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The Indigenous Worship Voice

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THE INDIGENOUS WORSHIP VOICE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF MINISTRY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
IN LEADERSHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

BY

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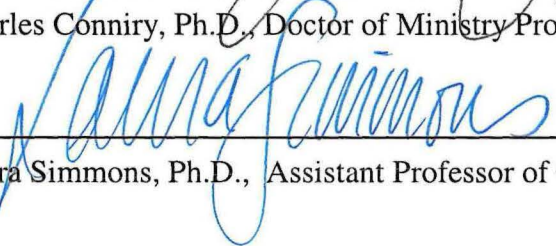
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We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this dissertation and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation degree.



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To Frayne, Dex, Kyle, Kenny

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Kelly Ballard, May, 2002

INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM

Above everything else maybe, we all want to be known by each other and to know each other...yet from the way we manage things most of the time, who in a million years would ever guess it? Who can remain unmoved by the thought of how the world might be if we only managed things right?

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

Richard's place of worship is no different than most of our Western Christian churches. First Christian Church is about a hundred years old, almost completely 'traditional' in style and not what one would consider trained in the ways of 'modern' worship expression. Weekly attendance is dwindling and it seems that passion for Jesus Christ is relegated to almost accidental status within somewhat disassociated pockets of the laity. Most worshippers at First Christian have let their hope for a bright future become overshadowed by a proud reflection upon the 'glory days' of the 1960's and '70's when the church demonstrated its 'fruitfulness' by packed pews and overflowing offering plates. It is a church shackled by structures and symbols. The incumbent musicians might be considered somewhat snooty and any thought of changing their ways is unacceptable. The building is resplendent with, but hobbled by, its fine architecture and antiquated aesthetic.

So Richard has started something 'new.' He has formed a band. He has chosen a strategic time. He has initiated a creative worship service that clearly divorces itself from the confines of the 'mother church.' Guitars have replaced the organ. A worship team has replaced the song leader. Choruses have replaced hymns. Shorts and t-shirts have replaced coats and ties. Group sharing has replaced the liturgy. It seems to be 'working' as it attracts more and more weekly participants.

So what's the problem?

Too many church leaders (is Richard one of them?) seem to be losing their connection with legacy, while they frenetically attempt to touch some kind of success by succumbing to the promise of the latest worship strategies. Consequently, many churches find themselves fragmented and in the throes of painful and seemingly hopeless 'worship wars.' Consider the following polarizations:

Traditional vs. Contemporary
 Bells and Chimes vs. Bass and Drums
 Flute and Harp vs. Sax and Horn
 Gospel (Black) vs. Gospel (Singspiration) vs. Gospel (Country)
 George Beverly Shea vs. The Gaithers vs. Audio Adrenaline
 Quartet vs. Sanctuary Choir vs. Praise Band
 Liturgy vs. Spontaneity
 Doctrine vs. Exposition vs. Application
 The KJV vs. The NIV vs. Living Bible vs. The Message vs. in the Greek
 Saint vs. Seeker vs. Sinner
 Suits/Ties and Dresses vs. Jeans/Shorts and T-Shirts
 Formal vs. Informal
 Cathedral vs. Country Church vs. Warehouse
 Organ vs. Synthesizer
 Quiet vs. Loud
 Meditation vs. Celebration
 Standing vs. Sitting vs. Kneeling vs. Dancing
 Builders vs. Boomers vs. Busters vs. Millennial Kids
 Newcomer vs. Oldtimer vs. Men vs. Women vs. Married vs. Singleⁱ

Pastors, leaders, and artists have all chosen many options by which to alleviate the discomfort they feel when trying to offer a more safe, inviting, and functional worship experience. These attempts range from maintaining the status quo without consideration of any other options to completely dropping any and every hint of traditional values and style.

But these “bipolar terminologies are not the only way to characterize our participation in worship.”ⁱⁱ In fact, God has allowed local congregations broad artistic and aesthetic diversity not as a curse, but as a unique pattern that most fully demonstrates the plan of his kingdom. Therefore, *the congregation that integrates varying tastes, abilities and styles—particularly those which emerge from the people and their environment—is the church that has the greatest opportunity to further God’s most complete purpose for his people within and without its walls.* So the gathered faith community must continually assess the strength of its worship ‘language’ in many areas and recognize the mysterious and wonderful beauty found in the culminating expression of all that is represented. This is the crux of the concern of this project and will continue to be referred to as the indigenous worship voice.ⁱⁱⁱ

The willingness of a local church to adopt this worship approach will find that from out of it can come the eternal rewards of extraordinary personal and communal growth. This is because the purpose of the Church is primarily worship. We are reminded on numerous biblical occasions that we exist ‘in praise of his glory.’ We can also cite many examples of the influence of worship on other areas of ministry. For instance, worship fosters discipleship as it crystallizes the truth of Christ for the worshipper. Worship facilitates outreach, as illustrated by the Acts 16 recounting of the impact of the singing of Paul and Silas on their jail guards. In the words of Dallas Willard, “...if those in the churches really are enjoying fullness of life, evangelism will be unstoppable and largely automatic.”^{iv} Worship also finds its connection with service as devoted Christians follow the pattern of the first century church with regard

to providing for all who are in need, as shown in Acts 2. There are many other biblical examples of this chronological sequence—the practical results of the authenticity of the worship community finding their expression in almost accidental fashion. It is clear that the effective use of the indigenous worship voice will lead to strengthened devotion, broader outreach, and greater service for the ultimate glory and honor of God.

<p>How can the local congregation identify, strengthen and engage its indigenous worship voice?</p>
--

Answering this question is timely for the Western Church. But many obstacles face those who would like to attempt such worship ministry. The purpose of this project, then, is twofold: (a) It will present a theological mandate for using the indigenous worship voice of the local church. (b) It will offer an accompanying strategy for the pursuit of this goal.

Words of caution and clarification seem appropriate at this point: There is no sure-fire technique for definitively answering all the worship questions of every church. The subject is much too complex. Many quality programs and formulae seem to promise ease and success in worship planning and implementation. Most of them outline a pretty reasonable plan for growth and some are very personal—with on-site visits and individualized dialogue available. Books have been written about the theory of worship and how to practically develop a fine church music program. But most of the proposed strategies of conferences, seminars, consultants, and publications might actually begin far too late in the process to meet the most

significant need of the worship minister. This is because the deepest experience of artistic discovery proves that “finding a voice is most definitely not a matter of technique. It’s a matter of time and a matter of searching—soul searching.”^v Even more radically, it is a theological exploration which concerns itself with discovering of a connection between God’s purpose in this world and our craft. What is the greatest yearning of God’s heart and what are we to do—and who are we to be—about it? *The congregation that has the greatest opportunity to experience the truly rewarding benefits of the indigenous worship voice is the one that will let its worship leaders risk all for the sake of deep, deep spirituality and commitment.* This is a difficult journey. It is intensely personal and often lonely. It takes worshippers on a path that challenges assumptions and convictions alike. As Richard Foster writes, “Jesus’ teaching does not lay out safe generalizations by which we can engineer a happy life. Instead, it is designed to startle us out of our prejudices and direct us into a new way of thinking and acting. It’s designed to open us up to experience the reign of God right where we are, initiating an unpredictable process of personal growth in vivid fellowship with him.”^{vi} The difficulty rests in the incredible, continuing mystery of how to appropriate the presence of the risen Christ. Even if we really knew we possessed his undeniable company, it might be hard to know where he may want to take our churches because, as Thomas is quoted so clearly in John 14.5, “We don’t know where he is going, so how can we know the way?”

But step out we must, as doing so is the only way to a clear understanding of what it means to identify, strengthen, and engage the indigenous worship voice. By grace we are allowed to look at biblical worship injunctions, historical precedents for

worship, and cultural developments that have a significant impact on worship. The findings of these exploratory tracks will inform a clear theological basis for indigenous worship ministry and “those who journey near us will say to us, ‘You say what I suspected, you express what I vaguely felt, you bring to the fore what I fearfully kept in the back of my mind. Yes, yes—you say who we are, you recognize our condition.’”^{vii}

Once a standard has been set and a clearer definition has come into view, we will take a look at how worship—a responsive, expressive, authentic lifestyle that is reflected in the gathered faith community—is actually practiced. We will see how far from perfection we are as we view how church leaders are worshipping. We will sensitively evaluate our attempts at solving the wars of worship and assess the effectiveness of their various approaches. We will see that the most desperate issue is not that churches don’t want to ‘be themselves,’ but that they don’t know how to effectively retool and rethink in a way that fully lets them be themselves. So theoretical and empirical considerations of the issue are meaningless without some kind of plan for those involved in it. This plan will incorporate spiritual, artistic, technical, and relational suggestions for pursuing effective indigenous worship, while being strictly subject to the influence of theological guidance. So the examination of worship theory and the evaluation of worship practice will be sifted together into this unique alternative suggestion.

We now embark on this ‘dangerous’ adventure ready to dig deeply into the stuff of theology—theology which is a culmination of biblical, historical, and cultural

factors, the fusion of which provides a realistic framework for an emergent definition of God's best for his worshipping people: the indigenous worship voice.

All of this will be undertaken with the intention that a group of local worshippers might find out what they've been given, allow it to develop, and release it for God's purpose.

ⁱ Doug Stevens, *All God's Gifts* (paper presented by The Renewal Project, Walnut Creek, California), 2.

ⁱⁱ Craig Erickson, *Participating in Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ A distinction must be made here between 'indigenous' as descriptive of the worship voice in a local congregation and "indigenization." The latter refers to enculturation and, though it will surface in our discussion, is used primarily when speaking missiologically.

^{iv} Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 247.

^v Les Steele, *On the Way* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 325.

^{vi} Richard Foster, *Prayer* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 205.

^{vii} Phil Zylla, *A Theology of Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in the Church* (paper presented as synopsis for DMN542, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, June 21-23, 2001), 2-3.

PART ONE: PATTERN

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.

Psalm 133.1

Many factors contribute to the formation of a theological stance. Thorough and accurate theology is based upon what God has said in his Word, how his purpose has unfolded throughout history, and what comes out of our current cultural context.ⁱ We must think of our worship questions in comprehensive terms (theoretical and practical), and a sound theology of worship will give us a baseline from which to develop a healthy worship experience.

ⁱ Theology is what we think and what we say about God. The practice of theology, though, has evolved and found nuance throughout the various epochs of history. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1960) does a fine job of summarizing the historical development of theology: The early church fathers (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, etc.) theologized in the context of pagan influences and thought. The canonization of Scripture required theological wrangling, as did christological questions. This period was followed by the Scholastic period, in which philosophy and theology were fused and subsequently developed. The Reformation brought about an exegetical twist to theology, culminating in an understanding of theology as primarily Christ-centered. Modern theology brings about an East-West contact as well as continued interplay between liberalism and neo-orthodoxy.

It is also important to distinguish between the various types of theology. There are practical, moral and historical theology (what one might call 'lived' theologies) as well as 'thinking' theologies such as systematic, philosophic and apologetics.

The purpose of this document is to use a synergism of several of these approaches to ensure a broad-based worship theology. In keeping with the most current considerations of a postmodern era, we will paint a broad stroke across the canvas and enjoy the various hues therein, while enjoying the entire created picture—a picture of God's character and our need—in the most vivid display.

CHAPTER ONE

OLD TESTAMENT WORSHIP

Even the holiest, or most moral, of ventures can be a feeding ground for our insatiable egos.

Kelly James Clark, *When Faith Is Not Enough*

We now consider a biblical foundation for the indigenous worship voice by sequentially constructing a necessary equation.ⁱ

The basis of Old Testament claims for the indigenous worship voice lies in our *response* as a necessary precursor to worship, which is predicated entirely upon the mysterious fact of God's revelation of himself to humankind. Virtually everything we might propose about the theory and practice of worship is rooted in this truth. Our relationship to God is presupposed by his initiative. Revelation includes past, present, and future realities. The past is only a precursor of what is to come; we may not see the revelation of God completely, but only as a sign of his future fullness (Isaiah 40.5). The present age is our Christian understanding as opposed to the 'incompleteness' of Old Testament understanding. Christ is at work in his Church today and is continually bringing about fresh insights and clarity to his people (I Corinthians 14.26,30, Galatians 2.2). The future will reveal all of the purpose and plan of God in its entirety, for the redemption of his people and for his eternal judgment on humankind (Romans 2.5, Revelation 1.1).

Another scriptural illustration of this premise (and its result) is Exodus 24.1-3:

Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach the Lord; the

others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him.”

When Moses went and told all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, “Everything the Lord has said we will do.”

God extended an invitation to the people through his servant Moses, an invitation that was meant for several purposes. First, God calls to his children for the purpose of establishing a bond with them. As this occurs they are healed of their uncleanness and reclaimed from their lost state. They are provided for in many ways. There is a lasting agreement made between God and humankind (covenant) bringing about new beginnings as well as the inception of the process of living for new reasons.

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive

Those who find themselves continually touched by the initiative of God can do nothing less than respond. We respond because we have recognized who God is and what he has done on our behalf. There is no other option for the hearts that have been truly touched by the mercy of God. We respond as we remember. Old Testament worship was crystallized by the people’s response to the Exodus event, and the ensuing history of the people of God is a constant reminder of their need to remember his work on their behalf. This remembering finds its way to recounting, as seen in Deuteronomy 6.21-25.

If the people of God truly remember and recount his merciful action for their sakes, they will consequently assume and maintain a posture of humble *gratitude*.

Perhaps no other concept so typifies our understanding of our relationship with God. Old Testament gratitude is particularly hard to quantify—there is no Hebrew equivalent to the English word ‘thanks’; but the theme of our standing before God is clear in two Old Testament concepts: *yadah* and *todah*, which both mean the acknowledgment of “God’s character and works,” as well as our need for public confession of our sin.ⁱⁱ

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive (recognition and gratitude)

Anyone who wants to interact seriously with Old Testament worship foundations cannot possibly stop with the response of the people, but must also address the question of *sacrifice*.ⁱⁱⁱ Sacrifice was not unique to the Old Testament believing community. It was somewhat a derivative and a development of the practices of other cultures. Always intended to give honor and thanksgiving to God, sacrifice also carried with it an element of atonement and forgiveness. The most obvious form of this understanding is the Passover, which includes both the provision of safety and the celebration of the community—particularly in meal form. National disasters or war brought about certain sacrifices, as did dedicatory moments and times of new starts.^{iv}

Sacrifice generally included the death of an offered animal—whether a bull, ram, lamb or goat—and its presentation and removal. These acts represented a wide variety of activities spanning substitutionary atonement, peace, homage, and communion. The sacrificial event served as a prophetic proclamation for the work of

God through Jesus Christ. Sacrifice included not just its own logistical and physical action, but was predicated upon the complete devotion and commitment of the hearts of the people who were involved.

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive (recognition + gratitude) + Sacrifice

Sacrifice carries with it two important qualities. Because sacrifice is not our natural inclination, it must be assumed that the first is *obedience*. Consider the words of the *shema*—the Old Testament worship synopsis found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and your gates.

The significance of the word ‘hear’ puts into context our understanding of obedience because it does not denote simple passivity, but presupposes that one’s hearing precedes her or his acting. Once we have acknowledged the sovereignty of our God we are compelled to listen and obey his commands.^v

One mark of Old Testament worship that illustrates the communal obedience of the *shema* was its organization. Worship was arranged in a structure of responsibility: the daily hours, daily temple rituals, and special feasts—e.g. Sabbath,

Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles. In addition, the worship experience of the people of God required an organization of personnel and leadership, as seen in I Chronicles 16.4 and I Chronicles 25.1, wherein God set apart specific servants for the administration and implementation of worship practice.

The second mark of sacrificial worship as found in the Old Testament is the concept of *offering*—again, not an ordinary practice for most of us. Yet we consider offering simply because “in sacrifice something is given voluntarily and unconditionally to God, in defiance of the inveterate obsessiveness and claimfulness of man; and this gesture of generosity is felt to be the best we can do (a) to atone for our shortcomings in other respects, (b) as a means of that approach to God which is an essential element in worship, (c) as an earnest of devotedness.”^{vi} The importance of offering in our discussion lies in its answer to the question, “For whom is worship intended?” More often than not our worship experience is simply that—*our* worship experience. We can easily forget that the very essence of the worship event has more to do with giving than with receiving. In the words of Jeff Reed, “We offer up to God, not because he needs anything, not to atone for our sin, and not to bargain or barter for favor, but because God is worthy of our offering, and it is the way of love to give, and it is the nature of love to give what is costly.”^{vii}

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive (recognition + gratitude) + Sacrifice (obedience + offering)

The obediently offered sacrifice of the worshipping community of the Old Testament reinforces its recognition of who and what they and God are! They are

rendered humbly receptive of the purpose of God and express this state in posture, action, thought, word, and deed. Therefore, bowing (*shachah*) and serving (*avad*) punctuate the worship experience as depicted in the Old Testament.

The culmination of these thoughts on Old Testament worship leads us to one quality that cannot be denied or debated. Old Testament worship in the context of its responsive sacrifice through grateful recognition and obedient offering can only be described as *unselfish*. Continual renewal of personal commitment is most clearly acted upon in the context of service on behalf of the people of God and those whom he has called them to love.

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive (recognition + gratitude) + Sacrifice (obedience + offering) = *unselfish*

ⁱ It will be impossible to provide a comprehensive view of biblical worship in a document of this scope. Therefore it will be necessary for the reader to pursue the noted citations regarding specific lengthy and complicated matters. Nevertheless, what remains here is intended to be a rather cogent synopsis of the most salient points of biblical worship in theory and in practice.

ⁱⁱ Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 595.

ⁱⁱⁱ It will not be possible here to identify and quantify the complicated and various types of sacrifice represented in the Old Testament. The biblical text which definitively communicates the types and ramifications of sacrificial activity is Leviticus 1-7. One good, succinct exploration of more in-depth sacrificial concepts such as votive (the consecrating sacrifice), piacular (the atoning sacrifice), oblation (consumption), peace offering, etc. is Evelyn Underhill's classic treatise entitled *Worship* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1936).

^{iv} J.P. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL, Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 1115.

^v One might consider the disobedience of the 'first Adam' as opposed to the obedience of Jesus Christ. Sacrificial discussions find their context in this line of thinking, as the Christian message depends on the value of this interplay.

^{vi} Underhill, 48.

^{vii} Jeff Reed, *A.R.M.* (paper presented to Hillside Covenant Church, Walnut Creek, California, January, 2000), 3.

CHAPTER TWO

NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other?

