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A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CONTEMPORARY LOOK AT
THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

by

MARK L. DALBEY

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

for

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In the past decade the church has witnessed a heightened interest in corporate worship. Many books and articles have flooded the evangelical scene on the subject of worship. Within Presbyterian and Reformed circles there has been much discussion relating to the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) and how to understand it biblically, historically, and today.

This project proposes that churches who seek to be faithful to the historic Reformed and Presbyterian regulative principle of worship will draw on both the richness of past expressions and the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship. Instead of framing the debate between traditional or contemporary styles of worship, this dissertation seeks to raise the far deeper issue of faithfulness to God and His Word. As we worship today are we making use of the full range of biblically faithful worship resources available from the past and the present? What forms do churches use to worship from the heart, with reverence and joy, according to the Word, to the glory of our

glorious God, in a way that is edifying to fellow-believers and intelligible to unbelievers and the unlearned?

The method of research includes extensive study of Scripture, church history, and contemporary worship. Surveys, personal observations, interviews, and workshops were utilized focusing on worship in the Presbyterian Church in America.

I have found that churches that put the focus of worship on commanded biblical elements with latitude in application and expression will make use of some type of blended worship. While there may initially be a measure of tension when churches implement greater variety of worship expressions, I have found with proper instruction, much patience, gradual implementation of change, and unity among the leadership this tension is overcome. As congregations learn to stretch toward one another with love and forbearance, and without insisting on their personal preferences, a deeper unity emerges with worship focused on Christ rather than styles of worship. The heart of what makes the different surveyed ministries in this study unique yet overlapping is the commitment to the RPW, with flexibility of application, based on the needs and giftedness of the local congregation.

Further research and usage of the principles of this dissertation could serve to bring about deeper unity in the PCA. Fine tuning of the worship seminar growing out of this project could be used for healthy discussion in presbyteries and throughout the denomination. Developing classes or

workshops at Covenant Seminary may help prepare pastors with greater wisdom and experience. I also believe this type of study--particularly with the extended focus on music in worship--would be helpful for worship leaders and musicians in the PCA. Perhaps seminaries such as Covenant Theological Seminary could hold concentrated one week courses for pastors, worship leaders, and seminarians to enhance unity and depth of understanding of both the theology and practice of worship. Broader surveying and interviewing follow-up would also be recommended to fine tune and expand the usefulness of this study.

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To My Loving Family and
My Dear Friends at Christ Presbyterian Church

CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION

In the decade of the 1990s the church has witnessed a heightened interest in corporate worship. Many books and articles have flooded the evangelical scene on the subject of worship. A sampling of subjects includes material consisting of biblical teaching on worship, early church worship practice, the history of worship, reformation worship, music in worship, practical considerations in planning and leading worship, and the relationship between worship and unbelievers.

In the midst of this surge of interest in worship in the evangelical church there has arisen great tension and even division within local churches as well as denominations. In the opening paragraph of his book *The New Worship* Barry Liesch states:

Nothing short of a revolution in worship styles is sweeping across North America. Worship leaders, pastors, and trained musicians face new and powerful forces of change--forces that bring renewal to some churches and fear to others. No denomination or group can sidestep the hot debate between the benefits of hymns versus choruses, seeker services versus worship services, choirs versus worship teams, organs versus synthesizers, and flowing praise versus singing one song at a time.¹

1 Barry Liesch, *The New Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 13.

The titles of two recently published books illustrate this growing conflict. John Frame has written *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* and Elmer Towns has written *Putting an End to Worship Wars*.² Both of these books deal with the mounting tension and conflict that has emerged in recent years over approaches to corporate worship.

The striking thing about Frame's book (as well as his earlier work *Worship in Spirit and Truth* ³) is that the tension and conflict are seemingly intensified within Presbyterian and Reformed churches in general and Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) churches in particular. Debate over the right understanding of the regulative principle of worship (RPW) and how to work out the details of corporate worship has produced heated debate among churches claiming equal commitment to the RPW.

Much of the debate is often focused on issues of style in worship. Does the RPW demand a "traditional" style of worship patterned after reformation churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or is it consistent with the RPW to utilize more "contemporary" styles of worship as well?

This study will attempt to answer questions related to a biblical understanding of the RPW and its appropriate

2 John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1997); Elmer L. Towns, *Putting an End to Worship Wars* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997).

3 John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1996).

implementation at the dawn of the twenty-first century. A knowledgeable grasp of the RPW as rooted in the Bible should relieve much of the tension within PCA churches and between PCA churches. An understanding of the RPW that places the focus on the "Who" of worship in a way that flows to the "what" of worship will produce both form and freedom. By rooting the discussion in the Bible first and in historical implementations of the RPW second, we will see a stronger commitment to God's desire for worship according to His commands and a greater unity and balance in the way we relate to others in the PCA and beyond.

