakwood? Yes No

7. Are you an Oakwood student? Yes No

8. How often do you attend services at OC church?

More than 1/week 1/week 2/month 1/month less

Survey questions

1. Do you prepare your heart for worship prior to arriving at church?

Yes No

2. Is the atmosphere of worship sufficiently reverent?

Yes No

3. Is the worship service inspiring and uplifting?

Yes No

4. Are the songs we sing in worship meaningful and inspiring?

Yes No

5. Do you feel welcome and at home in the worship service?

Yes No

6. Do you sense the presence of God in the sanctuary at worship?

Yes No

7. How do you feel about the timing of our worship service?

Too short Too long Just right

8. How do you feel about the level of youth involvement in worship?

Not enough Too much Just right

9. How many songs do you prefer to sing in the worship service?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 more than 7

10. What type of sacred music do you prefer for Sabbath worship?

Traditional (hymns, anthems, spirituals)	Contemporary (praise songs, contemporary)	Mixture of both
---	--	-----------------

11. Do you enjoy hearing the Scripture read from different translations?

Always

Seldom

Often

Never

12. What would you like to see *more* of in Sabbath worship? (circle all that apply):

Announcements Greetings Congregational singing Instruments

Choral music Prayer Preaching Audio/visual presentations

Children's stories Drama Puppet ministry Special music

Other (specify) _____

13. What would you like to see *less* of in Sabbath worship? (circle all that apply):

Announcements Greetings Congregational singing Instruments

Choral music Prayer Preaching Audio/visual presentations

Children's stories Drama Puppet ministry Special music

14. What topics would you like to see addressed in preaching?

15. What improvements would you like to see made to our worship service?

16. What things do we do well in the worship that you would like to see continued?

17. List your three favorite praise songs.

18. List your three favorite hymns.

19. Is there any other comment you would like to share with the worship task force?

Although the survey is anonymous, if you would like the task force to contact you for further input or clarification, please give your information below. Thanks again for your help.

Name:

Telephone:

APPENDIX I
GLOSSARY OF THEOLOGICAL TERMS

GLOSSARY OF THEOLOGICAL TERMS

Anabaptist: From the Greek word for “re-baptizer” used to refer to the radical wing of the sixteenth century Reformation based on thinkers such as Menno Simons.

Arianism: Major theological heresy of the fourth century that treated Christ as the supreme creature of God, not truly divine. Christ’s nature was described as *homoiousios*, of similar substance with God.

Catholic: Term used to refer both to the idea of the universality of the church in space and time, and to the denomination (Roman Catholic) that emphasizes this point.

Celebration Worship: A style of worship that became popular in the Seventh-day Adventist church on the west coast, emphasizing congregational response and good feeling as important aspects of the worship act.

Community conscious: Term used to refer to cultural practices that are given merit because of their primary focus on positive communal values.

Cultural Worship: Worship in which the forms and practices observed have their primary basis in particular cultural norms.

Ecclesiology: Technically the science of the study of the church, used to refer formally to the theology of worship.

Ego-centered: Term used to refer to cultural practices that are given merit based on their authenticity as cultural acts alone.

Eucharist: From the Greek meaning “thanksgiving,” the ancient name for the celebration of the Holy Communion in the Christian church.

Ex opere operantis: “Through the work of the one who works,” a teaching that asserts the efficacy of the sacraments are dependent upon the morality and motives of the officiating priest.

Ex opere operato: “Through the work that is worked,” a teaching that asserts the efficacy of the sacraments are inherent so that the morality of the officiating minister is not decisive.

Homoousion: Greek term meaning “of the same substance” that in the fourth century Arian controversy was used to refute the claim that Christ was a created being. The term refers to the divine nature of Christ as being of the same substance as God.

Invisible church: In Zwingli’s theology, a reference to the universal body of Christ that may or may not be co-terminus with the visible organization of the church.

Liturgy: From the Greek meaning “public work,” the system of rites and ceremonies performed by the church in worship, usually in written form. Also called the order of service.

Lutheran: The tradition of Protestant theology that is based on the writings of Martin Luther.

Pentecostalism: A stream within Armenian evangelicalism that emphasizes a further experience after conversion, namely, the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an endowment of power signified by speaking in tongues (*glossalalia*); and on the gifts of the Spirit listed in I Cor. 12.

Protestant Reformation: The protest against the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church that rose up in sixteenth century Europe.

Reformed: The tradition of Protestant theology that draws its main inspiration from the writings of John Calvin and his successors.

Ritual: Sometimes used synonymously with liturgy, a reference to the congregational acts of worship according to a set form.

Sacrament: From the Latin *sacramentum* - oath, vow, a holy ordinance instituted by Christ wherein by visible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are

represented, sealed, and applied to the believers. Protestants observe two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, while Catholics add five more: confirmation, penance, holy orders, extreme unction, and matrimony.

Scholasticism: A rational and systematic approach to Christian theology that is especially associated with the Middle Ages.

Sola Scriptura: “By Scripture alone,” a slogan that became characteristic of the Protestant reformers as an expression of the belief that Scripture was the sole and sufficient source of Christian theology.

Spiritual exercises: Also called “falling exercises,” referring to events by which worshipers were physically overcome in the act of worship, fainting, falling out, lying prostrate, sometimes for hours, presumably by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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