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

As we turn our attention to the worship of the New Testament, we should look initially at Jesus Christ himself as an example of, and model for, appropriate worship decisions. Jesus clearly supported the pattern of Jewish worship—this Old Testament pattern that has just been outlined. Jesus, however, brought that pattern into a new context, which required its transformation and development. We see in Jesus a ‘reinterpreting’ of the old ways rather than a complete eradication of them.ⁱ

This re-ordering is marked by several factors. The interaction of God with his people resulted in more spontaneity than rigidity. Prayer rather than sacrifice was one characteristic. New Testament worship was led more by laity than by priests. Preaching essentially replaced ceremony. Outward displays became an expression of inward piety, and complexity gave way to simplicity. These changes will be obviously displayed as we progress through yet another equation.

Urgency marked the ethos of the early Church. There was no denying that the events surrounding Holy Week catapulted Jesus’ disciples and other believers into a frenzied ‘hurry up and wait’ mode! This intensity was to set the tone for generations of believing Christians as their existence was a dynamic mix of intense activity and prolonged patience. The anticipation of the extension of Christ’s work through them

coupled with the difficulty of extreme confusion produced an environment of anxious wondering.

<p>New Testament Worship as...</p>

<p>Urgent</p>

As the Church progressed in the first centuries after the visit of Christ on this earth, the urgency with which it grew was exacerbated by two very, very important factors.

First, the Church was *persecuted* mercilessly on all sides. This was the true immediacy of their condition. As representatives of Christ himself, the worshippers of the early Church were pursued and antagonized by those in disagreement with their beliefs. Of all the marks of early Christianity, this unfortunate fact is perhaps the most significant with regard to how they did what they did. Though the early Christian was to endure persecution with patience, the environment was most certainly not amenable to that possibility. Countless New Testament passages refer directly to the importance of persevering for the sake of the promised victory through Christ.

Related to this persecution and perseverance was the fact that the early believers truly thought that this promise, this return of Christ, and the fulfillment of his reign was close at hand. Weeping would endure for the night but would be fully rewarded with a morning of joy. It was expected that just as Christ had come to the earth and ascended into heaven he would again immediately establish his earthly presence for the fulfillment of his cause. The key word that describes this activity is

parousia, meaning “presence.”ⁱⁱ The ‘surprising’ turn of events in the life of the Messiah did not dissuade his followers from trusting in his eventual, complete, powerful rise to prominence.

The perception of the *parousia* that was held by Christ’s hopeful followers carries with it two important ramifications: (a) their present suffering had an eternal purpose; (b) those who had not yet been received into the faithful fellowship must learn of the truths of Christ and accept his ways in order to avoid the impending judgment and destruction. Persecution and the *parousia* combined to create an urgent atmosphere for the forming Christian community, an urgency that was both unavoidable and necessary.

New Testament Worship as...

Urgent (persecution + *parousia*)

Such urgency required the Church to abide by certain values and standards in order to keep their perspective and mission intact. Ferdinand Hahn effectively reminds us of the need of the disciples to be bound to “Jesus’ ministry and the ongoing eschatological events.”ⁱⁱⁱ The disciples were strongly committed not only to Jesus’ message, but also to his death, resurrection and promise. This attendance could only come about by their *dependence* on God’s continually present work within them.

New Testament Worship as...

Urgent (persecution + *parousia*) + Dependence

The dependence of early believers on the life-giving presence of Jesus Christ was by design and by demand. For the good of the Church, this dependence contained within it a key element for the effective functioning of God's people. This was no less than the power of the *Holy Spirit* working in and through them. The eternal plan of God also precipitated a response in the formation of the Church to the many options by which it could organize itself.

If we go back a step, we gain further perspective into this first group of Christians and the design of God for their existence. We recognize the event of Pentecost itself as solidifying for this new movement—an obvious starting point, a birthing moment for the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit made manifest in this experiential way brought about a dramatic transformation in the remnant of faithful. They became bold, insightful, and strong. They sensed the comfort of God. They found unity in God. They gained wisdom into the purpose of God, which transformed them into a dynamic world-changing force. The entire book of Acts recounts the fulfilled potential of these missionaries, from this initial moment on.

The demand for dependence also came about as a result of remarkable growth. Several paradoxical issues combine to typify this New Testament *development*. The New Testament Church experienced cohesion in many ways. This unity had a tremendous effect upon its surrounding environs. The expansion of the kingdom of God was a unique result of this internal, somewhat protective, togetherness. A related paradox relates to the inclusion of 'outsiders' because of an 'insider' mentality. The mission of the New Testament Church was also enhanced and enabled by the self-protection that the Church required as a result of outside opposition.

The incredible growth of the Church brought about unique challenges in its formation. I Corinthians 3.9 speaks to the early Church concept of ‘fellow workers’ (*synergoi*), which “reflects a cooperative working relationship among the respective agents such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the agent acting alone.”^{iv} But this cooperation is obviously more easily said than done. Leaders faced many difficulties, within and without their circles of worship. (One example of the complexity of challenge is the diversity of New Testament accounts regarding the leadership of the Church. Virtually all portions of the New Testament contain varying nuances, according to their occasions and authorship.)^v The tendency to organize the organism is not necessarily a new idea, and dependence on the Holy Spirit was paramount for continued growth in insight and direction.

New Testament Worship as...

Urgent (persecution + *parousia*) + Dependence (Holy Spirit + development)

The *most important truth that can be gleaned* from studying the worship of the New Testament is that urgent dependence required *focus*. Today some would call it vision. Some might call it purpose. But only those who would call Jesus Christ the sole focus of their energy would gain the right to be part of a world-altering and world-saving event—the inception and growth of the Community in Christ. They absolutely had to find their own identity as a worshipping people in the “Christ event; the identity of the man Jesus with the risen Lord.”^{vi}

New Testament Worship as...

Urgent (persecution + *parousia*) + Dependence (Holy Spirit + development) = *focus*

The biblical foundation for the indigenous worship voice can be summed up in the completion of the equation:

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive (recognition and gratitude) + Sacrifice (obedience + offering) = *unselfish*

New Testament Worship as...

Urgent (persecution and *parousia*) + Dependence (Holy Spirit + development) = *focus*

Biblical worship of God finds its foundation in the faith community of the Old Testament. It was a responsive people—recognizing God’s character by his initiative and action and displaying that recognition in gratitude. Their worship was punctuated by sacrifice—the obedient offering of their very lives. Old Testament worship can only be described as *unselfish*.

New Testament believers continued the worship standards that were initiated by Christ by reframing Old Testament guidelines. Their worship developed in an urgently dependent manner. Because of external threats (persecution) and internal expectation (the eschatological hope of the *parousia*), and because of the powerful infusion of the work of the Holy Spirit in its midst, the New Testament movement of God experienced rapid development. This took the form of rapid numerical growth and consequential organizational formation. In order to maintain some semblance of

order and purpose, it was imperative that New Testament believers kept the work and Person of Jesus Christ as their *focus*.

Unselfish focus denotes the lasting concept of the Community (unselfish) in Christ (focus).

Old Testament Worship as...

Responsive (recognition and gratitude) + Sacrifice (obedience + offering) = *unselfish*

New Testament Worship as...

Urgent (persecution and *parousia*) + Dependence (Holy Spirit + development) = *focus*

Community in Christ

ⁱ Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 39.

ⁱⁱ *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: 1962, J.D. Douglas, ed.) states that the eschatological hope of all believers is that Christ would “come in power and glory (Matthew 24.27) to destroy antichrist and evil (II Thessalonians 2.8), to raise the righteous dead (I Corinthians 15.23) and to gather the redeemed (Matthew 24.31; II Thessalonians 2.1).”

ⁱⁱⁱ Ferdinand Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973), 33.

^{iv} Craig Erickson, *Participating in Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press), 15.

^v One example of this diversity is reflected in the following diagram:

Matrix of New Testament Structural Thought

	Pastorals	Colossians/Ephesians	Acts	Petrine
Title	Structure	Body	Spirit	Belonging
Characteristics	--pastoral supervision --accurate doctrine	--sharing in Christ --beyond human	--crisis continuity --future history	--dignity --identity
Strengths	--integration --apostolicity	--true love --holiness	--continuity	--new home, family
Weaknesses	--blandness --lack of creativity, leading of the Holy Spirit	--non-confrontational (reform, behavior) --weak local church	--triumphalism	--exclusivism
References	Titus 1.5,7	Ephesians 4.15-16	Acts 1.11 I Timothy 5.2	Mark 2.17

^{vi} James, J.D. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1977), 227.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNITY IN CHRIST

This love loves what its love loves.

Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship*

Because the purpose of the biblical message is not the exaltation of self but rather brings about a responsive sacrifice for the glory of God alone, and because the inevitable result of urgency is a concerted, imperative centering on the work of Christ Jesus, the arena for God's activity must be the Community in Christ. Community in Christ is best defined by understanding the nuances of four New Testament words and their associated connotations:

1. *Ekklesia*

This is the most common term for the church in the New Testament. It refers not only to the actual gathering of the people, but it carries the theologically important connotation of being different than the culture from which it is formed. It speaks of all of those who have been 'called out' of the grasp of this world and have committed themselves to the purpose of Christ. *Ekklesia* is the newly formed Community in Christ. "To discover the living Christ in the church is to take one's place in the *ecclesia ecclesians*, the church at its creative point, the church coming into history with its message and demonstration of renewal; the church not dead but living, not a cluster of symbols...but itself the continuation of God's sacramental incursion into the needy human scene."ⁱ The advent of the 'organism' of the church ushered into the world a secondary Incarnation, as the plan of God found its

representation in this new community of faith. Individuals who agreed to the claims of Christ found their way to shared expression and experience. *Ekklesia* refers to the local, gathered community, as well as the broader collection of all believers.ⁱⁱ

2. *Koinonia*

Perhaps the word known best for ‘fellowship’ in the Christian community, *koinonia* is generally thought of in terms of closeness or friendship. To a certain point this is true, but the significant depth of this word, however, extends to a deeper level, as it literally means, “to share with someone in something, to give someone a share of something.”ⁱⁱⁱ Even this sharing does not come as a dramatic surprise, particularly in the context of Acts 2. The mutual sharing of material goods was a standard of the early Christian believers. (Indeed, mutual sharing in the sense of *koinonia* eventually gave way to the organization of the *diakonia*—diaconate—so the most accurate meaning of *koinonia* must be understood not in that type of sacrificial giving alone, but in the context of the believers’ being in one heart and mind as seen in Acts 4.32-37.)^{iv}

It is interesting to note that this New Testament expression of community carries with it all of the Old Testament worship qualities of recognition, thanksgiving, obedience, sacrifice and offering. The ‘something’ that was shared by the members of the new community was something beyond them, a greater cause. Once this was seen and understood, they were able to frame the rest of their existence by it. Gratitude became the overarching theme of their interaction, rather than wrangling and jockeying for position and favor. In the healthiest representations of God’s plan

for his church, obedient offering and sacrifice overcame the focus on the personal aspects of spiritual development. Shareholding was automatic and expected.

3. *Synerchesthai* and *synagesthai*

Synerchesta and *synagesthai* refer to the act of coming together, or being gathered together.^v Though we are part of the Community in Christ simply because of the acceptance of God as mediated through the work of Jesus Christ, we function as that community as one gathered people. We join together in order to worship. As we remember that unselfishness is a lasting component of the faith community we cannot in any way dispute the import of this coming together. One might ask if we worship as community because of our need to be together or if we come together essentially for the purpose of meeting God in worship.^{vi} Is not one able to meet God privately? Can't a person find God in solitude just as well as in public? The establishment of the people of God, according to all of Scripture, was never intended to pull people apart. There were times when specific leaders might sequester themselves for one reason or another, but it was always in order to bring something back to the people for their good.

4. *Oikodome*

Oikodome means for the good of all—for the upbuilding that comes through the ministration of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians is the most obvious pattern for this type of communal thinking. (Cf. 12.7, 14.5, 14.12, 14.26) A quick look at the occasion of that letter brings about the clear reminder that growth, development, direction and progress did not come through individual posturing and agendas, but through the unified desire to be with and for each other.

This brief study of the biblical Community in Christ shows us that we first find our common place as fellow beneficiaries. It is this presupposition of ‘whose’ we are that frames the ‘what’ and ‘why’ we are. Only in its proper context can the Community in Christ find its purpose. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written of the difference between our organization and our belonging—that the coming together and subsequent ministry of the people (in his context the intention of holding all things in common) must follow the participants’ inclusion in a broader sense: “(Because) God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients.”^{vii} Our position as members of the Community in Christ may bring reason and privilege to our lives, but they are secondary to the grace of God by which we stand in that position.

As thankful recipients we are able to look past our own tendencies and tastes in order to recognize the partnership we share with others. As stated by Phil Zylla, “Authentic community will include the constant awareness of the subtle influence of prejudice and exclusivity in our fellowship.”^{viii} Just as the early church experienced growing parameters in terms of who might be integrated, so we must remember that being a part of the Community in Christ means accepting those who may not think, look and act as we do. As this awareness was modeled by early church Christians, perhaps our current environment can provide an opportunity for a shared vision that will continue “bringing us together, breaking down prejudices, uniting us to common history.”^{ix} Commonality is not obvious in the healthy Community in Christ simply because of whose it is, but by whom it includes.

This lack of selfishness renders us ready for the purpose of service. As we realize the mercy that has predicated our togetherness, and as our togetherness is broadly welcoming, we have absolutely no choice but to be agents of mercy that carry the message of God gladly to those who are in need, whether they be fellow believers or the curious outside our fellowship. Zylla continues, “Striving with God will include the reminder that we are called to spiritual, not human, community. That we have no direct access to our brother or sister but that authentic spiritual love leaves the other free, takes the towel and basin, and is attentive only to the will of Christ.”^x There is a direct correlation between how aware we are of God’s presence in us and how willing we are to be that presence to those who may desperately need it. The Community that finds itself truly in Christ will continually be aware of his presence and purpose among it—paying close attention only to the risen Christ through the guidance and insight of the Holy Spirit working within it.

Walter Wangerin observes, “At the center of the fullness of divine revelation is Jesus. At the center of our right relationship with God is Jesus Christ. Jesus: the person and the work he’s done. He! Not some teaching of his. Not his model for our living and our behavior. Not his poverty, not his meekness and lowliness of heart, not a single one of his condemnations, not the symbol someone makes him for some other thing.”^{xi} In Christ alone the worshipping community finds reason, strength, direction, and hope. In Christ alone will believers be able to carry on in the midst of troubling times and confusion. In Christ alone will the weary people of God be able to move forward. In Christ alone will fellow pilgrims find the wisdom necessary to

find which path to take together. In Christ alone will spiritual seekers be able to remember the promises of God on their behalf.

The Community in Christ has been saved together, unified together, bound together in common purpose. The Community in Christ is thankful for its establishment by God the Father, aware of its meaning because of Christ the Son, and ready for its mission because of its dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Robert Webber writes, “Worship celebrates Christ, which takes community.”^{xii} He goes on to compare the familial celebration of Christ (what is supposed to happen in church!) to birthday parties and the like—which cannot be effective in isolation! Because this is true and because it is reflective of the deep desire of God for his worshipping people, the Community in Christ has been established in antiquity, has developed historically, and exists in modernity. As we have considered the biblical precedent for, and now turn to the progression of God’s unselfish and focused people, we will now see what pertinent and critical information a clearer understanding of the Community in Christ will bring to our worship discussion.

ⁱ Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1959), 61.

ⁱⁱ Robert Webber, ed., *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, Volume IV—The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Robert Webber, ed., 146-147) subsumes under the general heading of *ekklesia* specific terms such as *Christianoï* (Christians), *he hodos* (The Way), *adelphoi* (the brothers), *hoi hagioi* (the saints), *qodesh* (holiness), *paneguris*, Heb. (festal gathering).

ⁱⁱⁱ F. Hauck, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume 3*, G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-1976), 804-809.

^{iv} David Peterson, *Engaging With God* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishin, 1993), 154.

^v Ferdinand Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973), 36.

^{vi} Pastors with a strong bent toward evangelism have debated strong worship leaders over this *a priori* question as well: Do we worship in order to evangelize or do we reach out to broaden our worship experience? The leader who is focused on the saving of the lost and the person who desires to further the ‘highest calling’ of worship often find themselves working together in dynamic tension. The

modern Christian community is much indebted to Sally Morgenthaler for her willingness to fuse these often conflicting purposes in her book *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers Into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995). There is also great interest in fellowship for the purpose of outreach; that is, intentional living communities which have the expressed purpose of the advancement of society at large. (One such organization is Jesus People USA, Chicago, Illinois.) Worship, fellowship, outreach and nurture all have a dynamic, reciprocal connection. Perhaps a *series* of works could/should be written about all of these interactions?

^{vii} Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1954), 28.

^{viii} Phil Zylla, *A Theology of Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in the Church* (paper presented as synopsis for DMN542, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, June 21-23, 2001) 2.

^{ix} Robert Webber, *Signs of Wonder* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1989), 11.

^x Zylla, 4.

^{xi} Walter Wangerin, "Jesus, our true center" *The Lutheran*, September, 1999, 6.

^{xii} Webber, 64.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COMMUNITY IN CHRIST IN HISTORY

Those who consider centuries are not easily upset by recent developments.

Bernhard Lang, *Sacred Games*

According to Robert Webber, “Christian worship has grown across the centuries in response to all sorts of stimuli and pressures.”ⁱ There have clearly been gigantic, sequential, epochal shifts in worship practice. How then do Old Testament *responsive sacrifice* and New Testament *urgent dependence* consistently play themselves out historically in the worship life of the Christian community, and how does that help build a theological case for the indigenous worship voice? What can we trust? How do the changing winds and shifting sands of our historical experience keep us from straying too far from a godly model? What tradition is most true to a biblical standard?

Worship has been expressed throughout history in many ways, often precipitated by a reactionary posture. Several worship components have evolved and lasted through the ages and continue to provide the framework for most of our current experience.ⁱⁱ These are elements that can be reconsidered and reformed in our current environment, and they clearly fall into three categories: presentational, presentational/participative, and participative. **Presentational** aspects of the worship experience include what happens ‘up front.’ Most parishioners will not directly participate in the expression of these elements, rather they are recipients of what is produced on the stage or chancel and in the room. The primary presentational parts

of a worship service will probably include the various symbols that are used in worship, as well as the preaching of the sermon. **Presentation/participative** acts are those that could stand alone as presentational or are used to invite and engage the congregation in some sort of expression, such as speaking (prayer and praise) and song. **Participative** worship refers to that which is entered into by the congregation. These are the elements that cannot be offered without some kind of community involvement. Particular to this category is the administration and use of the sacraments, most notably baptism and communion. Certainly there is often overlap between the different disciplines. There is no reason that the sermon cannot be an interactive experience, for instance. Every worshipper should not simply view the objectivity of the artistic rendering, but should enter into the symbolic experience. These generalizations respond not necessarily to how it could be, but rather to how our worship is generally practiced.ⁱⁱⁱ

Presentation

Symbol

Sometimes it is simply impossible to put into words what we deeply feel or believe about our great God. Our written and spoken word seems to fall short and we must turn to other media for a deeper connection with or understanding of his ways. This is the place of symbol in the worshipping church.^{iv} This includes the physicality of the worship space from the architecture to the art, from the furniture to vestments. We often see various worship elements and expressions centered on specific symbols. For instance, the open Bible on the communion table stands as a testimony to the

inspired word of God; the table itself as a symbol of our community in Christ. We generally place the Cross of Christ as central to our worship experience. Other examples of biblical symbols abound in physical objects, buildings, physical acts, rituals or even names. They are meant to speak of a reality beyond themselves.