Statement Of The Problem

The problem this dissertation will address is the tension and conflict within PCA churches and/or between PCA churches over how we are to worship God in corporate gatherings of worship. Specifically, this problem has three aspects: (1) tension and conflict over the proper understanding and application of the RPW, (2) tension and conflict over worship styles, and (3) tension and conflict over several related worship issues such as the balance between the engaging of the heart and will as well as the mind in worship. One of the challenges in addressing this problem is the highly charged emotions that often accompany views of proper worship. Those who hold to a strict application of the RPW believe worship today must match that of the sixteenth and seventeenth century reformation

churches. It is strongly held by some that this format for worship must be true for all PCA churches.

...there is no indication in Scripture that worship is to vary from church to church or that the aesthetic, musical or cultural taste of believers should have any influence on worship...⁴

Those who hold to a greater degree of freedom in applying the RPW believe they are more rooted in Scripture and less in historical expressions of the RPW:

A reaffirmation of confessionalism for our time ought to repudiate the commonly understood equation between confessionalism and traditionalism. It should rather reiterate a doctrine of *sola Scriptura* ... A doctrine of *sola Scriptura* must actually, practically, point us not simply to generalizations about historical trends, but to Scripture itself for our standards.⁵

The conflict and tension over worship is expressed in two arenas. The first arena in which it is made manifest is within local PCA churches where there are two or more groups striving to have their style of worship implemented in the congregation. The debate at this level often takes place without significant knowledge of the RPW either biblically or historically. The second arena in which the tension is made manifest is within presbytery and denominational discussions where one Teaching Elder (TE) or Session is seeking to convince other TEs or Sessions that his (their) interpretation of the RPW is the correct one and ought to be held by all others. The focus of this dissertation will

⁴ David Lachman and Frank Smith, *Worship in the Presence of God* (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992), 98.

⁵ Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 198.

primarily be the first arena--the local church in which there is conflict and tension over worship issues.⁶

One major dimension of the problem the church faces in the worship dialogue is the fact that so much focus centers on the "how" of worship. Significant attention is given to the manner in which the elements of worship are conducted. A greater focus on the "Who" of worship puts the "how" of worship into its proper perspective. This is consistent with the RPW because it gives first priority to the One Who regulates worship and second priority to the principles of worship commanded by the One we worship.⁷

A core passage that forms the theological framework for this dissertation is John 4:19-26. Here Jesus is engaged in a discussion of worship with a Samaritan woman at a well. The discussion begins with the "where" of worship--Gerizim or Jerusalem? Jesus states that a time is coming when the "where" of worship will be irrelevant and the issue will be worship "in spirit and in truth." Jesus is laying a foundation for New Covenant worship balancing spirit and truth. I believe this sets a direction for many significant balances in the worship of God including involvement of the

6 However, the conflict and tension may not be within the church but between the church and other denominational churches. Because the PCA is a connectional and confessional church there may be conflict and tension in a PCA church because its view of the RPW is either significantly more strict or loose than the norm within the denomination. While there may be peace and unity at the local level, there may be strife between that local church and others in the PCA.

7 Insight reflected in this paragraph was gained from a talk by Pastor Scotty Smith of Christ Community Church in Nashville, Tennessee at a worship symposium the author attended January 30-31, 1998.

heart, mind, and will of the worshipper. This key passage also indicates that God is primarily seeking something more significant than worship itself--He is seeking worshippers. This reinforces the major focal point of worship being about the "Who" more than the "how" of worship.

A related aspect of the problem of tension and disagreement over worship issues is where we focus the debate. One focus of the debate is often in a particular application of the RPW in a certain period of church history. How these fathers in the faith rooted their worship practices in Scripture and applied them in their day is then made normative for all ages and cultures. If this is the correct approach, then worship issues are determined by a correct historical understanding of how the RPW was actually applied in that period. The alternate focus of the debate is often centered on what the Bible teaches about the RPW and how that should be properly applied today. If this is the correct approach, then historical applications of the RPW become instructive rather than normative.

Another important dimension of the problem occurs where the RPW is either not understood or ignored altogether. The emphasis is not placed on what the Bible commands for worship but on what meets the felt needs of the unchurched.

One additional aspect of the problem is the tendency to determine worship style issues based on personal preference. The discussion of what is appropriate in worship often fails

to go beyond what a person likes or dislikes. This is especially true regarding worship music preferences.

The failure to address this problem in a careful, biblically based fashion that seeks to "speak the truth in love" will only further intensify the conflict and tension that exists. Discussions must major on manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit while seeking biblical truth. Otherwise the problem will remain so highly charged that peace and unity will remain out of reach.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation is to discover how local churches maintain their commitment to the RPW while drawing on the richness of past expressions of biblical worship as well as the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship.

Primary Research Questions

It is my desire to discover the common factors relating to worship expression in PCA churches that have a clear commitment to the RPW and whose worship reflects significant utilization of both past and present expressions of biblical worship. Key areas of discovery will answer the following questions:

1. How did these churches come to this commitment?
2. How do these churches implement their commitment?
3. How do these churches maintain their commitment?