Symbol as liturgical art—particularly sculpture—is sometimes associated with the dangerous aura of idolatry.^v It has been a source of contention between the Western Church and the Eastern Church, as well as between the Reformers and Roman Catholics. The danger of idolatry has always surrounded symbols—a danger that has manifested itself throughout history.

Sermon

Preaching is generally recognized as the cornerstone to the building of a worship event and may contain teaching, moral guidance and affect.^{vi} Early Christian preaching contained necessary encouragement, but since the time of Origen it has been the practice of Christian leaders to *promote saving knowledge through the exposition of the Word*. Every type of reformation activity has had associated with it the quality of preaching that is marked by preachers who “have considered themselves doctors whose advice functions as medicine that heals moral, social, and spiritual ills.”^{vii} Great evangelizers such as Jonathan Edwards and Billy Graham have maximized the affective quality of preaching by inviting listeners to enter personally into the saving activity of Christ.

The historical tones of the Christian sermon have never altered its most important purpose—existing as a medium by which the revelation of God is somehow

grasped by the need of humankind. The ministry of preaching has always assisted people in “genuinely encountering God through his Word in a way that forms their lives.”^{viii} Ultimately, the process of presentational preaching culminates in the event in which preacher and listeners actively participate in the reciprocal communication of the grace of God as shown in Christ.

Presentational/Participative

Speaking (Praise and Prayer)

Because worship is communication, the spoken word takes a prominent place in its action. Simply put, presentational/participative praise includes gratitude, glory, and adoration. Thanksgiving particularly marked the emergence of the free church in the 17th century. As lay people began to experience freedom from the rule of the clergy, they exercised their democratic right to a voice by gratefully speaking of God’s faithfulness. We are accustomed to glorifying praise through our exposure to biblical texts, such as the Magnificat, and their continuance throughout history.

The content of prayer generally centers on the recognition of the greatness and goodness of God, confession of our unworthiness, thanksgiving for forgiveness, supplication for intervention, and intercession on behalf of others. Earliest records demonstrate that prayer was not an occasional experience, but punctuated the believer’s activity throughout her or his daily life. Constant prayer marked the life of the individual, but was also undertaken on a communal level. Historical references to the word ‘office’ mark the prayer life of the church. These were regular, daily services of prayer and praise which developed and grew particularly through the 4th

century.^{ix} Monastic life contained the ‘hours,’ which reflected a regular prayer life of the cloister. We have come to know this regularity in the words adopted by Benedictines in the 6th century: vespers, compline, nocturnes, lauds, prime, terce, sext, none.^x Thomas Cranmer is most notable for the place of prayer in worship because of his leadership in the development of the Book of Common Prayer, which was initially introduced in 1549 and revised in 1552. The most widely recognized prayer of our day is The Lord’s Prayer, which transcends denominational and even sacred/secular lines.

The comparison and contrast of praise and prayer is obvious, as one recognizes in the former more objectivity and ‘about’ language. The latter is somewhat subjective and punctuated by ‘to’ language. Each type of spoken word, however, seems to ring true to the believer because it is tangible, recognizable and easily expressible. Public prayer and praise can both be subsumed under the word *liturgy*, which incorporates the various ways in which we expound upon the message of the Scripture.

Song

As with the other worship elements, it is impossible to recount two thousand years of church music history in a document of this scope, but it suffices to note that the song of the Community in Christ has been generally marked by a dynamic *juxtaposition of worldly and ecclesiastical elements*. That which we as believers sometimes ‘borrow’ soon becomes our tradition. For instance, the 12th century saw the purity of harmony; the unity of melody as representative of God’s ‘one-ness’

supplanted by *organum*, the addition of melodies of an octave, perfect 5th or perfect 4th above or below the original melody. Martin Luther is well known for changing the order of the Catholic mass. *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* (O Sacred Head Now Wounded) was sung to the same tune as the madrigal that contained the words, “My peace of mind is shattered by a tender maiden’s charms.” The most staunch traditionalist would cite Bach as the preeminent church musician while perhaps at the same time not recognizing how progressive were his harmonic tendencies for his time. Thomas Dorsey ‘jammed with the boys’ on Saturday night and Methodist-ically played the organ on Sunday morning.^{xi} The song of the church is never fully written and evolves in interactive tension with the times.

The singing of the church has also been marked by both congregational and performance-oriented music. For instance, the medieval period was marked by clergy-dominated music, which was clearly eradicated by the work of the Reformers. Congregational involvement has not always been a given in church music.

Participative

Sacraments

When we speak of the sacraments we are considering the great mystery of grace and its reception by a needy faith community. But mystery that refers to meaning also refers to practice. What does it mean and how does it work to participate in and adopt an external, Christ-ordained sign, which points to the adoption of an inward, spiritual situation? Answering this question begins to occur in the actions of baptism and communion, which stand out from other rites such as

marriage and confirmation, as they are clearly connected to the injunctions of Christ. In keeping with Old Testament rites, baptism and communion are the rather obligatory activities. As Christ has promised to be with his followers throughout their mission, he has reminded them not only to seek and save the lost, but to baptize as well (Matthew 28.19-20). This same outward posture is repeated in the implication that the taking of the Lord's Supper be done in remembrance of him and all that he was about (I Corinthians 10.16).

Baptism, understood in the broadest of terms, agrees with the standard set forth by Luther, specifically that it marks the receiving of a grateful people of regenerative grace through the work of the Holy Spirit. In that case it is appropriate for adult believers and for infants alike, as it celebrates the *prevenient* grace of God. The use of water symbolizes a complete cleansing through this grace. It is the point of entry into the Christian church, regardless of form. It requires some sort of spiritual preparation and assent to the faith on the part of the baptized. In the early church the catechumenate was established in order to ensure that newly enlightened believers were prepared for the faithful life to follow. The process of baptism coincided with Lent and the culmination took place at Easter. Eventually, as infant baptism increased, the catechumenate gave way to the process of Confirmation, as young people would give public testimony to their growing understanding and become accountable for their decisions.

Throughout history the worshipping community has debated the efficacy of baptism. Some traditions (Orthodox, Western and Roman Catholic) view baptism as a saving act that washes away the guilt of sin. Others (Reformed) consider baptism a

confirmation of salvation. Hence, almost every denomination and movement retains a particularly nuanced view of baptism. Nevertheless, there is an emergent ecumenism occurring that recognizes again the commonality of the sacrament as opposed to the many tangential idiosyncrasies of various groups.

Holy Communion (Eucharist, or *eucharistia*—the blessing prayer) represents for most of us the broken body and spilt blood of Jesus Christ.^{xii} In the context of the gathered worship community it also represents the gathering of individual believers in harmony; those who break one loaf of bread together participate in the breaking of the single loaf of Christian history.^{xiii} By the 4th century the form of the Eucharist meal had taken its general form. In later years, as authority became more Roman-centered, a more standardized liturgy was attached to the Eucharist event. Theological debate arose in the late Middle Ages over the meaning of the Eucharist elements. The classic formulation by Thomas Aquinas (13th century) of the concept of *transubstantiation* (the substance of the bread and cup is transformed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ) eventually gave way to Luther's *consubstantiation* (the presence of Christ) and the other reformers' *symbolic* stance. Nevertheless, this sacrament is the quintessential drawing in of the faith community and is the most dramatic example of participative worship. We participate with each other and we participate in the presence of the living Christ, as stated by the final draft of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry: "The Eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real Presence. Christ fulfills in a variety of ways his promise to be always with his own...But Christ's mode of presence in the Eucharist is

unique. Christ said over the bread and the wine of the Eucharist: ‘This is my body...This is my blood.’ What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the Eucharist is celebrated. The church confesses Christ’s real, living, acting presence in the Eucharist.”^{xiv}

Throughout history, these worship elements have been molded and shaped and re-worked time and again as the Christian faith community attempts to give voice to its desperate need for continuing connection with God. It seems that their combination often reflects the importance of the priesthood of all believers and the occasional threats to it. These presentational and participative qualities mark our modern worship and have stood the test of time. This brief explanation of their development and use will inform our discussion of the indigenous worship voice as we consider their congruence with and effectiveness for our individual situations.

ⁱ Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 188.

ⁱⁱ Sometimes these acts are referred to as ordinances, ritual or cultus, but they all attend to the revealed plan of God for humankind as mysteriously fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

ⁱⁱⁱ Absolutely the finest compilation of the various acts of worship is found in *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, Volume VI*, Robert Webber, ed. (Nashville, TN: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).

^{iv} “Symbols are tokens or signs (Hebrew *‘ot*, Greek *semeion*) that point beyond themselves to another, often abstract, reality that is difficult or impossible to represent any other way. A symbol can be a person, object, place, or act—anything that conveys meaning about the concept it represents.” Robert Webber, ed. *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, Volume I* (Peabody, MA: 1993), 38.

^v James White, *An Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1980), 119.

^{vi} Most people draw a simple division between the proclamation of the gospel (*kerygma*) and instruction (*didache*) without considering preaching as a comprehensive event. In the worship environment preaching has been generally relegated to the post-worship slot in the morning hour rather than being allowed to inform and be shaped by all other worship elements.

^{vii} Bernhard Lang, *Sacred Games* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1997), 3.

^{viii} Mel Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 118.

^{ix} White, 124.

^x White, 129.

^{xi} Jack Ballard provides a more detailed description of these events in his article entitled *History Lesson* (Kiwibird Creative Services, 1996).

^{xii} Robert Webber, ed. *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, Volume VI* (Nashville, TN: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 208.

^{xiii} Consider the response of Justin to 2nd century questioners regarding the practice of Eucharist and its appropriateness: “And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in the cities or the country and the memoirs of the apostles or writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites us to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the amen; the distribution and reception of the consecrated elements by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons. Those who prosper, and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he chooses to. What is collected is deposited with the president, and he takes care of orphans and widows... This food we call eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true and has received the washings of forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God’s word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.” (Justin, *Apology I*, 67,66).

^{xiv} Eucharist, par. 13.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COMMUNITY IN CHRIST IN CULTURE

The NT evidence cannot be made normative, but...must provide a model for renovation...in the face of all adherence to a later, historically developed form of worship, in the face of all traditionalism and legalism in liturgical matters. The proper form of worship is always proper only to its own age, because only thus can the missionary function of worship and its function in equipping the faithful for service in the world be taken seriously.

Ferdinand Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church*

In order to most efficiently present a complete context by which to theologically consider the viability of the indigenous worship voice, it is necessary to briefly explore the important cultural dynamic of postmodernism.

Postmodernism refers to our post-Rationalistic, current environment of deeply questioning, spiritually hungry, respectfully rebellious society of meaning-seekers. It is marked by a highly individualistic approach to religious thought that frees up the meaning-seeker to find her or his specific path to spiritual understanding and fulfillment. Postmodernism refers to the fact that our current reality does not seem to make great rational sense anymore. Our perception of the world around us shows us many “compounding anomalies” and inconsistencies.ⁱ (Speaking analogously, we might remember our parents saying, “Because I said so,” which does not entirely suffice in answering life’s hardest questions!) Postmodernism denotes ‘after-Modernism’ and speaks to a dubious bent that is pluralistic and relativistic, reflective of a confusion regarding all that appears even remotely human-made. This includes cultures, values and beliefs.ⁱⁱ In fact, the postmodern ethos is typified by its understanding of reason and truth as “subversive political disguises for power and

oppression.”ⁱⁱⁱ Christian doctrine, then, is subject to intense scrutiny and ‘tried and true’ forms are up for questioning. Scripture is viewed less as *what it is about* than *what it is for*. The postmodern generation is continually asking the ‘so what’ question about the gospel of Christ and it is expecting to find the answer not through a mechanistic, hierarchical order, but through the intersection of the Christian story with its own experience. The postmodern mindset is not based on an intended ‘deconstruction’ of the faith, however; it is bent on “reclamation--but only after the devastation of an engagement that destroys.”^{iv}

Postmodernism is partly fueled by the fact that our social perspective is drastically marked by a diversification in its racial, demographic, and economic definition. Charles Colson connects such pluralism to technological innovation, a primary cause of the postmodernism mindset. His contention is that the woes and weaknesses of Western society feed a global malaise because the lesser standards, strong selfishness, and cynicism of the West have insidiously found their way into other cultures.^v The resultant mixing of cultures, thoughts and ideas gives way to ideological liberty. Old platitudes are at best nebulous; at worst, ridiculous.

Postmodernism is aided by political developments. Internationalism and multi-culturalism are bringing about an inclusive liberalism that allows everyone to participate in an emerging free-for-all.

Therefore, people are seeking something meaningful by which to anchor their existence. For many, the healthiest quality they can find is meaningful relationships. Others translate that desire into a spiritual realm and are seeking a God of friendship.

Unfortunately, this is often expressed in consumerism and ‘feel-good’ religion, though that truly belies the underlying, desperate need.

Christian art is somewhat suspect as well. Postmodern viewer Craig Barnes puts it this way: “...(We) have tried to capture God in our highly sophisticated dry theologies, in our deader-than-a-doornail beautiful churches, and in our prophetic statements on public issues. But all we’ve really captured is ourselves with a few exclamation marks.”^{vi} Over and against this paradigm of somewhat aesthetic-yet-static, run-of-the-mill activity of our churches, the postmodern eyes are seeking something broader, deeper, more full, and more meaningful. Postmodern eyes “seek stylistic diversity not to grab attention, but to challenge canonical traditions.”^{vii}

Finally, most Christian denominations are not providing adequate assistance for their churches that are trying to function well amidst the tumult of postmodern challenges. They seem to be functioning out of fear and protection rather than vision and risk. They have become rigidly entrenched either in their antiquated structures or in systems of expedience. Their own identity crises must be minimized before they can ever hope to address those of their constituents.

In the current postmodern environment, many questions and uncertainties face the future of Western Christian worship. On the negative side, we may continue to see ‘political correctness,’ increasing liberalism, and consumerism (i.e. a ‘Giving God’), artistic stagnation, and the growing obsolescence of denominations due to their rigid entrenchment and lack of defined identity. Positively, the Christian community will be held accountable by postmodern cynicism and lack of trust. We will also see a diversifying demographic and subsequent universalism (i.e. ‘shrinking

world'), an emphasis on a relational Atonement, confusion about 'effective' worship styles and the open sharing of ideas, and a growing demand for worship leaders and their training.

Our postmodern culture presents a unique dilemma for the Community in Christ. The ways in which it might respond to the opportunities at hand in this 'up-for-grabs' environment could be described as perpetuation (the same old same old for fear of change), confusion (an inability to find its way through the craziness), or expansion (a capturing of the moment for the sake of the kingdom of God.)

Perpetuation may take one of two forms. First, because the 'worship market' continues to drive the motivation of the local church and 'formula' takes precedence over the growth of the indigenous worship voice, denominations will continue to answer hard worship questions with easy answers. Consequently, worship leaders may be less interested in integrity and authenticity than in success and numerical growth. Or the faith community will fear the ramifications of embarking on an adventurous path, thus perpetuating the status quo, and people outside of the faith community who are wary of the institutional church will continue to chase other ideas of what seems true and right. Ironically, these opposites (trying what is trendy and perpetuating what is antiquated) have the same boring, uneventful, terminal result. So a broad chasm will form between the church and the world, and application and relevance will be extremely damaged.

Confusion will show itself as the Community in Christ continues to wonder why something is missing. This has nothing to do with generation or style. People of all ages and forms will wonder why the prevailing, unoriginal platitudes seem to offer

less of the Christian life than they expect. The postmodern question will not be limited to the tattooed and pierced Gen-X deconstructionist individual, but will continue to expand and permeate the hearts and minds of all who are sincerely seeking a deeper worship experience. Again, ironically and unfortunately, what seems prudent and prosperous at this moment will inevitably warrant a radical transformation as current questionable strategies make less and less sense.

Expansion will find the Community in Christ taking to heart the advice that it should not “linger too long over the carnage of a Christendom that is now collapsing, but instead (should) engage boldly in the task of untangling (itself) from the vestiges of such a Christendom.”^{viii} It could be that the time is perfect for the Community in Christ to experience dramatic expansion unlike it has ever seen before. Undoubtedly it will come about in surprising, shocking, unsuspecting ways. It cannot be quantified. It cannot be planned. It will not be manipulated. And, as we will quickly see, it will not be by human ingenuity and devices.

Godly worshippers need not fear culture. They must embrace it and vigorously pursue the opportunities for worship development that are directly at hand—by eradicating their continual blundering and by opening their collective eyes to the surprising provision that God has promised specifically for our time and place. Postmodernism could be considered a lacking design of humankind, and it is not only to be challenged by the worshipping community but also, ironically, mysteriously and paradoxically, redeemed by it. Herein lies the potential of the indigenous worship

voice, as it recognizes the fact that community is comprised of a consortium of
 ‘solitudes’ which share, at least, the trappings of the culture of which they are a part.

ⁱ Stanley Grenz, *A Primer On Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 55.

ⁱⁱ Chuck Smith, Jr. “Riding the Whirlwind,” *Worship Leader* Vol. 20, no. 5 (September/October 2000), 20.

ⁱⁱⁱ Larry Shelton, “A Wesleyan/Holiness Agenda for the Twenty-First Century Wesleyan Theological Society” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 33, no. 2, Fall, 1998, 67-100.

^{iv} Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 26.

^v Charles Colson, *How Shall We Then Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishing Co., 1999), 25.

^{vi} Craig Barnes, *Yearning*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 60.

^{vii} Craig Van Gelder, ed., *Confident Witness—Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 26.

^{viii} Van Gelder, 65.

CHAPTER SIX

THEOLOGY OF THE INDIGENOUS WORSHIP VOICE

When God is put first in worship, and when a worshipping congregation awakens to a sense of the holy Presence in their midst, they will not countenance silly sensationalism.

Craig Erickson, *Participating in Worship*

The following chart assimilates our biblical, historical and cultural findings:

Category	Data	Findings	What it says about us:	What it says about God:
Biblical	OT NT	Responsive Sacrifice Urgent Dependence	Community in Christ	Transcendent Transcendent/ Immanent
Historical	Presentational Presentational and Participative Participative	Symbol Sermon Speaking (praise, prayer) Song Sacraments	Our attempt to give voice to our desperate need for continuing connection! How do we say this thing we want to say?	Immanent
Cultural	Postmodernism (social, political, relational, artistic denominational)	Perpetuation, confusion or expansion	Everything is up for grabs.	Consistent



Category	Data	Findings	What it says about us:	What it says about God:
biblical	internal and	process and	needy and	transcendent
historical	external	dynamism	unsure	immanent
cultural				consistent

What does this mean?

As we consider where and how we began (biblical), where and what we've been (historical), and where and who we are (cultural), we can clearly see that we as worshippers have been affected by both internal and external factors alike. Internally, we are constantly wavering between faith and doubt, between conviction and question. Externally, we have known both liberty and bondage, freedom and imposition. All in all, we are a people in process, dynamically finding our way to some sense of equilibrium or belonging.

If our history as worshippers has been a desperate attempt at living out biblical injunction, and if our present experience questions our historical ineptitude, then what does this say about us, about our God, and what does it mean for the worshipping Community in Christ and how does it possibly demand the use of an indigenous worship voice? What is the connection? What's the point?

Here is a list of some of the words contained in the aforementioned text which have described us to this point: disassociated, shackled, snooty, hobbled, frenetic, succumbing, fragmented, soul searching, lonely, fearful, seeking, warring, questioning, dubious, pluralistic, relativistic, selfish, ridiculous, unaware, isolated, defiant, complacent, stagnant.

People often say, "He just doesn't get it!" They're right! We *can't* get it!

We just cannot depend on our selves!

We must turn elsewhere.

We must remember our Father God and his absolute character: In light of our biblical, historical and cultural practice, we recognize God as transcendent, immanent, and consistent.

Our responsive state speaks to the initiative of God. Our sacrifice of ourselves points to his gracious willingness to accept our offering. Over and against the urgency of our existence lies the peaceful sovereignty of God, while our dependence on him shows his care. Clearly he transcends all of our greatest ability to grasp, explain, or otherwise reach him.

Yet a remarkable transformation in our position occurs in the Incarnation of his being as expressed in Jesus Christ. Suddenly, that which was once considered beyond all limits of comprehension has come near and the transcendent has (by his choice, because he is transcendent) become immanent, that is, close and present to us. (A demonstration of our attempts to believe in the immanence of God lies in our artistic renderings of worship which are offered for his sake. Indeed, art is not art until it has been received and our limited expression cannot be received by God unless he is willing to draw near to us in some sort of condescending fashion.) Nevertheless, we are pulled into this great mystery by the wrangling of our own minds and hearts over how this can possibly be. Our finiteness shows itself most obviously here. We cannot help wondering, and this wonder takes the form of great unknowing and confusion.

Once again, this transcendent, immanent, consistent God is the One who turned our existence upside-down by the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, and *provided a way to power through weakness by the lasting gift of his Holy Spirit*. Without the

work of the Holy Spirit in us we would be unable to grasp the reality of Christ.

Unable even to begin to conceptualize the meaning of the work of Christ, we would not be able to put expression to it, nor would we be able to discern its lasting effect on or connection with our current state. *It is only by the ministration of the Holy Spirit of God working on our behalf and in spite of us that we have any hope to pursue a worship life that is in any way pleasing or acceptable to God.*

Category	Data	Findings	What it says about us:	What it says about God:
Biblical	OT NT	Responsive Sacrifice Urgent Dependence	Community in Christ	Transcendent Transcendent/ Immanent
Historical	Presentational Presentational and Participative Participative	Symbol Sermon Speaking (praise, prayer) Song Sacraments	Our attempt to give voice to our desperate need for continuing connection! How do we say this thing we want to say?	Immanent
Cultural	Postmodernism (social, political, relational, art)	Perpetuation, confusion or expansion	Everything is up for grabs.	Consistent



Category	Data	Findings	What it says about us:	What it says about God:
biblical historical cultural	internal and external	process and dynamism	needy and unsure	transcendent immanent consistent

▲ — Holy Spirit — ▲
as Mediator

Because the work of the Holy Spirit frames our worship experience, a great paradox identifies the indigenous worship voice. Only by giving up all of our “wish dreams”ⁱ and assumptions and *accepting the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit of God in us* are we even remotely able to begin to be whom we really are meant to be by the grace of God! Such an irony exists in our humble, non-controlling posture actually being the way to a full life as Community in Christ faithful! Indeed, there is no lasting purpose in our vain attempt to strategize, copy or otherwise manufacture a supposedly worthy “concoction for God.”ⁱⁱ The primary mark of willingness to employ the indigenous worship voice can only be defined as complete, total, and unequivocal submission to the Spirit of God.

We are no less than dependent on the Holy Spirit for our attendance to Jesus Christ, for the voice we need to express worship, and for the wherewithal to understand his hope for our future. Consequently, we are freed from the confines of our making and can truly release our clever manipulations and give up the pushing of our own agendas. And when we stop taking ourselves so seriously and just *be by belonging*, we can then begin to *do...by being* responsively sacrificial, urgently dependent, unselfishly focused, community serving worshippers of Christ Jesus.

Douglas Horton asserts, “Worship is the ritual re-enactment of our theology.”ⁱⁱⁱ Because we have come to a theological position that necessitates the purging of our pretense in favor of the mysterious action of God, our next step is to consider the actual ritual re-enactment of that stance. Defining that re-enactment in a new way is the remarkable concept of the indigenous worship voice, and it is to that worship approach which we now turn.

Each word in the phrase must be clearly defined. ‘Indigenous’ refers to everything that is brought forth that *captures the heart of the faith community* as it relates to God and his work among it. Indigenous must involve having a strong sense of where and how the Spirit of God is leading. It also speaks not only of what comes from the people within, but what conveys to the people without. Because culture is dynamic, so is anything that we might label indigenous. One cannot realistically think of indigenous as unique and native to the worshipping community alone without considering the inevitable process of the spiritually sensitive community’s enculturation to its surrounding ‘home.’^{iv}

According to Ilion Jones, “Worship is the apprehension of the mystical, contemporary comradeship of God in common life.”^v The activity of God exists. It is not possible to define that activity fully, but we as worshippers know that it is a present activity—here and now. By grace our worship experience is grasped by God himself, and we are the ones who are apprehended! Worship is reflective of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as it happens in this milieu in which we live. As we are pulled into the embrace of God, we fulfill our task by presenting an offering that fulfills the intent and practice of the Old Testament and the New Testament and the historical witness to the gospel of Christ. Worship is the ultimate goal of our faith, the releasing of our entire beings to the guidance and purpose of God, wherein our obedience is resigned to all that God might will.

‘Voice’ refers to the language in which all of our ritual re-enactment takes place. It is the collection of symbols which point to Something beyond our own understanding, including—but not limited to—words, pictures, songs, items,

architecture, and use of the body. Language speaks of the Incarnation of Christ—making the extraordinary something tangible in time and space. Incarnational language is accessible enough to be sensed while all the while speaking of an intangible Reality.

Now it might be important to look at what the indigenous worship voice is not. Some will use the indigenous worship voice as an opportunity to anthropomorphize God. Consider Douglas' account of such an activity: 'There is a temple I have visited in Madura, India, where the god is so indigenous as to be counted a kind of neighbor by the people. There the priests in midafternoon make a great beating of drums. Why? In order to wake up the god who like any wise person in the heart of the day has been taking his siesta.'^{vi}

A related danger lies in not finding the balance between what we know we can express and what we dare not attempt to express. Hislop, communicates this tension well as he writes, "The Church of Rome achieves through her use of a liturgical language the effect of distinguishing between the atmosphere of worship and the atmosphere of the market-place. But by using a language that is unknown to the people she pays too high a price for this result. Yet the sense of mystery must be given expression in worship and, we saw, the unfamiliar sound of words assist in this purpose."^{vii}

Another misconception regarding the indigenous worship voice is that it is simply a way of mediating between the great history of the church (what some might call traditionalism) and the need for relevance, this being the goal of many worship programs. For instance, Tom Long writes about researching "congregations that had

created a new thing on the earth—a service of worship completely attuned to the American cultural moment but also fully congruent with the great worship tradition of the Christian church; a service that attracts young people and seekers and the curious and those who are hungry for a spiritual encounter, but that does so by beckoning people to the deep and refreshing pool of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been understood historically in the church.”^{viii} The indigenous worship voice is not a plan for ensuring a worship experience that is both deep and ‘hip.’ Though these are worthy objectives, the indigenous worship voice does not fuse two extremes in the process of developing a unique and helpful hybrid—*the indigenous worship voice actually begins ‘in the middle.’* The resultant impact on the other ‘outside’ factors is unavoidable and obviously apparent. It is a different way of living with (and in) the best of both worlds. Of course these are not mutually exclusive approaches, as our current voice has been forged in dependence upon the past and developed in anticipation of the future. In terms of music, for instance, “a substantive musical life means forging a musical syntax for the song of a people in a specific time and place, and taking with utmost seriousness those who have gone before and those who will come after.”^{ix}

The indigenous worship voice is the authentic offering of the collective media of the Community in Christ, dependent on the Holy Spirit for its inspiration, formation and reception—for the good of the worshippers, for ministry to unbelievers—for the ultimate honor and benefit of God.

ⁱ Phil Zylla, *A Theology of Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in the Church* (paper presented as synopsis for DMN542, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, June 21-23, 2001).

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- ⁱⁱ Jeff Reed, interview by author, Walnut Creek, California, October, 2002.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1977), 13.
- ^{iv} Enculturation refers to the adaptation which occurs as a group interacts with the prevailing culture of its surroundings.
- ^v Iliion Jones, *A Historical Approach to Evangelical Worship* (New York, NY, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1959), 170.
- ^{vi} Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1959), 25.
- ^{vii} David Hislop, *Our Heritage in Public Worship* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 296.
- ^{viii} Tom Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2001), 12.
- ^{ix} Paul Westermeir, "Beyond 'Alternative' and 'Traditional Worship,'" *The Christian Century*, March 1994, 301.

PART TWO

PRACTICE

There are two musical situations on which I think we can be confident that a blessing rests. One is where a priest or an organist, himself a man of trained and delicate taste, humbly and charitably sacrifices his own (aesthetically right) desires and gives the people humbler and coarser fare than he would wish in a belief...that he can thus bring them to God. The other is where the stupid and unmusical layman humbly and patiently, and above all sternly, listens to music which he cannot, or cannot fully, appreciate, in the belief that it somehow glorifies God, and that if it does not edify him this must be his own defect. Neither such High Brow nor such a Low Brow can be far out of the way. To both, church music will have been a means of grace; not the music they have liked, but the music they have disliked. They have both offered, sacrificed their taste in the fullest sense.

But where the opposite situation arises, where the musician is filled with the pride of skill or the virus of emulation and looks with contempt on the unappreciative congregation, or where the unmusical, complacently entrenched in their own ignorance and conservatism look with the restless and resentful hostility of an inferiority complex on all who would try to improve their taste—there, we may be sure, all the both offer is unblessed and the spirit that moves them is not the Holy Ghost.

C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*

Before looking more thoroughly at the plan of the indigenous worship voice we must briefly explore why there is such a need for it. Instead of embracing peaceful togetherness, a church may choose to address the issue of divergent expectation by adopting one or more of a variety of solutions. As we outline these choices, it is important that we have a clear understanding of a simple process through which all worshippers will pass as they approach and live the worship moment, for in doing so we will better be able to define the alternatives to the indigenous worship voice. These three worship steps apply regardless the model or approach a church might take and are directly related to what we have explored as presentational and participative events. An understanding of each is extremely

important in order to understand how our worship practice relates to the indigenous worship voice.

All worshippers will first **enter an environment**. This is the particularly spatial and logistical step of the worship event. It includes issues such as parking, signage, greeters and ushers. Entering an environment means hearing the sounds (the musical prelude, for instance), smelling the smells (brewing coffee), seeing what there is to see (décor), and getting generally settled.

Somewhat simultaneous with entering an environment is the time when worshippers **encounter an experience**. The promptness of the start of the service, the look of the bulletin/program, the room temperature, sound, and lighting are all a part of the ‘happening.’ Coupled with these environmental factors are the relatively presentational elements of the welcome, announcements, reading of scripture, message, and benediction.

The third level of the worshippers’ experience occurs as they **extend an expression**. Singing is the most obvious example, but it may include elements such as responsive reading, giving of the offering, and other physical activities.

As all of these events unfold, determinations are being made about the effectiveness of the worship event. The insightful worshipper might immediately perceive what is not ‘real’ or authentic during any step of process. It is the inconsistencies therein that the indigenous worship voice, when properly understood and used, can rectify and redeem.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SIX ATTEMPTS

The community is an agent of dissonance that causes persons to rethink the direction of their identities.

Les Steele, *On the Way*

The following six approaches are the primary ways in which local congregations attempt to make the three-step worship chronology ‘work.’ Each has its benefits and drawbacks, and they all have at least one thing in common: They do not represent the qualities of the indigenous worship voice.ⁱ

Business as Usual

This option occurs when the worshipping community is unable or unwilling to adopt anything new, innovative, creative, or ‘edgy.’ This is its ‘feel,’ including its signage, parking and access. It also refers to its aesthetic, from the color of the carpets to the decorating of the walls. The printed material is antiquated, as are the technical and electronic enhancements. There does not seem to be a sense of urgency or passion. The singing of the congregation feels lackluster, the preaching rote, and all movement appears stilted and disjointed. Presentational aspects of worship appear to lack energy and it is hard to find obvious signs of worshipper participation.

This type of church could be found virtually on any street corner in every suburb, any rural country street and any block of every urban center of our country. These churches are large and small, old and young, fancy and plain. It seems that if a church chooses this answer to its worship wars, then it is the church that is simply not

interested in progressing, for whatever reason. It could be that the driving force behind this approach to worship is that “some clamor to have the familiar things used at all times. (Why is the word ‘good’ so often used with ‘old’?)”ⁱⁱ

Some would say that the obvious strength of this method is that it allows the somewhat ‘comfortable’ church the very good possibility of avoiding all conflict whatsoever. The leadership of this type of church, however, might have to question its understanding of just how comfortable the gospel calls it to be.

Baby With the Bathwater

“Tradition is death,” they cry! Anything that speaks of antiquity in any sense is anathema. Get rid of the symbols. Get rid of the vestments, the churchy words, the bulletin, the high-church decorations. Replace *everything* ‘old’ with something fresh and new. Be aware. Consider your modern surroundings and emulate them. The leader of this type of church might agree with Eugene Peterson: “The commonest forms of devil-inspired worship do not take place furtively at black masses with decapitated cats but flourish under the bright lights of acclaim and glory, in a swirl of organ music.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This church can be recognized by its catchy slogans (seen everywhere from the Yellow Pages to the sign out front), its non-churchy name (The River, Artista, Life Enhancement Center), its very attractive band (some complete with snazzy outfits), and its obvious departure from the institutional church.

Two fine examples of this kind of church are The Creek^{iv} and The Shelter^v, both found in Contra Costa County, California. These fellowships are comprised

primarily of their ‘target audience’ of post-high school, post-college young adults. In each case skeptics have questioned whether congregations comprised of a limited, relatively young, middle class demographic could really flourish in the Walnut Creek—Pleasant Hill—Concord area. What were once gravely doubted have proven effective simply *because they understood what was going on around them and have programmed their worship to meet a specific need.*

The strength of this strategy is obviously its grasp of current cultural relevance and the expedience that it offers “demographic—and missionary—logic.”^{vi} But that strength is partially negated by its exclusion of an entire segment of necessary worshippers—those for whom ‘traditional’ nuances are attractive, meaningful and necessary. Both ‘sides’ lose.

Block o’ Praise

This somewhat pejorative term speaks volumes about tokenism. It allows the divergent voice a brief ‘moment’ within the context of a broader, more ‘acceptable’ voice. It is usually comprised of a few apologetically-led praise songs in the traditional service or a responsive reading in the more contemporary service.

Again, many examples of this attempt can be found in virtually any setting in the Western hemisphere. The African-American church in San Francisco can sing its traditional hymns and their leaders can wear their standard vestments. Communion can be served in the regular way and the fully-robed choir can sing its ‘safe’ anthem. But at any moment the young organist might move to the piano, the musicians take their places, and the young people jump to position for that one, quick, funky gospel

tune. In other churches it might just mean the inclusion of a couple of guitars and congas.

The benefit of the Block o' Praise is obviously its inclusion of a few 'fringy' or divergent voices.^{vii} People who have been hoping to experience what they believe to be quality worship begin to take ownership in church services. This is, however, also its greatest weakness, as those same voices can easily begin to broaden the worship chasm by taking great advantage of one little 'foot in the door.'

The worst part about the Block o' Praise is how it communicates to anyone unfamiliar with the Christian faith just how fragmenting worship arts can be. There is a definite lack of integrity in this approach and there is virtually no way to hide it.

Many within the fold will remain happy while a few will, at the very least temporarily, stop grumbling. But it is stopgap at best.

Bigger is Better

This starts with the (expensive) newspaper advertisement. If that is attractive enough, then plenty of visitors will have the opportunity to see a top-notch performance ensue. Production rules the day. Pageant is primary. There is always an unspoken, subtle attempt to 'outdo' the previous year. For the most part, Bigger is Better is seasonal, but can also be reflected in the weekly program.

If necessary, and if the budget allows, a church can bring in outside musicians, actors, presenters, and speakers in order to entice and hold the general public. The quality of the event is always unquestioned even if the content is sometimes suspect. More often than not, participation is not required of the congregation/audience, as the

success of the Bigger is Better approach lies mainly in the class of what is happening ‘up front.’

Bigger is Better is attractive at times. In a culture in which television channels are countless and quality entertainment comes in any form, it is the one attempt at worship ministry that is most up-to-date and relevant.

But it is also marginally deceptive—people may wonder if “it’s like this here all the time” and potentially self-aggrandizing—as in, “Where could anyone possibly find better family entertainment in this town?”

Bend Over Backwards

This is apparently the most popular attempt at solving any crisis of disagreement. Bending over backwards simply means planning various worship services that speak to the different tastes, styles and wants of the listeners represented.

The Community Church of Joy in Phoenix, Arizona is a great example of how this attempt is ‘working,’ as a church which was once on the decline has been transformed into a burgeoning ministry outpost.^{viii} After assessing its location and its most severe needs, the Church of Joy has several different services, beginning with a Country Western service on Saturday night. Sunday offers a range of styles—from contemporary to ‘mixed’ to liturgical; something for everyone.

Nobody goes home disappointed from this kind of church. There is plenty to choose from and one can attend based on what kind of mood seems most helpful. Worship wars are diminished because no one is required to accept the opinions,

tastes, suggestions of anyone else. “It seems so logical...Conflict is avoided, people are more comfortable, and they can really enjoy their worship.”^{ix}

But there is a bit of unhealthy consumerism at work here, which, again, serves the idea that worship is subjective and self-centered. It does not take a great deal of maturity or even tolerance on the part of these believers in order to function in the group—because the group is really just made up of more of them!