Significance Of The Study

Teaching Elders (TEs), Ruling Elders (REs), and Deacons in the PCA all take a vow at ordination to "sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures."⁸ The *Westminster Confession of Faith* in 21-1 states that "the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture."⁹ This vow (with its inclusion of the RPW as just quoted) must be taken seriously. The author has served as a member of Candidates and Credential Committees in two PCA presbyteries during nineteen of the twenty-one years of his ordained ministry (seventeen of those years as chairman of the committees). The understanding of the RPW and its application to worship today has consistently been a point of debate and tension over the years as new candidates for gospel ministry are presented, and as TEs from other denominations and even other PCA presbyteries are examined for reception. The author has also been involved in numerous examinations of elders and deacons

8 *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Atlanta: Office of the Stated Clerk, 1997) 21-4 (#2) and 24-4 (#2).

9 *The Westminster Standards* (Norcross, GA: Great Commission Publications, 1991), 22.

for ordination both in the churches he has served in the PCA as well as serving on commissions to examine first time elder and deacon nominees in mission churches being organized. Consistently the issue of the RPW is found difficult to grasp and even more difficult to apply to worship in our day. Corporate worship is at the very heart and soul of local church life. Greater understanding of the RPW and its appropriate application is needed in the PCA today.

TEs, REs, and Deacons also take vows related to the peace, purity, and unity of the church. The vow for RE's and Deacons asks, "Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the church?"¹⁰ Putting vows number two and number six together emphasizes the importance of holding on to the truth expressed in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) with a zeal for peace and unity in the church. The conflict and strife related to worship issues at times seems to lack either a zeal for the truth or a zeal for peace and unity. The ordination vows of the PCA call for both. The pursuit of this dissertation will seek to do both. If God is pleased to bless this work it could be used to serve the PCA along these lines.

An outworking of this dissertation will be a course entitled "Biblically Balanced Worship." It will be the goal of this course to increase the knowledge of the participants in a way that will reduce tension and conflict and enhance

10 *The Book of Church Order*, 24-4 (#6).

biblical worship in the local congregation. While the course would be targeting use with local churches, it could have a broader application at a presbytery or denominational level as well.

Definition of Terms

It is very important to be clear on the use of key terms when dealing with any subject--and particularly one as highly charged emotionally as worship. The purpose statement above states: "The purpose of this dissertation is to discover how local churches maintain their commitment to the RPW while drawing on the richness of past expressions of biblical worship as well as the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship." The following working definitions will apply to this dissertation:

"understanding of the RPW"--There has been much debate over the meaning of the regulative principle of worship. There will be much in this dissertation that interacts with the outworking of the meaning of this term. The basic definition is simply that which is expressed by *The Westminster Confession of Faith* in 21-1.¹¹ God has instituted the acceptable way of worshipping Himself in His revealed Word. He is not to be worshipped in any way other

¹¹ *The Westminster Standards*, 22.

than what He has prescribed in Scripture. John Frame summarizes this definition as follows:

We must ask the Scriptures what God wants us to do in worship. Then, as we worship, we must do those things--and only those things.¹²

Determining "circumstances" and "applications" of this principle will be the subject of much of this dissertation.

"draws on the richness of past expressions of biblical worship"--This phrase was carefully chosen to avoid the more nebulous term "traditional." Traditional often carries with it a fixed expression in a particular time. To draw on the richness of past expressions of biblical worship is much broader in scope. It gives the worshipping congregation and worship leaders all of church history to draw from in a more selective way. It appreciates what God has done in the past in worshipping congregations yet draws on the past with an eye to present applicability.

"freshness of present expressions of biblical worship"--This phrase was carefully chosen to avoid the more nebulous term "contemporary." Contemporary often carries with it a particular style narrowly defined, such as use of drums and electronic instruments in worship. To draw on the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship gives much more freedom to seek or even create fresh expressions that are relevant to the worshipping congregation in view. That may take the form of setting hymns written in past centuries to

12 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 39.

arrangements that include accompaniment by wind, string, and percussion instruments of the present day "praise band" phenomenon interspersed with scripture songs and choruses.¹³ Or it may take some of the same hymns and set them to a classical arrangement with a string quartet and interspersed with American folk hymns as described by Tim Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.¹⁴ The key factor is relevance to today's worshipping congregation.

"biblical worship"--A summary definition of biblical worship is worship from the heart, according to the Word, unto the glorious Triune God, in a way that is edifying to the brethren, and intelligible to the unbeliever.

13 As the author recently observed and experienced at Christ Community Church (PCA) in Nashville, Tennessee.

14 Tim Keller, "What it Takes to Worship Well," *Leadership* 15 (Spring 1994): 22.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Biblical-Theological Framework

The biblical-theological framework that undergirds this work is covenantal and reformed. God presents Himself in the Bible as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe Who reveals His will regarding how He desires to be worshipped. He does this through the inspired writers of scripture from Genesis through Revelation. Through a process known as organic inspiration these writers are directed by God the Holy Spirit¹⁵ to write exactly what He wants while at the same time consciously addressing the immediate context in which they are writing.