Balanced and Blended

By keeping the right amount of various ‘flavors’ in the mix, the Balanced and Blended approach can keep most worshippers engaged despite the fact that they don’t always get what they want. It remains somewhat comfortable by not pushing out the edges too much or testing untried methods and styles. The organ and the worship team get equal billing. The choir always sings, but so does the worship team. Drama is acceptable as long as there is also some kind of congregational scripture reading. The sermon can be creatively delivered as long as the benediction is standard. Equal time. In fact, Donald Hustad suggests that our musical expression, particularly, should vary “to either side” for the sake of satisfying different tastes and increasing musical literacy.^x

Balanced and Blended is the worship approach which is most often confused with the indigenous worship voice. The main difference between the two lies in the fact that the indigenous worship voice never puts quotas on what styles are represented when. Balanced and Blended is not a bad plan if leaders desire to

maintain a general equilibrium while “allowing for variety within certain diplomatically inferred parameters.”^{xi}

The greatest detriment to this plan is the constraints it puts on those who are leading and planning worship. Because they must always provide a completely balanced program they are never allowed to tip the scales in one direction or the other—even if the scriptural text, theme, mood, and environment cry out for something different. They are never free to ‘color outside the lines.’ They are never free to be wildly creative.

Each of these attempts at finding a suitable worship voice (or voices) typifies dissonance rather than resonance. Because community in our worldly environment will always be imperfect, this dissonance is ‘normal.’ But its normalcy does not dictate its status, as it must dynamically move and grow toward unified health.

ⁱ Marva Dawn has done an excellent job of listing no less than sixteen reasons for the general ineffectiveness of these attempts. Her comments are primarily based on the issue of ‘taste’ in worship and reflect a fine understanding of the ironic divisiveness that invades our churches as we try to creatively ‘do’ better at worship. See her comments in *A Royal Waste of Time* (Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 189-192.

ⁱⁱ Clarice Bowman, *Restoring Worship* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), 38.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 15.

^{iv} The Creek, 1460 S. Main St., Walnut Creek, CA, (925) 934-4321.

^v The Shelter, 2250-D Commerce Dr., Concord, CA, (925) 212-3110.

^{vi} Doug Stevens, *All God's Gifts* (paper presented by The Renewal Project, Walnut Creek, California), 5.

^{vii} It is interesting to note that the ones for whom we feel the most are the very ones we often marginalize. We can say that we care about the ‘fringe,’ but unless our inclusion of it extends past mere tokenism we have not actually done anything tangible to strengthen the unity of our fellowships.

^{viii} Community Church of Joy, Phoenix, AR.

^{ix} Michael Bryce, “Diversity and unity are not incompatible goals,” *Worship Leader*, Oct/Nov 1993, 12.

^x Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II* (Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL)

^{xi} Stevens, 3.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FIVE REASONS

Human love continues to desire even when it seems to be serving.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

We must ask why these six attempts at winning the worship wars are so prevalent when they really may not ‘work’ so very well at all. Why on earth do we keep perpetuating the pain of our warring ways? Why do we settle for worship experiences that are—at best—truces, peaceful, yet incomplete compromises? What is it about our churches today that have caused them to stray so far from a biblical/historical/cultural, thus theological, standard?

Our answer must begin with what we are not. By process of elimination we can discard anything that appears healthy and perhaps get an idea of where we truly reside in relationship to what God intends. The process of thinking theologically was difficult because it took away our ‘spiritual scaffolding,’ that is, we have been forced to strip away all that was supposedly important and apparently valuable to us.ⁱ Now we must begin the even more painful process of beginning to recognize our own emptiness. Only then will we be able to rebuild again in an eternally viable manner. It is time for an honest self-assessment by our churches, regardless of how troubling that might be:

All your patient sees is the half-finished, sham Gothic erection on the new building estate. When he goes inside, he sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him one shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands, and one shabby little book containing corrupt texts of a

number of religious lyrics, mostly bad, and in very small print. When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided.ⁱⁱ

The opposite of Community in Christ is Individual in Isolation. The church that seems unable to adopt a united, indigenous voice of worship might be one that is fragmented within and without. How might a church get to such a position? The equation may look something like this:

Fragmented Worship as...		
Indifferent (blind + demand) + Retention (defiant + withholding)	=	<i>selfish</i>
Complacent (safe + familiarity) + Autonomy (inability + dissolution)	=	<u><i>indirection</i></u>
Individual in Isolation		

It is difficult to describe this equation in any kind of positive terms, and anyone who has related to any of these indicators of a problem knows that the way out of the difficulty is not easy. But the condition must be named before it can be dealt with.

The first biblical quality of the indigenous worship voice is responsiveness, so it must follow that one quality of the fragmenting church might be that of indifference. Responsiveness is a result of recognition and gratitude, so indifference must be a result of blind demand, which leads to the tendency of an organization to hold on to, and to protect, its successes and assets. Defiant withholding is generally not how a church would want to present itself, but many churches are completely unaware of this tendency.

As this kind of selfishness finds its way into the leadership and laity of a congregation, it will find itself less and less concerned with ‘kingdom matters’ and more interested in what concerns the organization itself. The eyes of the people begin to focus on the safe and familiar areas of its ministry, and complacency is only eclipsed by a kind of escape not only from other ministries, but from the powerful work of the Holy Spirit as well. The unraveling of the spiritual fabric of the church is close at hand. The individual believer (or the individual organization) who finds herself or himself in this rut also finds loneliness and disconnectedness.

One of the most insidious difficulties we discover, however, is that these issues often are hidden behind the masquerade of production and accomplishment. We find everywhere “churches that are monuments to human achievement: enormous parking lots, together with marvelous strategies for moving vehicles in and out with ease between the services. Vast choirs. Expensive electronics. Buildings of lightness and space, fitted like theaters. And at the core of all this is not the cross, neither the humility of Jesus nor the humility of those who live at its foot.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The reasons for these dilemmas that we face as worshipping Christians might fall into six categories:

1) Pattern

We have become habitual in our ways. There is little freshness to what we do. We hold on to existing structures. We even have a certain degree of ignorance to own up to—admitting that we don’t know it all. (How can we consider finding our voice when we don’t even know it’s really there?!) We are unable to confront. We are unable to envision. We are stuck.^{iv}

2) Pragmatism

We are desperately concerned with, as Daniel Somerville calls it, “what works.”^v Organizational ‘success’ is a great seducer of the weak-willed worshipper and it is usually measured in getting more and more people to be attracted to, and awed by, our offering. “Isn’t the most generally applied standard of success...whether people feel good...?”^{vi} Time is also of the essence. To practically apply the concepts involved in the indigenous worship voice takes a great commitment.

Related to this is the fact that many worship planners and worship leaders—once they’ve been recognized and trained—are tired; tired of the drudgery and tired of criticism. It is much easier to coast than it is to drive.

3) Pride

Most worship artists have been told from an early age on that personal pride in the craft is the worst sin imaginable! There must be a reason for this warning! Pride is the root of all worship-leader malaise. Pride excludes the possibility of accountability and heightens the worshippers’ sense of indispensability. Annie Dillard writes, “The higher Christian Churches...come at God with an unwarranted air of professionalism, with authority and pomp, as though they knew what they were doing, as though people in themselves were an appropriate set of creatures to have dealings with God...If God were to blast such a congregation to bits, the congregation would be, I believe, genuinely shocked.”^{vii}

4) Persona

Persona is the temptation of pride’s promise. Not to be confused with

charisma, which is relative to the worshipper's specific gifting through the Holy Spirit, persona eventually transforms God's vision into that of the worshipper.

Eugene Peterson reminds us of the temptation of persona in his recounting of the biblical King Saul.^{viii}

5) Power

Power is the consequential manifestation of pride and persona. Political control is most dramatically wielded in the worship arena because of the importance placed by most worshippers on their prejudices and preferences. Doug Stevens has called power plays in the worship arena 'worship terrorism.' As people hold other people 'hostage,' they do so not so much with the mindset that worship needs to be either protected or withheld, but because their personal investment in the organization is most vital. Seeking power proves the weakest worshipper, while the strong worshipper has no fear of losing it.

6) Protection

Our paranoia is yet another manifestation of our struggle with letting go of that which we consider important. We're generally afraid that if we risk a new way we will be losing something of our own place in this world. Loss is depressing, and we sometimes want to be able to have at least one item of joy to fall back on when times get difficult. Therefore, we protect what we think is ours to hold on to.

Though the diagnosis of some current worship environments may be discouraging, the prognosis for their future does not necessarily have to be. As we not only recognize our errant behavior but also understand the reasons behind it, we

can look ahead to better health and enduring vibrancy. This is because the indigenous worship voice senses the problem and brings a pattern to the practice, which will bring about an accessible and hopeful plan.

ⁱ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 53.

ⁱⁱ CS Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York, NY: McMillan Publishing, 1982), 12.

ⁱⁱⁱ Walter Wangerin, *The Lutheran*, September, 1999, 9.

^{iv} For a good discussion on “stuckness” see the thoughts of Robert M. Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, 250 ff.

^v Daniel Somerville, *Diversity in Unified Worship (Planning Thematic Worship Within a Blended Context)* (paper presented for the 1994 Midwinter Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church), 3.

^{vi} Richard Foster, *Prayer* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers), 99.

^{vii} Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1977), 59.

^{viii} Eugene Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall* (San Francisco, CA: Harpercollins Publishers, 1997), 27.

PART THREE

PLAN

What followed was a sentimental, overdramatic presentation of an old favorite hymn from the man's childhood. It was a bad piece of music, but the congregation listened with love and genuine appreciation as he sang. The music was hardly worth a dime, but the offering was the 'widow's mite,' thankfully given and joyfully received.

Tom Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars*

Before a plan is established, a review is in order.

Many churches are experiencing a difficult problem in their communal worship. They have not figured out how to retain the old ways of worship expression and at the same time embrace fresh, new ideas, while honoring the concept of love in their midst. Worship wars abound.

A creative way to alleviate the difficulties associated with worship wars is the indigenous worship voice, which means discovering, strengthening, and engaging the unique, native voice of a congregation as the prime example of worship integrity. This suggestion is firmly substantiated by a strong theological foundation, which includes biblical, historical, and cultural consideration. Scripture shows that worship validity is found more in the initiative and receptivity of God than in the subjective whim of the church and that we must not worship in isolation, but together we must focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Historical and cultural study proves that our human condition renders us somewhat unsteady and undependable, compared to an understanding of God as beyond all of our comprehension, yet close enough to meet our need.

Therefore, we need the Holy Spirit to serve as our Guide and Comforter. Our dependence upon the Holy Spirit shows that our manipulating ways and important agendas are somewhat meaningless in the entire scope of worship thought. We must let go of our vain attempts with the deepest, ironic hope that in losing ourselves we will be then again found in a surprisingly mysterious and gracious act of God: the indigenous worship voice—unified and complete expressions of who and what we are as respective faith communities.

Unfortunately, most churches find themselves far displaced from such a standard. Rather than being selflessly focused, much worship experience is selfishly floundering, reflecting desperate individualism and isolation, proven by an overemphasis on politics, power, and protection.

This reflection brings us to the point of looking at several areas related to our worship in order to see how it might be possible to get past our problem and into a place of actually experiencing the healthy gift of the indigenous worship voice in our various Christian communities. The proposed plan will consist of several assumptions about worship that apply to each area, to be followed by specific steps which will help the worship leader to assist her or his faith community in identifying, strengthening, and engaging its indigenous worship voice.

CHAPTER TEN

VALUES AND CRITERIA

Clear at their core, curious about their future, these organizations develop expansionary range.

Margaret J. Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers, *A Simpler Way*

Doug Stevens lists many important worship values, as well as by what criteria our worship experience should be judged:

Worship Values and Criteria

Values

Integrity: muse over Scripture
 Imagination: recreate the experience
 Authenticity: keep it real
 Participation: engage the people
 Presence: invite into intimacy
 Conviction: illumine the challenge
 Transformation: picture the potential
 Joy: release the energy

Criteria

Experience Mystery
 Recover a sense of drama
 Emphasize excellent, eclectic arts
 Adapt worship space
 Practice hospitality
 Call for worship responses
 Employ talented, insightful leaders
 Move toward joyous festivalⁱ

Stevens' prioritization begins with God—integrity and imagination—and concludes with our experience—joy. In between is a collection of means and measures that help us determine whether our worship is really accomplishing what it should and could. If our worship experience is to be truly Christian it must emanate directly from the Word of God as it tells the story of the heart of God expressed through his Son, Jesus Christ, and continued through history by the work of the Holy Spirit. The proper use of Scripture itself is the way to ensure that our worship is an action that integrates our actions with our intentions. There is a great mystery connected with this standard, and because we are unable to capture the full essence of God we must use our imagination in order to re-present the Christ event.ⁱⁱ

As we participate in this re-creation, this re-enactment, we invite people to participate in an intimate recounting of the deepest love of history. As we are authentic in our acceptance of our own finiteness and as we attempt to communicate honestly, our worship expression will remain 'real' to all who are involved or watching. *Our authenticity and realness is the greatest testimony for the possibility of intimate connection with God, for intimacy excludes inhibition.* We warmly and hospitably include both worshippers and seekers alike into this modern Incarnation as we find ourselves in the midst of the closest connection of the 'stuff' of our world and the grace of heaven.

After we have focused on the Christ-event and then immersed our selves fully into its essence, we will begin to understand the challenges and potential that exist in the redemption of our inadequate state. This brings about great hope in the people of God, as the reclamation of what has been lost becomes believable.

We become mindful of the disparity between who we are and who we can be, which results in a joyful and festive culmination. If there is anything about the worship that should reflect its most experiential quality, it is this climactic moment of recognition and the unbridled response that it inevitably brings about.

All of these values and criteria must be incorporated into the indigenous worship voice, and in a sense they are almost synonymous with *the authentic offering of the collective media of the Community in Christ, dependent on the Holy Spirit for its inspiration, formation and reception—for the good of the worshippers, for ministry to unbelievers—for the ultimate honor and benefit of God.*

We can break the definition into its key portions and label them appropriately:

The authentic offering **(purpose)**...of the collective media **(art)**...of the Community in Christ **(relationship)**...dependent on the Holy Spirit for its inspiration, formation, and reception **(spirit)**...for the good of the worshippers, for ministry to unbelievers—for the ultimate honor and benefit of God **(task)**.

Authentic Offering	Collective Media	Community in Christ	Holy Spirit	For the...
(Purpose)	(Art)	(Relationship)	(Spirit)	(Task)

In order most fully to discover, strengthen, and engage the indigenous worship voice, it will be important for the worshipper to list these in order of priority.

The temptation for most churches is to begin with that which could be considered ‘utilitarian.’ *We must always be careful to avoid the tendency to hold our craft hostage to the temptation of expedience.* After all, “the church cannot bring God out before them in such a way that they are compelled to believe, and it would not do

so even if it could. But the church can lay before them the accompaniments that have led others to believe.”ⁱⁱⁱ As we try to discover, strengthen and engage our various voices, it is entirely too easy to jump right to the formation and presentation of our art. Without a solid foundation, such a ‘house of cards’ will collapse in the many winds that threaten. Worshipping without God’s leading and without His audience can lead to prideful mediocrity. The other great temptation might be to begin with the task at hand. But if we begin with what we are to do we impose much the same damage, for our doing must arise out of our conviction. One might say that we must start with relationships. After all, isn’t the true test of the indigenous voice whether it is fully inclusive? There can be no true native tongue if it is not reflective of the entirety of its setting. The answer is clear as we recognize many places (athletics, politics, education, etc.) where an occasional unified expression has nothing to do with the things of God. Nor is purpose the element out of which all other elements find their import. I Corinthians 13.1-3 certainly communicates that purpose can be accomplished with no underlying, more important end.

Therefore, we must order our strategy in terms of what will make us stronger for the long run. In this light we see that we must proceed first with a spiritual plan; a plan that will bring us into a clearer comprehension of what it means to live according to the Ephesians standard of ‘the praise of his glory.’ This spiritual plan must be followed by plans for purpose, relationship, task, and then, and only then, art.

Spirit	Purpose	Relationship	Task	Art
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The spiritual aspect of our quest will be labeled ‘inspiration,’ for without it we have no life. Our purpose is also our ‘intention’—what we are ultimately about and why. Relationship speaks to our ‘connection’ one to another. What we do can be called our ‘mission,’ and our artistic rendering of that mission can accurately be called ‘expression’:

Inspiration	Intention	Connection	Mission	Expression
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Progressing through the identifying, strengthening and engaging of these five elements will bring us to a change experience that is comprised of three parts. Any organization will find itself in one of three camps: survival, maintenance, or advancement, depending on a complicated mix of both external and internal dynamics. This constitutes its *position*. And this is what we must first find. Once position has been defined and ‘owned,’ a group will render a *proposition*. This can be either verbal or unspoken, contingent mainly upon the severity of the position. These are our ‘ideas’ and ‘hunches’ that will help us make our position stronger. A non-sedentary association must then do something, that is, experience *progression*. We move past theory into action—we engage in the task at hand.

So position, proposition, progression: a cyclical movement, as each stage will be met with some degree of success and/or acceptance, thus bringing about a renewal and recapitulation of each step. Therefore, these three categories can be subsumed under the heading entitled *process*, as no worshipping community ever fully arrives, but can only develop through experience and understanding.

(Process)	Inspiration	Intention	Connection	Mission	Expression
Identify (Position)	?	?	?	?	?
Strengthen (Proposition)	?	?	?	?	?
Engage (Progression)	?	?	?	?	?

Enter now the challenging and rewarding process of the indigenous worship voice.

ⁱ Doug Stevens, *All God's Gifts* (paper presented by The Renewal Project, Walnut Creek, California), 4.

ⁱⁱ Robert Webber makes a great distinction between the centrality of Christ in worship and other foci. Christ can always be found in positive ramifications of living the life of faith. But to really be called 'Christian' worship it seems that the gathered expression must incorporate something of the gospel story: the love of God as shown in Christ and motivated by the Holy Spirit. So "10 Steps to a More Romantic Marriage" or "How to Really Succeed as a Dad" may be based on biblical/Christian standards, but unless these themes speak to the historically pivotal action of Jesus Christ, they may not fit into the scope of our discussion.

ⁱⁱⁱ Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishing, 1959), 51.

CHAPTER TEN

INSPIRATION

God also has a spirit—is Spirit, says the Apostle John. Thus God is the power of the power of life itself, has breathed and continues to breathe himself into his creation. In-spires it. The Spirit of God, Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, is highly contagious. When Peter and his friends were caught up in it at Jerusalem on Pentecost, everybody thought they were drunk even though the sun wasn't yet over the yardarm (Acts 2).

They were.

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

We think of inspiration when we hear a moving song or watch a stunning athletic performance. We are *inspired*. We are inspired when the underdog wins or our children gladden us with their beautiful creativity. The mountains in springtime inspire us just as the waves that endlessly crash upon the shore. Romance inspires. Injustice inspires. The human spirit inspires.

When we think about inspiration in the worship context, we must be careful to separate it from how worship might make us feel—how it might warm our hearts or motivate us to act. We must consider inspiration as part of a much deeper movement, that is, the very Source of our being. This is when inspiration becomes in-Spiration (according to Buechner, “in Spirit”); the Holy Spirit breathes into our own spirit and we are refreshed, renewed, refocused, and ready for its leading. The Spirit of God gives us life, changes us, moves us. So how lively, changed, and moved can the worship gathering be? How does that in-Spiration show itself? How can it become more in-Spired?

The identifying of in-Spiration within the local church begins with the congregation—the collection of worshippers that ultimately adopts strategies and makes decisions. The congregants themselves ARE the church. They are the ones who marry each other, the ones from whom the babies come, the ones who live their lives in, and work in, community, and die with other congregants by their sides. The active life of Christ is within them and they carry that life to those without. The congregation is usually politically represented within the organization by a group of elders. More often than not, these are the major ‘stakeholders’ of the church. They are the invested ones. The negative connotation is power-mongering; the positive, seasoned stature and profound wisdom. (This reminds us of the importance of ascertaining just why they are stakeholders and determining the appropriate criteria by which these elders are chosen.) As these elders discern spiritual direction for the congregation, they interact creatively with pastors and staff for the spiritual health of the community. This leadership process ensures accountability for the pastor as he envisions and embarks upon the future manifestation of the goals of the church, and encourages continual spiritual growth and deepening of the faith community.

As this circular form ensues (congregation-elders-pastor-congregation-elders), it points to the reciprocation and dynamism of the Community in Christ. The three areas of kingdom activity cannot be considered in isolation one from another, but must function as a spiritual entity as a whole. The hard fact of the matter is that these three-elements-in-one don’t often feel or appear in-Spired. Sometimes they border on living in crisis mode as they function out of various competing motivations. *When any or all of these three groups are not participating honestly in the grace of God as*

mediated through the Holy Spirit and in the name of Christ, the church of which they are a part cannot be called in-Spired. Author Dave Hansen calls this spiritual boredom: “Boredom is having nothing to do, nothing to see, nothing to feel, nothing to taste. It is either the absence of beauty, goodness, truth, and holiness or the inability or unwillingness to know and create these realities in our lives...Boredom isn’t nothing to do on the outside, it’s nothing happening on the inside. Boredom is the symptom of a starved soul.”ⁱ Flat. Dull. Lifeless. Anemic. Inept. Impotent. Taken to its penultimate extreme (the stage immediately prior to death itself), spiritual boredom becomes what Os Guinness calls “sloth.”ⁱⁱ This is the state of desperate spiritual gloom, which renders the carrier so un-in-Spired that the promises of God mean virtually nothing with regard to envisioning a hopeful future. The faithfulness of God cannot or will not even be remembered. Therefore, there is no living within the hope of in-Spiration.

Conversely, the in-Spired church is easily recognized! There seems to be a contagion that cannot be denied or squelched. The old saying, ‘the bigger the rock the bigger the ripple’ takes on significant meaning! One can see it in the prayer life of the church. One can hear it in the singing! One can see it in smiling faces and enjoy the grace of God expressed by warm embraces and encouraging conversation. Gossip is all but non-existent. Budgets and attendance increase.ⁱⁱⁱ

In all three arenas the strengthening of in-Spiration must first begin with personal devotion. Each member will nurture her or his own relationship through prayer and study. This piety will be motivated only by the gift of the Holy Spirit and will be meant for nothing less than godly-responsible thinking and acting. It will be

born out of the need and calling of the individual alone—but ready for and responsive to the accountability and reciprocation of the community. The service of the congregation will then find its way out of piety and into the world. The paradox of receiving from giving will be largely at work as true devotion will give itself away to those who are in need. This will be reflected not simply in acts of benevolence, but by acts of sacrificial love, including genuine forgiveness and undying mercy.

The elders of a church must adopt this same approach to in-Spiration. But sometimes the environment of service as church leadership can work against a fresh awakening of the Spirit. This is because many elder leadership responsibilities could easily be considered less than in-Spiring! If an elder board is at all representative of the various aspects of church life, then its membership is made up of many people who are trying to accomplish many different tasks. The budget needs to be balanced, nursery care needs to be acquired, and worship pieces need to be assembled. The Christian Education Board, the trustees, the mission-minded, and the Diaconate all have to keep up with their many chores so ministry items will not ‘fall through the cracks.’ This speaks to a model of activity that can become relatively static. The tendency toward rote behavior dominates flexibility and surprise.^{iv}

Pastors and staff run this risk as well, as serving the organization can compete with the spiritual premise of ministry. Pastors must be allowed to continually recall and renew the wonderful stories of their calls to ministry. It is absolutely essential that the concept of Sabbath be renewed and adopted in the life patterns of professional church workers. This Sabbath consideration should be incremental in nature. Yearly, monthly, weekly, daily, hourly refreshment must occur habitually in

order for spiritual leaders to be both in-Spired and in-Spirations. It is no new news that “the minister can set the example by making prayer in worship central, not only in his personal life-philosophy (where no doubt it is central), but practically speaking in the budgeting of his daily hours, his weekly days—until he can say with the psalmist, ‘he restoreth my soul.’ Until that happens to him, it will probably not happen in his church.”^v

To the congregation that has engaged in-Spiration, *nothing else matters*—not the perception born out of people’s subjectivism, not ‘what they’re doing down the street,’ not what used to be or what might be imagined. In-Spired congregations bask in the gift received for the season that it has been given. Grace received is grace accepted gladly and thankfully. Basking in in-Spiration does not mean harnessing the power of the Spirit for the purpose of re-releasing it in difficult times! The favor of God is of his doing exclusively.

As in-Spiration takes hold of the elder board, its job description may have to change! (Or at the very least, it might have to reconsider how it spends the bulk of its time.) How in-Spiring it would be for more elders to do less strategizing and more worshipping! Financial considerations must never determine the ministry decisions of the church. Perhaps ‘number crunching’ would find a lower tier of priority in light of the pressing demand for spiritual humility and communal confession. Administration must always be accomplished by asking the question, “What is God doing and where can I be a part?”^{vi} When the Spirit of God is at obvious work in a specific situation, all of our maneuvering becomes secondary at best.

The primary responsibilities of the in-Spired pastor should always center on the necessary mediating of the things of the Spirit of God to the fellow leaders and congregants. Preaching must become a sacramental event—mediating the mystery of God through spoken word. It must invite, include, and inspire a communal moment. Preaching should not be a presentation of the good news, but an immersion in it.^{vii} Pastoral care must become an act of worship rather than a mundane obligation. Visiting in homes or hospitals, officiating at weddings and funerals, confronting of parishioners and counseling all find in-Spiration only as these pivotal events of life have nothing to do with the positions of church members within the church, but their places within the Body of Christ. The Spirit of God working through the pastor works through the rest of us as well. Pastors must become organism-minded rather than organization-motivated. In-Spiration and administration are not necessarily mutually exclusive terms! The purpose of God is to develop and order, but not to the detriment of freedom and surprise. Leadership must become empowering rather than controlling, freeing rather than stifling, receptive rather than dominant. Most leadership systems are too bound to the human condition to be able to facilitate the manifestation of this kind of servant leadership, as modeled by Jesus Christ himself. But if five qualities are pursued through the ministration of the Holy Spirit, there is hope for an ‘upside-down,’ paradoxical opportunity for leadership success:

1. Humility must be practiced as shown by Christ and documented in Philippians 2.
2. Authenticity is the quality of likeness to Christ that allows for the presence of actual authority (John 5.16-20).

3. Service is the pragmatic core of effective leadership. Jesus, having come from the Father, completes his descent by stooping to the lowest position, which eventually proves to be the greatest (John 13).
4. Guidance includes not only developing an interest in the economy of God, but also waiting for it (Luke 6, 9, 11).
5. Stewardship means not grasping that which we think is ours, but embracing the vision (and all that accompanies it) that God has chosen for us (Philippians 2.6).

In-Spiration is a gift—just as every other element of the indigenous worship voice. In-Spiration can be frustrating because it cannot really be defined. But a church knows (albeit somewhat intuitively?) whether it is in-Spired or not. The knowing in itself, perhaps, may be an initial proof that in-Spiration may be on the way!

As the in-Spiration behind the indigenous worship voice is discovered, strengthened and engaged, a unique situation takes place. The worshipping community begins to find itself continually renewed by the less-than-spiritual, common experiences of everyday life. Perspective is brought to the existence of the worshippers and great catches, pictures on the refrigerator, mountain air and salty breezes begin to be appreciated for something more than their aesthetic value. They are experiences to be lived as messages from God—tangible points of his creative work among us that point to his grace and goodness breathing their extraordinary way into our ordinary existence.^{viii}

ⁱ Dave Hansen, *A Little Handbook on Having a Soul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 172.

ⁱⁱ Os Guinness, *The Call* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 147.

ⁱⁱⁱ Not ALL churches with these characteristics can be categorized as in-Spired. There are relationally challenged churches that only *appear* 'happy' as they put up false fronts. There are churches that have many financial resources but no heart. There are fast-growing churches that some would say possess as much Spirit as fast food restaurants offer nutrition. So it is important to weigh many factors in regard to accurately assessing this area.

^{iv} For a good explanation of this dichotomy see *Natural Church Development* by Christian A. Schwartz, (Emmelsbull, Germany: C & P Publishing, 1998). After assessing thousands of churches globally, the NCD model proposes the two somewhat conflicting church-development principles called technocratic and biotic. "The technocratic approach: the 'robot' model. From the beginning, all pieces are in their final form and are simply assembled according to a step-by-step plan. All end products are identical and do exactly what they have been programmed to do...The biotic approach; the 'organism' model. It is not made by assembling pre-fabricated pieces. A single cell begins to divide—first rapidly, later more slowly. In this way, a complex organism begins to develop. The outcome of this process is an individual with a distinct identity."

^v Clarice Bowman, *Restoring Worship* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951), 47.

^{vi} Blackaby *Experiencing God* (Nashville, Tn: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 113.

^{vii} Leonora Tubbs Tisdale has written a fantastic article entitled "Preaching As Folk Art," in which she draws an analogy between preaching and the circle dancing of her people in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. This wonderful metaphor offers a definitive explanation of preaching as a communal moment. (*Theology News and Notes*, Vol. 48, no. 2, Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, Fall, 2001), 14-17.

^{viii} Pam Mark Hall. *A Paler Shade of You* (© 1993 Storyville Records, Brentwood, TN)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INTENTION

We might ask ourselves what would need to happen in our place of worship for God to be able to say, “I was worshiped here today.”

Les Steele, *On the Way*

As in-Spired perspective is brought to the worshipping community, the questions of ‘Whom did we reach?’ or ‘What were the numbers?’ or ‘Did the music rock?’ or ‘How was the sermon?’ cease to occupy its consideration after Sunday morning has come and gone. Rather, the question of whether the indigenous worship voice has been activated in its fullest form and employed completely will be answered by asking whether our intent to honor God has been realized. The breadth of this inquiry takes the purpose of worship out of narrowness imposed on it by the ever-consumptive worshipper and into the breadth of kingdom of God consideration.

The truly authentic worship offering can be characterized by *a present moment that speaks to a past Event that has eternal importance*. What we do today in our gathered worship experience has its foundation in the Word of God—the unifying thread throughout all of history. What happens in our authentic offering will indeed both respond to and usher in the purpose and presence of God on earth and beyond. We will view worship as “embodying a particular way of life that exemplifies the ontological reality of the eschatological future brought into the present by the incarnational reality of Jesus Christ.”ⁱ Worship as *primarily* the act of authentic offering finds its proper contextual setting and is recovered from several areas of peripheral foci that often get most of our attention.

So often we hear of the effective worship ‘program.’ Certainly there is a pragmatic requirement involved in worship. As we remember that the indigenous worship voice is merely a composite of many individual voices, we cannot deny that putting together children’s choirs and bands and sound and lights and video clips and preachers and greeters and holiday services and special events and ushers and lights and worship orders all requires a certain level of preparation and oversight. But it is important to remember that all “ministry is not a task, program or production.”ⁱⁱ It is obviously evident in the Western church that the difficulties associated with programming for effective worship tend to supersede qualities of relationship and partnership. With varying levels of artistic proficiencies reflected in the local church community, it is tempting to spend exorbitant time and energy on ‘getting it right,’ to the detriment of the real ‘happening’ of being in it together.

The intention of the indigenous worship voice also shatters our illusions about performance.ⁱⁱⁱ It is not uncommon to hear worship artists refer to ‘giving God our best.’ While this is a worthwhile objective in the context of tithing our ‘first fruits,’ it is more dangerous than helpful when it comes to what emphasis we place where on the worship event. If accurate intention is our concern, then we must discount performance and production as the apex of our worship energy. Jeff Reed offers:

What catalyzes corporate worship is not primarily an excellent product but an authentic offering. When someone offers up before the body an actual sampling of the true work of the Holy Spirit in that person’s life, the rest of the body is able to receive spiritual impact from the offering. The emphasis on excellence can be misguided. It is true that God is worthy of our best, but the best offerings may vary widely from person to person in terms of aesthetic excellence. We want to fill our corporate worship services with elements of authentic offerings.^{iv}

A healthy intention will allow a church to be able to laugh at itself from time to time, to move past mistakes and imperfections, and to celebrate the grace and forgiveness found in the One on whose ears its meager attempts at expression fall.

A third result of authentic offering is the proper ordering of outreach and mission. Rather than worship becoming a ‘hook’ by which to ‘snag’ the outsider, worship becomes an inclusive entity that encourages participation by visitors. Worship as authentic offering will be irresistible not because it has been programmed and performed in order to be irresistible, but because its realness can be nothing but attractive. Keeping this order in mind is key to the effective implementation of the indigenous worship voice.^v

If a worshipping church truly desires to determine the integrity of its intention, it must begin with the consideration of its worship purpose statement. A cogent statement will begin the process that a church must undergo as it finds its reason for being. A comprehensive worship purpose statement clearly emerges by superimposing the definition of the indigenous worship voice with the standards of the incarnational, ontological and eschatological requirements:

Incarnational (past)	Ontological (present)	Eschatological (future)
Christ	Community Dependent on Holy Spirit Authentic offering Collective media	Good of worshippers Ministry to unbelievers Ultimate honor and glory of God

A church can use this template as a guide for crafting a worship purpose statement by remembering that all of the three standards and the qualities of the indigenous worship voice must be included. The formulation of a statement of intention should be in-Spiring as it reflects the hope and enthusiasm of the indigenous worship voice!

Using the worship purpose statement as a model, a worshipping community can assess the various elements it contains in order to decide what strengthening steps should next be taken. Virtually everything that is offered must stand up to the interrogation of that purpose. Presentational (symbol and sermon) aspects will not be offered for the consumption of the worshipper, but in order to bring about that worshipper's own offering to God. Presentational/participative (speaking in prayer and praise, scripture, song) moments will be entered into fully by the worshipper, as leaders will captivate and engage in order for the faith community to be drawn into unified activity. The participative event of Holy Communion will not be accomplished by rote, but will take on new, fresh meaning as the elements are presented and received as a grateful acknowledgment of grace extended, past, present, and future. All of these possible changes are undertaken as the church desires to employ its intention to the fullest degree. The 'what' of in-Spiration is followed by the 'why' of intention, and the two work sympathetically one with another. As we clearly remember the events of the past we are catapulted into the exciting hope that awaits in the future.

The story of Christ told today with expectation for tomorrow is the key to exercising the intention behind the indigenous worship voice. *Story is the framework*

by which the participants authentically offer all that they are and have, for it provides the proper context in which worship can take place. Paul Lessard states, “As pastors and worship leaders plan, they celebrate, rehearse and remember each week not their story, but God’s.”^{vi} All who participate in the story of Christ find their existence framed by the more important existence of God the Father, as they are enlightened to the relationship between the two stories by the ministration of the Holy Spirit. What we intend for worship, then, is based on what is happening in our very lives and organizations this day, but with an understanding of what is to come, based on all that has gone before. An effective worship intention must incorporate the past into the present, with implications for the future. The familiar comes alive today and looks ahead to what is next.

Old Story New

Two biblical narratives give shape to this worship-intention paradigm. Joshua 4.22-24 recounts the words of Joshua regarding the erecting of the stone monument at Gilgal:

In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.

Joshua looks back for the sake of present context and anticipates future ramifications. The impetus for his comments lies not in his desire to explain away the

confusion of his followers, but in his focus on exalting the God who works on their behalf. Likewise, Luke 2.41-52 tells of the ‘Boy Jesus in the Temple,’ which is the part of the story we most regularly emphasize. But a deeper understanding of the text reminds us that it is grounded in a ‘going-experiencing-returning’ pattern. The involvement of Jesus in the temple was predicated upon the return of the Holy Family to a required memorial moment. Each passage instills in the reader the importance of reflecting on the past for clarity in the present, resulting in anticipation of the future. That which *was* informs that which *is*, which precipitates that which *will* be.

The old must be remembered and reflected upon but must not give way to regression. Any kind of return to the ‘glory days’ can be a precursor to the digression of a group from the course of healthy growth. Regression leads to stagnation. The old is only a part of Story if it is allowed only to inform, rather than dominate.

Of the many important qualities of a good story, we are most aware of the need for a beginning and an end. In the Story of God we can only impose our finite intellectual parameters on *Logos*, so our beginning and end are rather nebulous.^{vii} But we must start the story somewhere, with a willingness to let the end remain in question. (Already our employment of intention is characterized by an unknowing quality, rendering us humbly aware of the inadequacy of our storytelling.) A good story will also introduce an antagonist and protagonist, which are obviously clear in the Christian message. Story must have movement, which carries the participant through a complex chronology of tension and release, problem and solution. Story always involves integration between the events it contains and the experience of the participant. All of these qualities are brought into the present environment of any

worshipping community. If these parts of the story are told honestly and directly, the tellers of the story are able to present an authentic offering because they have bypassed negativism, anger, obsolete platitudes, and worn-out assertions.

The final step to engaging the intention of the indigenous worship voice takes recognizing what God has done, and what he is doing currently, and discerning and believing in what God says he will do. This cannot be done in isolation, and as it brings worshippers together, it can be referred to as pilgrimage—the reciprocal experience between teacher and student, leader and journeyer. It assumes a mutuality that is fleshed out in the humility of honest questioners and deeply desirous, hopeful seekers. These people recognize hope in the future as they recognize the sovereignty of God and his control over the entire mysterious, epic journey. Their telling of the story of Christ means that they concern themselves more with understanding his leading than they do with the protection of their agenda.