In order to discover God's revealed will regarding worship, careful attention must be given to the progressive unfolding of God's revealed will moving through various stages in the redemptive-historical account. Throughout the Old Testament there is an expectation that a "new song" is coming¹⁶ which finds its initial fulfillment in the first coming of Christ and its final fulfillment in the heavenly

15 2 Timothy 3:15-16.

16 Psalm 98:1-9.

worship of the Lamb who was slain.¹⁷ On one hand the substance of the Old Testament must not be missed in the understanding of the New Testament Church. On the other hand the newness and greater glory of the New Testament Church must not be weighed down with the former glory of the Old Testament. Issues of continuity and discontinuity as well as promise and fulfillment are ongoing sources of discussion and debate in understanding the entire biblical revelation God has given His people.

All evangelical Christians strive to be biblical in their understanding of worship. Yet a right understanding of the Bible's own presentation of itself as a progressive, unfolding revelation of God's covenant plan of redemption for the ages is a critical point of departure that has various implications for how God is to be worshipped.

Biblical Perspective

Before the fall, Adam and Eve walked in the Garden of Eden with God. Their lives were offered up in moment-by-moment worship and celebration of the God Who had made them in His image. All of life was truly worship that honored and exalted God.

Sin broke the intimacy and immediacy of worship by bringing guilt, shame, and separation between God and His image-bearers. Adam and Eve hid from God and needed His

¹⁷ Revelation 5:9-14.

provision of a covering of animal skin.¹⁸ They were driven out of the Garden and had to approach God with a sacrifice to come near to Him. As the account of Cain and Abel teaches, even with a sacrifice it is clear that God was to be approached with a heart of faith. Otherwise the outward form of worship was found unacceptable.¹⁹

During the period from Adam to Moses the patriarchs acted as priests before God on behalf of themselves and their families. They built altars of worship before God and offered sacrifices as they called upon the name of the Lord in worship.²⁰ Enosh, Noah, and Abraham are good examples of this. Each of these men of faith were responding to God's expression of grace in their lives.

God remembered His gracious covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when He called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land. After miraculously delivering the children of Israel from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, Moses and the Israelites sang a song of praise and triumph to the Lord Who had saved them. Miriam, the sister of Moses, then led the women in a song of praise with tambourines and dancing.²¹ Here we see a more corporate celebration and praise of God in response to His

18 Genesis 3:21.

19 Genesis 4:1-7; Hebrews 11:4.

20 Genesis 4:26; 8:20-21; 12:6-8.

21 Exodus 15:1-21.

redeeming grace. Alfred Sendry notes the significance of this event:

In Ancient Israel music had a triple significance: singing, playing of instruments, and dance. All these forms of musical art were considered worthy to serve God and glorify His name.²²

The ten commandments that follow in Exodus 20 begin with God's gracious deliverance out of Egypt and the importance of proper worship of the one true God as recounted in the first four commandments.

The confirmation of the covenant with Moses at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 24 reveals the importance of blood sacrifices. Blood was sprinkled on the altar and on the people followed by a fellowship meal with God and the leaders of Israel. This sets the overall context for the establishment of the sacrificial system, the priesthood of Aaron, and the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25-31. Throughout the establishment of the Levitical priesthood and Old Testament sacrificial system is a focus on God's sovereign and gracious provision of forgiveness for a sinful people through the shedding of blood. Worship reflects looking to God in faith and celebrating His goodness and grace. Joyful celebration was part of the appointed feasts and sacrifices.²³

In the midst of the Mosaic worship system are clear indicators that God desires to be worshipped according to the specific commands He reveals in the law. In a general way God

²² Alfred Sendry, *Music in Ancient Israel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969), 76.

²³ Leviticus 23:39-41.

makes it clear regarding all of His commands that nothing is to be added to or subtracted from God's law.²⁴ Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu serve as specific examples of what happens when unauthorized additions are made to God's worship commands.²⁵ They took their censers, put fire in them, and added incense. Then they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord that was contrary to His instruction. Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and they were consumed. This reveals that any attempt to approach God in His holiness apart from His prescribed manner is met with potential immediate judgment.

After Israel entered the land and King David brought the ark to Jerusalem, preparations were made for the building of a permanent home for God in a temple. The temple would be patterned after the tabernacle and include the holy place and the most holy place.

David was very involved in the structuring of worship at this time with a special focus on musical instruments and singers. In connection with the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint brother Levites as singers and instrumentalists. They were to raise their voices with "resounding joy."²⁶ David set apart Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthum for the ministry of prophesying

24 Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 12:32.

25 Leviticus 10:1-3.

26 1 Chronicles 13:8; 15:16-28.

while accompanied by harps, lyres, and cymbals. Old and young alike were involved in playing these instruments.²⁷ These temple musicians were devoted to worship music full-time.²⁸ The range of instruments included winds, strings, and percussion most every place instruments were mentioned.²⁹ The sheer number (4000 out of 38,000) of Levites devoted to music and song reveals the vital importance David placed on music in the worship of God.³⁰ David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister there daily.³¹

When the temple was dedicated under King Solomon the worship and praise of God was enhanced by the Levites using the musical instruments King David had made for praise to the Lord.³² Rayburn describes this advance in worship music:

The worship of the Lord's people during the reign of David was organized upon a grand scale. It became even more magnificent after Solomon's temple was completed. Great choirs trained under professional musicians provided sublime music for the awe-inspiring services of worship. It was only in the splendor of the ceremony that the worship of the temple was different from that of the tabernacle. The same sacrifices, offerings, and feasts were observed. The emphasis upon worship through music, both instrumental and vocal, seems to be the only added element. God introduced this emphasis largely through the poetic and musical gifts which He had given to His servant King David.³³

27 1 Chronicles 25:1-8.

28 1 Chronicles 9:33.

29 1 Chronicles 13:8; 15:28; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13.

30 1 Chronicles 23:3-5.

31 1 Chronicles 16:37-38.

32 2 Chronicles 7:6.

Edersheim describes this scene at the dedication of the temple as a foreshadowing of heavenly worship in the Book of Revelation:

But how solemn must have been the scene when, at the dedication of Solomon's Temple during the service of praise, "the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of God!" (2 Chronicles 5:13-14) Such music, and such responsive singing, might well serve, in the book of Revelation, as imagery of heavenly realities (Revelation 4:8,11; 5:9,12; 7:10-12), especially in that description of the final act of worship in Revelation 14:1-5, where at the close of their antiphony the two choirs combine, as at the dedication of the second Temple, to join in this grand unison, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." (Rev. 19:6-7; 5:13)³⁴

Singers accompanied by musical instruments led the praises of God at key points in the future history of Israel when reform took place in the land. The instrumentalists and singers led the joyful worship and praise of God when Joash was announced as king during the attempted overthrow of David's line by the wicked Athaliah; when King Hezekiah purified the temple and restored proper sacrifices; and when King Josiah restored worship in the temple in his day.³⁵ A proper place for musical song and instruments is particularly seen here with specific application beyond the offering of sacrifices alone.

33 Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 76.

34 Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.), 81.

35 2 Chronicles 23:13; 29:25-30; 34:12.

The Psalter is the inspired book of songs for the people of God. David's authorship of many of them is consistent with the outburst of song and instrument in his time. Even the instruments seem to convey the great joy of worship. Psalm 98 is a great illustration of the place of song in worship:

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn-- shout for joy before the LORD, the King. Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.³⁶

Music in worship has a central place throughout the psalms. God commands His people and, in fact, all of creation to praise Him. Roff notes:

As the greatest music lover in the universe, God has surrounded himself with song.³⁷

Psalm 150 closes out the Psalter with a call to resounding praise to God for His greatness by utilizing everything in His creation to praise God. This includes a vast array of musical instruments including the clash of cymbals in two different styles. One writer suggests that a softer clashing of cymbals is achieved by holding them horizontally and striking them vertically while a louder clashing of cymbals

36 Psalm 98:1-9 (New International Version).

37 Lawrence C. Roff, *Let Us Sing* (Norcross, GA: Great Commission Publications, 1991), 19.

is achieved by holding them vertically and striking them horizontally.³⁸ The role of musical dynamics is also noted throughout the psalms with the most common notation being that of *Selah* which is generally understood to call "for a musical interlude by the instrumentalists, or a dramatic crescendo in volume."³⁹

Throughout the prophets there is the ongoing problem of the people of Israel going through the motions of outward worship while their hearts are far away from God. Isaiah gives a good example of this:

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."⁴⁰

As a result of ongoing unrepentant idolatry and heartless worship, God brought judgment and captivity to His people. While in captivity the music stopped as the people mourned the loss of their temple sanctuary. They renounced the joys of music and refused to play the songs of Zion when taunted by their enemies.⁴¹

Psalms were read and likely sung in the synagogues during the captivity. However, only after the return from captivity and the restoration of the temple was the singing

38 W. S. Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1962), 111.

39 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 27.

40 Isaiah 29:13 (NIV).

41 Psalm 137:1-6.

restored with the songs of Zion. Asaph's descendants numbered 128 and there were 200 men and women singers.⁴² But even with the rebuilt temple and restored worship there was a greater glory missing, and some who had seen the former glory of Solomon's temple wept.⁴³ The dawning of the New Covenant and the Lord's Messiah would bring to fruition the true worship that was only anticipated and foreshadowed in the Old Covenant.