In-Spiration precedes intention. Purpose is consequently framed by an understanding that the God whom we worship is the subject of the Story. He is the Beginning and the Ending, and it is his Plot that unfolds through the turning pages. He is the Author of the Story and the primary Reader of the Story. The intention of our worship must center on this truth. It is important that “however worship is put together, it provide in some way for this great drama of telling the truth—the truth of our need to live by grace, and the truth of a God who is dying to give it to us.”^{viii} Worship which is planned, produced, and authentically offered with the telling of the Christ-story in mind is worship that must bring joy to the heart of God. Therefore, as

this goal becomes the *only intent* of a group of worshippers, there is endless potential for true peaceful togetherness to occur.

ⁱ Craig Van Gelder, ed., *Confident Witness, Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 258. Incarnational, ontological and eschatological terminologies essentially speak of a past, present, future conceptualization of the worship experience which is founded on the Christ-event, practiced in the 'being' of time and space, and anticipate a future hope.

ⁱⁱ Stacy Rinehart, *Upside Down—The Paradox of Spiritual Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1998), 118.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is not necessary to completely invalidate the concept of performance. As worship leaders we are, after all, 'performing' a certain task. We also sometimes denigrate entertainment in the same manner. But, again, as worship leaders we absolutely must be willing to 'entertain' the hearts and minds of our congregants by both presentational and participative means.

^{iv} Jeff Reed, *A.R.M.* (paper presented to Hillside Covenant Church, Walnut Creek, CA, 2000).

^v This refers primarily to the regularly scheduled worship life of the church. There is nothing wrong, however, with specific 'outreach' events, particularly those that are seasonal or related to some sort of series. Concerts, plays, special meals, holiday services, and other programs should be employed for the purpose of inviting others into the activities of the faith community.

^{vi} Paul Lessard, *Covenant Book of Worship* (Chicago, IL: Covenant Press, 2002).

^{vii} *Logos* refers to the entire sphere of the Christian activity of God, including Creation, the prophets, the moral order and the work and Person of Jesus Christ. As stated in the prologue to the gospel of John, the Word is, however, before and after.

^{viii} Craig Barnes, *Yearning* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 63.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONNECTION

If there should emerge in our day emerge...a fellowship, wholly without artificiality and free from the dead hand of the past, it would be an exciting event of momentous importance.

Eldon Trueblood, *Alternative to Futility*

One of the most in-Spiring truths regarding the indigenous worship voice is that as our ultimate intention is remembered, we find that there is a commonality among us that transcends style and taste and that it is possible to experience that unity—a unity which is not based on a market-sensitive, worship-trend approach, nor an antiquated form led by those who have sacrificed a developing worship theology. For the Community in Christ, this commonality can be no less than the power of the Holy Spirit working in unseen ways to bring about true togetherness in spite of ‘surface’ dissension. Psychologically speaking,

We have seen that there is a greater likeness between the subconscious of people than there is between the conscious. Differences of tastes, outlook, culture, mental power, art sense, and ethical insight are prominent in the conscious, but the subconscious, in which race memory survives and primitive instincts abide, is much more homogenous. What therefore appeals to the subconscious and sublimates its energy creates an instinctive basis of unity.ⁱ

The ‘indigenous’ quality is that subconscious, deep level that supersedes all subjectivism and opinion; and it always validates itself as its theory gives way to practice. Ultimately, this is to say that the gathering of worshippers in time and space elicits an environment in which group emotion—whether positive or negative—is far

more powerful than the emotion of the individuals of which it is comprised. *The communal aspect of worship is not held hostage to the impulse of the individual because it is ultimately far more powerful.*ⁱⁱ

This characterization of group dynamics must be tempered somewhat by pragmatism. Dr. William McDougall believes a group has five needs: continuity of existence; a general idea of its nature and functions; rivalry with other groups; traditions, customs, habits; order.ⁱⁱⁱ It is easy to see these elements at work in the worshipping church as it continually seeks to honor God—the only reason for its existence. The desire to further the work of the kingdom of God necessitates the overpowering of the spiritual Adversary. Organisms evolve and self-organize, so the church adopts liturgical standards and quantifies its polity and its piety. These universal qualities prove the integration of the church. Without them it would be in grave danger of disintegration.

As the subconscious of the group (psychology) is combined with its needs (practicality), an important step follows. Values are proposed and adopted. This forms a standard by which a worship community can function, as aptly represented by the example of the worshippers of the Evangelical Covenant Church in Rocklin, California. They have agreed that worship must (a) be unified, (b) seek the presence of God, (c) engage all, (d) pursue the experience of God, (e) be uninhibited.^{iv} The significance of this statement lies in the fact that the worshipping community of Rocklin would not generally be considered ‘together’ in the artistic expression of its worship. It is truly fragmented in style and taste. The strength of their life together is an underlying resolve that is based on their standing as fellow believers in the work of

God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. It is an agreement that is in step with the idea that Jesus Christ certainly made a considerable investment in faith community issues compared to preaching and teaching. As the church in Rocklin unifies under its inspiration and intention, it is just now discovering more significantly the next necessary step of connection.

Most churches are willing to comply with this underlying resolve in theory, but are retaining disintegration in practice. This is not the way of the indigenous worship voice! *The phrase most often stated by those who think they are using the indigenous worship voice is, "Well, I don't like it, but I'll put up with it because it seems to minister to them!"* But there is a dramatically significant difference between *tolerating* the views of another person and actually *embracing* what she or he has to say. 'Agree to disagree' might work well as a Christian catch phrase that keeps many worship skirmishes either at bay or otherwise suppressed, **but as *modus operandi* it does not reflect the deepest yearnings of the indigenous worship approach.** It is the most insidious and damaging imposter! This is because as each worshipper only compromises for the sake of any semblance of peace, something is lost for everyone—individually and collectively.

As the worshipping church finds its developing connection in the indigenous-worship-voice context, compromise must give way to consensus or the indigenous worship voice has no chance of truly working! Three steps must occur for this to happen. First, complete honesty must rule the moment. All of the varying opinions and convictions must be openly communicated. Second, each person must listen to these opinions. Though it is sometimes difficult to vulnerably divulge intense

internal thoughts and feelings, we most often have more trouble listening to others' intense internal thoughts and feelings—particularly those that are antithetical to our own! Good talkers need good listeners! Finally, good talkers and their listeners are hopeless without the willingness of all parties involved to learn to accept as well. The concept of connection is the least static of all of the indigenous worship voice components, and because relationships are constantly evolving, these three *proactive* steps are the most productive way to strengthen connection. Individuals must take the initiative one with another.^v

Connection can more easily be threatened and weakened than reinforced. Unfortunately, much of the strengthening of connection occurs reactively. People make poor choices. Feelings are hurt. Friendships wear down. As brothers and sisters find themselves in the throes of tense relationships and as their struggles become naturally and increasingly more difficult, they will have to choose whether to restore and renew broken interactions. So when a breach of trust or confidence or connection occurs, immediate steps must be taken before chasms of non-communication and mutual indifference or antagonism can widen. If Matthew 18 standards were more than just an occasional reference point for modern Christians, the indigenous worship voice would become not only a possibility, but inevitable! Another remedial connecting process is referred to by Susan Howatch in *Glittering Images*: “(C)aring may generate understanding, understanding may generate forgiveness and once you’ve forgiven them you’ll be at peace with them both at last.”^{vi}

Proactive and reactionary steps toward connection are reflected in the two biblical examples of John and Peter. John was apparently the best friend of Jesus—the one whom He loved. This represents that style of intimacy we are sure was born out of an undeniable affinity. Though we know of tense moments in the relationship, our overwhelming sense is that open sharing and understanding typified the bond between the two. Peter, on the other hand, was constantly blurting out this or that, covering up his tracks, and learning from his mistakes, thereby needing constant confrontation. Awareness of both types of relationships will keep the worshipping community prepared for the dynamic growth inherent in the development of true connection.

One of the most challenging ways the leaders of worship can employ a healthy sense of connection is by viewing practice and production through pastoral eyes. Certainly one of the most difficult dichotomies lies in the difference between what we think the product—visual, aural or otherwise sensory—ought to *look, feel or sound* like and what it actually does! It is more often the case than not in worship ministry that the perception of what our craft should be extends further than what our fellow participants' proficiency can yield. It is in these times that the patient artisan will assume more of a caring, understanding, forgiving, peaceful posture than a 'mercenary,' distant, intolerant, agitated one. The pursuit of excellence should never, ever supplant relational integrity and possibility.

Secondly, true connection will never come about as a result of worship, but must be a necessary precursor to it. We simply cannot manufacture the aura and reality of connection by developing more and better worship services that seem to be

connection-friendly! Kent Hotaling, who has spent a professional lifetime championing the purpose and practice of community, writes,

Worship certainly enhances community. However, if things are not happening in the connections at a deep level with people outside of the worship service then the experience of community is superficial and does not get translated back in to Kingdom of God living. Thus people begin to have a pseudo experience of God in worship—Who they can't find any place else in the other activities of their lives. I think this is a special danger to this generation who have grown up on TV and Nintendo and the computer world. Reality is in these disconnected worlds rather than in the hard choices of relationships.^{vii}

In addition to caring first, producing second, we must always be concerned with what happens in our relationships *before* we try to worship together.

The third tangible—and by far the most difficult—way in which a worship leader can employ connection in the worshipping community is through mutual submission. The Greek word that is used most often for submission in the New Testament is *hupotasso* and it refers to the opposite of self-assertion. Submission refers to hierarchical matters such as our relationship to God, to others in authority in professional and spiritual circles, as well as societal orders such as family matters. Submission means giving up our own assumptions for the sake of our growth as individuals through the insights of others, as well as releasing what we think is our greatest need for the sake of the community.^{viii}

Submission is particularly difficult to employ because it contains two inherent difficulties. First, some would say that submission imposes parameters on the one who is doing the submitting because it threatens her or his freedom to think and act in a certain way. Submission might mean compromising certain rights or convictions.

Full submission to God seems reasonable because of his sovereignty, but submission to others who may not be as ‘right’ as we think we are is a bit more troublesome. Ironically, submission might not necessarily be an intrusion on one’s independence. According to Richard Foster, “Every discipline has its corresponding freedom. What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way.”^{ix} A corollary difficulty is the perceived imposition of submission on identity. If God has uniquely gifted and called a person according to His purpose, it may seem incongruent to submit to an opposing or challenging viewpoint. Rather than obliterating identity, however, submission actually validates it. If individuals did not possess and maintain their unique selves, there would be no possibility of subjection in the first place!^x

We cannot leave the discussion of connection without briefly exploring the concept of connection through crisis. *Without a doubt, the most direct path to the formation of close community is through the experience of shared tragedy.* Crisis can occur within the confines of the faith community or in the broader community at large. Regardless, crisis always brings about, at the very least, momentary connection. We find ourselves appalled by, enthralled by, or simply moved by intense moments of life. Perfect strangers forming a bucket brigade, sandbagging, enlisting in the military, rationing, working extra shifts, sharing, talking, organizing block parties, praying on the sidelines for injured athletes, all prove the natural quality of connection through crisis. Perhaps worshippers must recognize the crisis of their own need (again, many churches are at war within themselves), and the

incredible tragedy of a lost world in need of a Savior, in order to embrace the concept of connection most fully and effectively.

In-Spiration, intention and connection form a strong internal structure. This inward strength and resolve will eventually find its focus turning outward in mission and expression:

We look for any relationships or networks that need to be established for the health and welfare of the community... Whatever, wherever, whoever... Our major weapon in this work is Christian community... an alternative way of living that shows forth social life as it is meant to be lived. Communities of love and acceptance. Fellowships of freedom and liberation. Centers of hope and vision. Societies of nurture and accountability. Little pockets of life and light so stunning that a watching world will declare, 'See how they love one another!'^{x1}

ⁱ David Hislop, *Our Heritage in Public Worship* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 49.

ⁱⁱ Ironically, however, Hislop does not deny the impact of the community experience on the individual. The great irony is that "something is created—a social medium—a fellowship before God and the Creator Saviour in which the individual experience of each worshipper is fulfilled." (55).

ⁱⁱⁱ Hislop, 51.

^{iv} Rocklin, CA visit by author, November 13, 2001.

^v This entire discussion presupposes an idealistic view of connection. Unfortunately, most relationships are unable to withstand total honesty. The absence of love precludes any profit being gained through straightforward, uninhibited dialogue. One must also ask whether all relationships should be filtered through the same 'intimacy' lens. Where does one draw the line, for instance, when it comes to confession of sin? Or how realistic is it to imagine carrying on multiple deep-level relationships? Certainly responsibility must be taken to guard and protect in certain areas, but it seems more necessary to err on the side of more connection, particularly in the context of our highly individualistic and fearful society.

^{vi} Susan Howatch, *Glittering Images* (New York, NY: Fawcett Crest, 1987), 286.

^{vii} Kent Hotaling, email received by author, October, 2001.

^{viii} Aside from New Testament allusions, this concept of intentional community for societal concern is reflected in many historical and modern movements. Commonality is seen particularly in early Eastern custom, in St. Anthony of Egypt, Pachomius, Basil of Cappodocia, Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Gregory of Nyssa, as well as post-Reformation communities such as the Hutterites and Mennonites. The Shakers, Doukhobors, Ephrata Community, the Oneida Community and the Amana Society are modern examples. Great leaders such as Walter Rauschenbusch, Vida Scudder, Mother Theresa and Dr. Martin Luther King championed social reform. The fusion of connection and mission are represented by great Christian workers such as Gerard Groote, Thomas A'Kempis, Dorothy Day, and Clarence Jordan. The paradox of the 'extended cloister' is one of the greatest examples of the manifestation of idealism.

^{ix} Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 96.

^x Foster, 99.

^{xi} Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 1998), 174.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MISSION

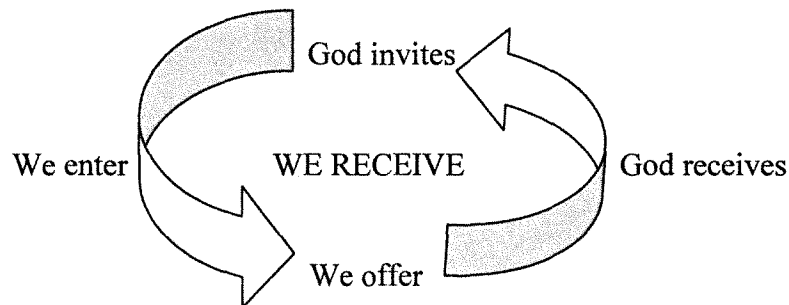
(I)f those in the churches really are enjoying fullness of life, evangelism will be unstoppable and largely automatic.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

Because most churches begin their search for a worship voice with the question of ‘how’ to reach out, they often bypass the ‘what, why and whom’ of inspiration, intention and connection. Their energy gets expended mostly on how to get the most ‘bang for the buck’ in order to keep the organization progressing. But over and against the tendency toward target audiences and marketing techniques lies the mission that results from Spirit-led, Creator-focused, brotherly/sisterly-love worship. For a church to definitively discover, strengthen, and engage its mission in the context of the indigenous worship voice, it must begin with these three prerequisites. God has established a relationship with his people who respond in worship, which means they are motivated and empowered by His Spirit, willing to tell the redemptive Story of Jesus Christ, and committed to being and doing so together. Douglas Horton says, “The relation of God to the worshiper is one of forgiving and creative love; that of the worshiper to God one of loving dependence and dedication; and that of the worshiper to his fellow man one of loving witness to God’s will.”ⁱ Then as worshipers are drawn into the work of God they find themselves inextricably linked to each other and to those who are expectant and curious about the claims of Christ. Much of what has been propagated in church

growth circles really has nothing to do with this chronology because church growth processes often start with the *mission technique* rather than the *mission reason*.

The indigenous worship voice definition remembers the importance of ministry to the worshippers themselves as a necessary—albeit not the primary—quality: ‘...for the good of the worshippers...’ There are both individual and collective ‘benefits’ to the worshipers of a church as they begin to engage its mission. Ministry to those ‘on the inside’ comes as a result of the ‘cyclical dance’ that occurs between worshippers and their God, wherein God invites our entrance into his revelation, in which we remember and offer our thanks. He receives our worship and presents a subsequent re-invitation.



Several areas of growth occur as this cycle takes place. Spiritually, the people of God find refreshment for their souls. The worship experience reminds us of the core need-provision of our existence. We are a people who are desperate for a Savior and long for a deeper understanding of our existence. This growing understanding is the intellectual benefit of the worship experience. The didactic quality of worship does not have to occur through what is commonly called ‘teaching,’ but is a result of a conglomeration of worship elements. Spiritual and intellectual renewal might also

bring about additional renewal as worshippers find release from the plight of their daily lives and restoration for their overtaxed emotions. Much of this refreshment comes through the gift of common experience, as worshippers find their difficulties somewhat eased as they share them with other fellow Christians. Relational strength is reflected in and brought about by all of the areas of internal worship ministry.

This is the ‘psychology’ of worship, wherein the deepest ‘felt needs’ of worshippers are addressed not by the manipulative efforts of selfish participants, but by the grace of God as mediated through the worship experience. Ministry to the gathered, open, believing, grateful, and offering community is broad, thorough, and unlike any other form of personal or communal renewal.

The strengthening of this internal mission can best be summed up by the words of Matthew 11.28-30, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The invitation is clearly stated. It is an invitation extended to the very ones who have found that their own attempts at life leave them tired and overwhelmed. It is an invitation that comes with a promise; a promise that once discovered and recognized, the God of all creation will be seen as ready and able to provide. What we seek as worship leaders who have become inundated with envisioning, creating, producing, and perpetuating ‘success’ is found as we dance the dance of the invitation and inclusion of God and the remembering and offering of our selves.

The problem with a fully-engaged inward mission is the tendency toward a ‘community-focused’ holiness rather than a ‘Christ-absorbed’ sanctity. Sometimes the ministry to the insiders can translate into a celebration simply of Christian attributes that may positively affect those who gather for worship. Self-ministry that is self-centered can be reflected in an emphasis on the internal atmosphere and agenda: “The church unfortunately cannot protect itself against the insinuation of a mere group spirit, be it a town spirit, a class spirit, or even a national spirit, into its symbols. Christ is displaced by a sometimes quite respectable tribal God.”ⁱⁱ We see this reflected particularly during holidays when the celebrations of the calendar year supplant the celebration that is offered in the church year! Mothers, Valentines, veterans, Independence Day and the like all have their place in our Christian life, but must always be secondary to (or at least partnered with) the cause of Christ. So it must also be with ethical persuasions, moral teachings, tributes, and cultural prognostications.