The life and ministry of Jesus in the gospel accounts reflects a time of transition and fulfillment. Jesus was obedient to the Mosaic law regarding worship at the temple and He participated in synagogue worship as well. Yet He was also critical of many of the Jewish leaders of His day. He applied the words of Isaiah regarding vain worship to the Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law.⁴⁴ In a key discussion with the teachers of the law, Jesus emphasized love for God and neighbor as the greatest command. When one of the teachers commented that love for God and neighbor was greater than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, Jesus commended him by saying that he was not far from the kingdom of God.⁴⁵ Here Jesus is reinforcing the statements of King David that a broken and contrite heart is what God most

42 Ezra 2:41, 65.

43 Ezra 3:12-13.

44 Mark 7:6-8.

45 Mark 12:28-34.

delights in and that without a broken spirit God does not take pleasure in sacrifice or burnt offerings.⁴⁶ Jesus is putting the primary emphasis on the condition of the heart before God. While He is certainly not denying the commands of God regarding sacrifices and worship, He is highlighting what the Old Testament also teaches--outward forms alone do not constitute true worship.

For Israel, the temple was a central focal point of worship. Jesus' teaching on the temple is a radical departure from the typical Jew of His day. Jesus makes a shift from the temple as a geographic place in Jerusalem made of stone to the temple being Himself and all who are joined to Him. At the Passover in His first year of public ministry Jesus is asked to give a sign to show His authority for driving out the moneychangers. The sign He foreshadows is His own resurrection when He states that if they destroy the temple He will raise it up again in three days.⁴⁷

Perhaps the most significant teaching in the gospels on worship takes place in an unlikely encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman.⁴⁸ In the midst of Jesus asking her for a drink of water, Jesus turns the conversation to the living water only He could provide. After He confronts her about her immoral lifestyle, she turns the discussion to the

46 Psalm 51:16-17.

47 John 2:13-22.

48 John 4:1-26.

appropriate place for worship--Mt. Gerizim of the Samaritans or Jerusalem of the Jews. Jesus' answer indicates that the question of "Where?" is not the right question. He states that a time is coming--in fact has already come--when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

What does it mean to worship the Father in spirit and truth? While true worship must be empowered by the Holy Spirit, the use of spirit here most likely refers to the human spirit or affections. Worship must come from the core of one's being. The affections orient the worshiper's mind, will, and emotions toward God.⁴⁹ God's people are to worship in humility while fully engaged with God Himself. Worship in truth means in full harmony and doctrinal soundness with what God has revealed in the Bible. Jesus defines worship. Worship involves grasping the truth of God's revealed Word and then letting it strike the center of one's being.

Who worships God this way? None born of Adam have a natural desire to worship God in spirit and in truth. The most important key to worship is not "where" or even "how" but rather "Who." Jesus' revelation of Himself to the Samaritan woman as the Messiah is the key to true worship in spirit and in truth. Only the God-man Jesus worships the Father in spirit and in truth. And only those who are new creatures in Christ by grace through faith enter into the

⁴⁹ Keller, *Leadership* 15 (Spring 1994), 18.

Son's worship. This is the only kind of worship the Father finds acceptable. Worship is most foundationally about the gospel of grace.

Jesus understood that the shedding of His blood would take away the sins of God's people. At the Passover meal He inaugurated the new covenant in His blood poured out.⁵⁰ He was the perfect Passover Lamb.⁵¹ The time of fulfillment had come. He was about to open the way to direct worship of the Father through His own atoning death. Now as the fulfillment of temple sacrifices and worship, Jesus is to be worshipped and adored with great magnificence and grandeur. All that glorified God in temple sacrifice is now focused on the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He Himself worshipped the Father on His way to the cross as He sang what was most likely the *Great Hallel* (Psalms 113 through 118) with His disciples.⁵²

Christ's atoning death opens the door for the redeemed sinner to boldly access the Father in worship. In the context of being worshipped, Jesus gives the Great Commission to make disciples of the nations.⁵³ Disciples of Jesus Christ are most importantly worshipers of the true and living God. Heavenly worship of the Lamb Who was slain involves people

50 Luke 22:20.

51 I Corinthians 5:7.

52 Matthew 26:30.

53 Matthew 28:16-20.

from every tribe and tongue and nation.⁵⁴ The message of Christ is spread among the Gentiles so they will worship God for His mercy.⁵⁵

The writer of Hebrews presents Jesus as the One Who stands in the congregation and leads in worship.⁵⁶ What kind of worship does the God-man Jesus accept as He leads us in worship?⁵⁷ Jesus leads the congregation of His redeemed people as He sings Psalm 22 as quoted by the author of Hebrews. This psalm is both a song of lament and a song of joyful victory--the gospel of sin's curse poured out on Christ Who then triumphs over sin and death. Jesus sings this song of lament from the cross in crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."⁵⁸ But He goes on to sing and declare the praises of God triumphant in the midst of His assembled people.⁵⁹ This picture of Jesus singing is parallel with the prophet Zephaniah's prophecy of God rejoicing over His people with singing.⁶⁰ William Edgar comments on this:

54 Revelation 7:9-10.

55 Romans 15:8-9.

56 Hebrews 2:11-12.

57 The insights presented here were learned from Dr. Reggie Kidd of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida at a worship seminar at Christ Community Church in Franklin, Tennessee, 31 January 1998.

58 Psalm 22:1.

59 Psalm 22:22-31.

60 Zephaniah 3:17.

This (Zeph. 3:17) is a most wonderful passage. God rejoices over his people by singing! No-one would deny the attribution of "emotions" to God. As a personal being, he is often spoken of in terms of feelings, anger, love, and so on. Music is a manifestation of emotions, and there is no reason to shy away from attributing song to the Lord ... here let us simply notice that the Zephaniah passage has its key in the teaching on the incarnation. God, in Jesus Christ, who stands in the midst of the congregation of the redeemed, rejoices over his people with singing.⁶¹

How diverse in style is this song Jesus sings? Verse 23 speaks of the descendants of Jacob and Israel praising and revering God--a Jewish song. Verses 27 and 28 notes the ends of the earth and families of the nations remembering and turning to the Lord--diverse Gentile songs reflected in every tribe and tongue and people and nation.⁶² The poor--most likely the working poor--seek the Lord in verse 26 and praise Him--songs of a less refined cultural status. In verse 29a the rich of the earth worship God--the culturally refined in worship. The dead, or those who cannot keep themselves alive, are mentioned in verse 29b as kneeling before God in worship--the worship songs of departed believers. Verses 30-31 speak of posterity and future generations proclaiming God's righteousness--contemporary worship in the present generation and the generation yet to be born. Christ, the Worship Leader of Hebrews Two, blends together a very diverse song of praise in the worship He presents to the Father. All true worship in spirit and truth is found acceptable to the

61 William Edgar, *Taking Note of Music* (London: SPCK, 1986), 33.

62 Revelation 7:9-10.

Father only because the Son is willing to perfect it and present it to Him.⁶³

The Jerusalem Christians understood that the worship of God was central to their daily lives. They continued to relate to the temple in Jerusalem while recognizing that worship was now focused on the person and work of Christ rather than the shadows and types of the Old Testament sacrificial system.⁶⁴ Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin particularly notes the limitations of confining God to houses made by men.⁶⁵ The early church related to the temple but realized it had been fulfilled in Christ. While their style of worship may not have been significantly different from that of synagogue worship with its scripture, prayer, and praise, the content focus of worship had changed dramatically in that it was now Christ-centered. While the style of worship remained clearly Jewish, there was application of new worship content into the worship of the Jerusalem church. There was a definite shift from the earthly Zion to the heavenly Zion.⁶⁶

The early church devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and

63 Reggie Kidd insights from worship symposium.

64 Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 44.

65 Acts 7:44-50.

66 Edmund Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 124.

prayer.⁶⁷ As persecution arose and the church was scattered the style of worship most likely adapted to the needs of the new churches being established in other areas of the Roman empire. Allowance for modification and new application of the elements of worship spread as Gentile congregations outside Palestine were formed.⁶⁸ The emphasis on proper content was primary.⁶⁹ Paul was concerned with the churches being edified and strengthened in their faith. Paul was also concerned that the "unlearned" be able to understand.⁷⁰ This would most likely include a concern for unbelievers, new believers, and children. The primary worship elements of reading and preaching the Word, praising God in word and song, prayer, and the sacraments would need to reflect some diversity of language and culture in their application in order to be understood by the "unlearned."

Both Paul and Peter elaborate on the teaching of Jesus that Christ and His people are the New Covenant temple. Paul speaks of God's household being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. This "spiritual" building is a holy temple in the Lord and the dwelling place of the Holy

67 Acts 2:42.

68 Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, 3.

69 I Corinthians 14:13-17, 26.

70 I Corinthians 14:16, 23-25.

Spirit.⁷¹ Peter uses similar imagery to describe the church being a spiritual house made up of living stones with Christ as the foundational living Stone. This spiritual house of living stones offers spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. These spiritual sacrifices are the worship of God's people.⁷² Later Peter applies the language descriptive of Old Testament Israel--chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, people belonging to God--to the church. This New Covenant church is a worshipping body that declares the praises of the God Who delivered her from darkness into the marvelous light of Christ.⁷³

Worship in song is a vital part of the New Covenant church of Jesus Christ. In parallel passages Paul speaks of making melody in the heart as psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are sung.⁷⁴ As wine is to drunkenness so the Holy Spirit is to praise.⁷⁵ While the heartfelt devotion of the one praising God was of greater value than the musical merit, the singing was to be an expression of that praise to God. The goal in worship singing is for Christ to dwell richly in the worshipping congregation. This is done through teaching and admonishing in song; singing to both God and one another;

71 Ephesians 2:19-22.

72 I Peter 2:4-5.

73 I Peter 2:9.

74 Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:15-17.