Though inward ministry is needed for the growth of kingdom work, it is equally or more important that the worshipping community discover, strengthen and engage its mission to those outside of its fold, for ministry to unbelievers. An obvious criterion by which to judge the integrity of the indigenous worship voice is whether it is forcing worshipers to expend more ‘heart energy’ on those outside the fellowship than on those within. As the church finds healing through in-Spired, intentional and connective worship, it will ultimately find itself compelled to “look out and not in.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This looking out and seeing the possibilities that present themselves to us in outreach can only happen if we are committed to turning away from our looking inward at our own issues. Unfortunately, many church leaders are wrangling over issues of polity, finances, vision, and infrastructure. In addition, much of what is considered ministry is less kingdom work than it is an emphasis on legacy, history, tradition, and ecclesiastical mores and memories. Frederick Buechner writes of a time in his life when he was “less a man praying than a man being a man praying.”^{iv} A loose paraphrase would bring the analogy into many of our churches as we are ‘less churches ministering than churches being churches ministering.’

As we move past our selves we are thrust into an abrupt recognition of the outside need. We need to discover who the ‘outsiders’ are by knowing the demographics of our communities, by discovering how they are related to our churches. We need to translate knowing who they are into who from our fellowship knows them and who can subsequently care for them. Knowing who can care for them will move us toward actually knowing their needs and trying to find a way to assist in meeting them. These needs reflect all of the areas where we as worshippers are finding change (physical, emotional, relational, intellectual), and our helping must be an extension of the help we have found for ourselves! Only after getting past ourselves, opening our awareness to the struggles of those around us, determining most obvious contacts and sincerely sacrificing for their good, will we be able to hope our worship will be a source of comfort and provision for those who are spiritually curious.

Dr. Larry Crabb submits that the only way to strengthen our resolve to exist for ministry to others is by providing a haven for all in our worship experience. He believes that the “job of the pastor is to teach people to pray, to lead Christians into worship. Everything else—evangelism, discipleship, youth ministry, everything—flows from worship.”^v So once worship has been ordered as the top priority, worshipping Christians can then progress through the only way to open inclusion. It comes through vulnerability and brokenness. Because we are broken ourselves, we are welcoming to others who are broken. Our vulnerability fosters a sense of welcome because we join rather than judge.

The adequate engagement of the indigenous worship voice is predicated upon inclusion. We must be welcoming of all if we want to use the voice of all! The invitation is open. There must be no exclusivity in our midst—whether spoken or implied. The indigenous worship voice embraces a mission that draws people into unified worship rather than segregates, based on varying strata of societal, artistic, racial, or any other representation. *This may be the most difficult aspect of engaging the indigenous worship voice* because our churches are generally marked by complacency with regard to inclusive invitation. We sometimes stand above rather than next to. Thomas Merton writes, “(The educated) stand and starve in the doors of the banquet—the banquet to which they surely realize that they are invited—while those more poor, more stupid, less gifted, less educated, sometimes even less virtuous than they, enter in and are filled at those tremendous tables.”^{vi} Once we remove any hint of snobbery from our life together, we are given the opportunity to experience the greatest reciprocation that comes from the offering of those we perhaps imagined

could offer the least. Hence, an accompanying responsibility of the actively-engaged, outward mission of our worship is accessibility. One of the most important steps to engaging the indigenous worship voice with respect to visitors is to “speak to them seriously and in something like their own language.”^{vii} Our mission is not complete if is not intelligible. We must worship in the vernacular of our constituency.

All of the quantifying and assessing of inward and outward mission must be filtered through the lens of kingdom work, as it relates to the ultimate honor and benefit of God. Many lesser goals exist under the guise of ‘kingdom work’ while they really have little to do with the overall purpose of God. Perhaps the greatest example of this type of charade is the account of misplaced motivation found in I Samuel 13.7-12:

Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear...So he said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.” And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. “What have you done?” asked Samuel. Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”

Saul had led worship for the wrong reason. He offered a sacrifice not to please God but in order to *keep happy the people under his command*. This was not an isolated incident in the life of Saul, as similar events took place to varying degrees. The same consequence awaited Saul each time, with final judgment coming in I Samuel 15.22-23, a solemn reminder to all leaders of worshipping communities:

Samuel said, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.”

Worship is not an expedient.

The only way to strengthen our resolve to worship solely for the benefit and honor of God is to remove all of our carnal expectations and motivations from the inception, creation, and implementation of the worship event. Our thinking of worship must be employed not simply by considering where we want to go from where we are, but by sensitively discerning how God wants to move us closer to his purpose. We must humbly bring forth our craft with a clear understanding that all we can create is sorely inadequate to the mission of attaining Perfection. Our presenting of worship elements will then find context in a fresh realization of God’s gifting and our grateful acceptance of his disclosure of Himself! This approach to worship will most definitely not, as Douglas Horton writes, “please musicians who think that revelation comes through their high art or their commercial appeal. It will not please pastors who think that revelation comes through their beautiful words or their folksiness. It will not please any group with dynastic pretensions or with the need to have egos gratified. It will not please any of us. But then the gospel is not about pleasing us. It’s about life-new life.”^{viii} This new life is the life that comes to us by grace through faith, beginning and ending with God Himself.

Because He is Beginning and End, every component of our worship must be evaluated in the context of His activity. This is the process of negation by which a

bold determination can be made regarding the appropriateness of our worship mission. (As with sculpting, we chip away that which we do not want and are left with the quality result for which we hope.) We must chip away anything that is born out of putting mission first, without considering it in relation to in-Spiration, intention and connection. Therefore, according to Michael Horton, what should be “absent from our services are market-driven entertainment elements. We also avoid moralistic, political, therapeutic, and consumer-oriented preaching. Instead we focus on God himself telling his story of redemption through the lips of the minister.”^{ix} In short, we must ask if our worship experience ultimately honors God and his continuing work among us. This question is the crux of our mission and properly orders all of its other missiological intent.

In-Spiration.

Intention.

Connection.

Mission.

The healthy fusion of the four occurs and the next quality of the indigenous worship voice is inevitable:

Expression.

ⁱ Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1959), 69.

ⁱⁱ Horton, 65.

ⁱⁱⁱ Clarice Bowman, *Restoring Worship* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951), 38.

^{iv} Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco Publishers, 1983), 32.

^v Larry Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1999), 164.

^{vi} Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 194.

^{vii} Buechner, 47.

viii Horton, 13.

ix Ibid., 13.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EXPRESSION

(W)e must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God—drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression...

C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

It has been clearly established that there are four precursors to the appropriate and vibrant expression of the indigenous worship voice. Underlying all that happens is the necessary inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit. As this in-Spiration takes hold of worshippers, they should intend only to reciprocate by pleasing God and God alone by telling his story. This intention finds one example of practical application as the subconscious unity of connection frames the activities of the worshipping group. Their embarking upon successful mission then becomes largely automatic. Worship that is God-breathed, God-centered, unified, and automatic brings about an artistic expression that is *free and unrestricted*, as opposed to one that is bound because it is contrived, selfish, manipulative, and manufactured. Not only is expression resultant of these qualities, it is inevitable. Expression in the worship sense is the creative transmission of perfect Truth through various media. Expression is synonymous with art. The artist cannot ignore what begs to be shared, so her or his art attempts to bring into order that which the artisan knows and believes, though she or he may not fully comprehend it.

The discussion to follow will center on discovering, strengthening, and engaging this unrestricted expression by focusing on the specific artistic discipline of

music, for it is perhaps the media most used in worship, and because it is the artistic offering around which most dissension occurs. The truths that we will discover through crafting and implementing the music moment will be generally applied to other modes of worship expression.

Music, more than any other art form, should be that by which we are pulled “into coordinated participation with people whose voices are very different from ours without in any way reducing or blurring the distinctiveness of each voice...the way of music is to pull together all the different timbres and qualities of voice, and weave them into rich harmonies, preserving the uniqueness of each one.”ⁱ Music should bring us together rather than divide us. Music that follows the pattern of the indigenous worship voice is harmonious and pleasing—bringing integrity to the worshipping community rather than disintegration. The gift of music should be friend, not curse nor foe!ⁱⁱ

The first step to creating and implementing unifying music is accomplished by finding that which could be considered quality ‘ingredients’ for the worshipping community. Establishing criteria for the selection of both artists and repertoire does this adequately. Good people without good components leads to courtesy claps. Good songs without mature and gifted musicians leads to frustration. Quality in personnel and repertoire serves the indigenous worship voice.

Musicians (singers and players) who want to participate must exhibit three primary traits. First, they must not be primarily seeking ‘platform time.’ Most musicians don’t practice in order to practice, they practice in order to play! So they are usually looking for a chance! This is a difficulty in most church situations

because musicians are often relegated to providing music ‘at the local level’ if other venues do not prove practical. But if using the church primarily as an outlet is the driving motivation of the artist, the quality of worship is threatened. Second, musicians must possess the necessary ability for the task at hand. Though perfection is never attainable in the area of music (as if tempo and melody and harmony and dynamic and room and personnel and diction and text could ever be *completely* in line), there is something to be said for pursuing fine presentation. The church is too often a place where artists are allowed unnecessarily to fail in their craft because they have been set up to fail. Worship leaders must, for the sake of the presenter and the listeners, provide some kind of parameters by which to determine who sings or plays what when. Finally, musicians must be willing to make personal sacrifices in order to participate. The more significant the degree of involvement, the more a person must be willing to give up in order to participate.

But *who* are these people? How do we determine *where* to find them? We must remember that expression only comes by way of connection and it is our relationships that will tell *how* the emerging artist will surface. We must listen. We must seek. We must provide opportunities for musicians to share their hearts’ work through retreats and creative-arts programs. Finding good musicians and music can happen as we take the necessary time to explore. Relationships must be built on all levels. Worship leaders must be willing to do the pastoral work of production! This means spending time with people, observing their various artistic offerings, and inviting them to participate. Children must be welcomed into the worship experience and worship leaders must be welcomed into children’s programs. Children must be

allowed to ‘play’ out their faith. Because adolescents need to ‘belong’ by participating with their peers, worship leaders must provide opportunities for them to express together. Young adults are asking hard questions and deeply desire a pastoral presence. Many, many middle-aged adults have honed their crafts to a high level of competency and need to be asked to share. Older adults must never be led to feel as if their lives have been ‘wasted,’ as they often demonstrate the greatest integrity of faith and art. So worship leaders must assume their roles as people who are aware of the deep complexities and difficulties in the lives of those whom they serve and invite people of different perspectives to join in the weekly rendering of the Truth of where they have been, are, and will be going together.

In addition to finding the right people, worship leaders must also find the appropriate repertoire. Donald Hustad has listed several items of note with regard to quality worship music. All good sacred music will:

- a. express and communicate the gospel in text and music languages that are richly understandable by the culture for which it is intended.
- b. offer a worthy ‘sacrifice of praise.’
- c. express and enhance the best Christian theology of each culture.
- d. speak from the whole person to the whole person.
- e. be genuinely creative, shunning the hackneyed and trite as well as the elitist and abstruse.

In addition to these standards, when music is chosen for congregational singing the leader must consider the focus of the music, its tempo, style, accessibility (jumps, skips, accidentals), familiarity and language.ⁱⁱⁱ

Interestingly, these criteria say nothing about style.

Worship leaders must develop libraries of printed and recorded music. But this collection *must extend beyond the confines of their own musical tastes*. Rap, Classical, Romantic, Impressionistic, Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Contemporary Christian music are all styles that should be recognized as possibilities for inclusion in the indigenous worship voice, because they might all be reflective of culture of a particular setting! International voices, such as Eastern and Latin styles, should be heard, as multiculturalism is a growing and necessary reality. Worship leaders should prioritize their financial resources to this end, as well as take the necessary time in order to interact with others who are also seeking quality music.

The first goal in expression is *finding good material*.

Once found, good material must be strengthened.

First, music and musicians must be arranged properly. Arranging refers to the instrumentation, form, and setting of a musical piece. Instrumentation must be considered in the context of that which is available in the group. It must also fit the genre of the piece in question. Music must be playable or singable! It must also be acceptable and attractive to the players, singers, and listeners. A good piece of music will become a great piece of music as it is molded to fit the moment for which it is intended. Musical offerings should be accompanied properly and undertaken with technical, emotional, spiritual, and relational efficiency. In short, music must make sense!

Second, the old adage of ‘practice, practice, practice’ also bodes well for those

who want to strengthen the indigenous worship voice. But practice does not mean to ‘try it out’ on a warm and forgiving audience! It means embracing the discipline required to work not on what is easy and fun, but on what is lacking and troublesome! Practicing the expression of the indigenous worship voice is difficult because it is musically, relationally, spiritually, and emotionally confrontational.

The third step in strengthening the expression of the indigenous worship voice is highly intangible: passion. When the truth of the message of Christ captures the heart of the believer and is manifested in in-Spiration, intention, connection and mission, the voice that is heard is confidently, humbly, remarkably resonant. Something ‘feels’ right to all of those who participate.^{iv}

The goal in the strengthening phase of expression is to *nuance the good material* that was chosen.

Engaging the expression of the indigenous worship voice involves its presentation. Good material with the proper nuance will be in the proper vernacular. It will take into consideration the limitations of the receiver. But it will not necessarily cater to the prevalent whim because in so doing it will often compromise the integrity of its message! Music properly presented will also be entirely appropriate for the situation. Proper language and appropriate delivery will then serve as ‘windows to God,’ as opposed to distracting performances.

What is presented will be rejected or received so the overriding goal is to build rapport. Somewhere between the delivery of the music and its acceptance is the no-man’s-land of relationship. Rapport brings togetherness, and this is the way of the indigenous worship voice. Therefore, every effort must be made to decrease the

platform/audience, presenter/receiver dichotomy. Perhaps it is time to reconsider the architecture, setting, pace, order, printed material, and elements of our worship services. Perhaps it is time to consider creatively how music can include in new ways. The French writer Antonin Artaud, for instance, “advocated transcending distinctions between actors and observers and drawing the audience into the dramatic experience.”^v Artaud advocated theatrical moments that were rather extemporaneous and fresh, with each creative event existing for that moment and then disappearing forever.^{vi} (Some have even questioned the title ‘worship leader’ because of its tendency to perpetuate the separation inherent in the traditional leader/follower model.) An excellent analogy to consider with regard to inclusive leadership is the worship leader as leader of the circle dance. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale writes particularly about the preacher who “stays close to the ground of the local community, inviting and encouraging others to join in the circle dance of faith...And in this dance, as in the circle dance, the preacher is not the only leader. Indeed, there are those in the circle far more adept at the dance than the preacher—faithful Christians who help keep the community growing, learning, and moving in the rhythms of faith by their own seasoned modeling and teaching.”^{vii}

Good material properly nuanced and initiated should bring about rapport.

This is the apex moment of the indigenous worship voice and the conclusion of all of our striving.

Our expression can be discovered, strengthened, and engaged, but it is important to remain realistic in our expectations. At the very least, we can attempt

this artistic rendering of unified honor and glory to God, and at the very most, occasionally touch the praise of heaven. After all, our expression here is merely a rehearsal for eternity and our experience on earth reminds us that “we are not riders but pupils in the riding school; for most of us the falls and bruises, the aching muscles and the severity of the exercise, far outweigh those few moments in which we were, to our own astonishment, actually galloping without terror and without disaster.”^{viii}

ⁱ Eugene Peterson, *Answering God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989), 89.

ⁱⁱ It could easily be argued that not all music is meant to be so harmonious. This is certainly true in the case of the avant-garde and aleatoric. Much could also be said about ‘tension’ being more appealing to the listening ear than ‘release.’ But generally speaking, dissonance occurs more for resolution than aesthetic variant in most Western music. The analogy then stands unimpeded.

ⁱⁱⁱ Daniel A. Sommerville: *Diversity in Unified Worship (Planning Thematic Worship Within a Blended Context)*, (paper presented at the 1994 Midwinter Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church in America), 3.

^{iv} There is a somewhat obscure, intangible term in artistic fields called ‘It.’ No one knows exactly how to get ‘It,’ but one knows when someone has ‘It.’ ‘It’ is an elusive combination of spirit, experience, training and craft that translates into intense and incredible communication through worship arts.

^v Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1996), 27.

^{vi} Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn’t What It Used To Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and other Wonders of the Post-modern World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 49.

^{vii} Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, “Preaching As Folk Art,” *Theology News and Notes*, Vol. 48, no. 2 (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, Fall, 2001), 14.

^{viii} C.S. Lewis, *Reflections On the Psalms* (San Diego, CA, New York, NY, London: Harcourt Brace Jonavich, Publishers, 1958), 96.

CONCLUSION: PARADOX

Often breakdowns lead to breakthroughs.

Mary Michael O'Shaughnessy in Brennan Manning's *Abba's Child*

One of the most distinguishing qualities of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the question of how two apparently opposing truths (humanity and deity, humility and exaltation, giving and receiving) can function fully in tandem. The concept of paradox is so significantly antithetical to any 'worldly' structure that it precludes the rational assumption that anything about Jesus' mission could have been fashioned by human imagination! Paradox proves the gospel because no one could ever think it up as practically possible!

Because it mirrors the 'audacity' of the gospel itself, the paradoxical quality of the indigenous worship voice is, perhaps, the most compelling proof of its efficacy for the worshipping community. *Lose your voice and you will find it!*

For instance, sometimes we think that the hearts and minds of postmoderns can only be touched by doing and being something wildly creative and innovative. The great irony is that because the postmodern person craves something that is REAL, the very synthetic quality of our innovation is the very quality that turns her or him away! Perhaps it is the mystery found in the sacraments that will be the very attraction! Perhaps it is in the reclamation of liturgical form, because, "for them, in fact, the singing of praise songs is old news, and the singing of the Psalter is fresh and bracing. Like someone who is used to fast food but then sits down at an elegant feast,

those who are drenched in popular mass culture often, at the very least, find rich communities of faith more interesting.”¹

One devout minister tells of the embarrassment he feels every time he sees the old chandeliers hanging in the foyer of his tiny coastal Oregon parish. He wonders if they can be attractive at all to the outsider or if they are just throwbacks which are good for nothing other than reminiscent wanderings. But it might just be that those chandeliers are so representative of real, true in-Spiration, intention, connection and mission that what they express can be so much more than what initially appears.

We began this exploration of the indigenous worship voice with Richard’s story. Can in-Spiration, intention, connection, mission and expression ever happen in such a place? Properly ordered, prayerfully considered, and cautiously approached they are concepts that the church cannot afford to bypass. If we all embrace the possibility of paradox we will embrace each other once and for all. We will embrace “not just with civility but with genuine appreciation.”²

¹ Douglas Horton, *The Meaning of Worship* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1959), 13.

² Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 1998), 177.

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