75 Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, 167.

and in embracing a variety of forms.⁷⁶ Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs either referred to the full range of musical composition or three different styles including Jewish psalms, new songs of praise through hymns, and free singing spontaneous songs that probably included such jubilant praise exclamations as "hallelujah."⁷⁷ Diversity in song is clearly in view even if limited to only the psalter:

Some psalms are short, others long. Some are historical, many are personal. Some are structurally complex (the acrostic, the symmetrical); others, straightforward and repetitious. This scriptural precedence of allowing a variety of expression deserves attention.⁷⁸

James also advocates the singing of songs of praise.⁷⁹ The presenting of songs of praise to God are to be brought into corporate worship in New Covenant assemblies for the strengthening of the church.⁸⁰ Smith maintains that there are five phenomena of New Testament times confirming new compositions of song in worship:

Five phenomena of the N.T. times which have a special bearing upon the musical praise of the early church have been surveyed: (1) the centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ in the life and worship of the church, (2) the need for a 'new song' to celebrate the work of God in Christ, (3) the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the pneumatic gifts, including some that were specifically musical, (4) the important place in the worship service of the liturgical actions in connection with the Supper and baptism, (5) the connection of suffering and martyrdom with song. Taken all together, these data create an exceedingly strong probability that from the outset, fresh, more or less original compositions were

76 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 34.

77 Ibid., 36.

78 Ibid., 40.

79 James 5:13.

80 I Corinthians 14:26.

included in the musical praise of the Christian church. This probability is confirmed by: (1) the explicit testimony of the Fathers, (2) the existence of hymns and fragments, including those to be found within the New Testament itself, and certainly those extant from a slightly later period.⁸¹

The New Testament itself has hymn compositions as reflected in the four songs Luke records related to the birth of Jesus.⁸² There are also quotations in Paul that many view as early Christian hymns or hymn fragments.⁸³ The name of Christ associated with the singing of praise and some of these hymnic writings in the New Testament itself leads Hill to state:

...(W)e have seen that the New Testament documents incorporate hymnic compositions whose rhythmical style, unusual vocabulary and artistically structured form are present. We have also observed that these lyrical pieces embody theological concepts, especially Christological doctrines, expressed in language which is exalted and liturgical ...⁸⁴

Based on Colossians 3:16-17, Vernon M. Whaley lists six questions for selecting music for worship:

1. Are the lyrics of the composition consistent with the biblical truth?
2. Does the composition teach doctrinal truths and/or biblical principles?
3. Does the composition admonish (warn and encourage)?
4. Does the composition utilize the words of Scripture (a psalm), focus attention on God (a hymn), or emphasize what God is doing in the life of a Spirit-filled believer (a spiritual song)?
5. Does the composition call more attention to its musical style or form of presentation than the lyrics or the melody?
6. Does the composition cause those who play it, sing it, and

81 Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, 88.

82 Luke 1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:14; 2:29-32.

83 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 27-28. (Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Ephesians 5:14; I Timothy 3:16)

84 Joseph A. Hill, "The Praise of God in the New Testament" (Th.M thesis, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1971), 108-109.

listen to it to have an inward spirit of thankfulness toward God?⁸⁵

Worship depicted in the Book of Revelation reveals the anticipated new song being sung. The church victorious sings both the song of Moses and the new song of the Lamb.⁸⁶ This new song was already being sung by the New Covenant church as they worshipped Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant promises. As Smith reflects:

...the point is, that the two passages (Rev. 5:9-10 & 14:3) indicate that there was a definite connection in early Christian thought between the redemptive work of Christ and the need for a 'new song' commemorating just that work.⁸⁷

New Testament worship is linked with the heavenly worship that never ceases.⁸⁸ Earthly worship now participates in heavenly worship. Therefore the musical praise of heaven gives focus and perspective to earthly worship now. Smith notes:

... the New Testament presents musical praise as a particular category of praise. Musical praise, moreover, is the form of worship employed in heaven now, and in the new heavens and the new earth of the future. On earth, in the meantime, those in whom the Word of Christ dwells and who have been filled with His Spirit, join the heavenly hosts in praise of God and the Lamb, singing of the mighty acts of divine redemption... When the church on earth sings "Hallelujah!" she participates even now, as it were, in the mighty eschatological anthem which celebrates the ultimate salvation and judgment, the absolute reign of God, and her marriage to the Lamb (Rev. 19:1-8). It is, then especially in her

85 Vernon M. Whaley, *Understanding Music and Worship in the Local Church* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Training Association, 1995), 42.

86 Revelation 5:9-14; 14:3; 15:3.

87 Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, 74.

88 Hebrews 12:22-24.

musical praise that the church manifests that even now she is partaker of the heavenly, eschatological realities.⁸⁹

This biblical summary of worship sets the context and stage for understanding biblical worship in church history and in the contemporary church. The arguments for or against specific aspects of worship must first be rooted in the Bible and a proper biblical-theological grasp of the breadth of biblical revelation. To have the right biblical principles does not guarantee the right application. However to start without the proper biblical principles is fundamentally wrong and will result in worship that is not honoring to God. As a summary of worship throughout church history is now reviewed, the biblical foundation that has been laid must be held in view throughout.

Worship in Church History

The early church inherited the legacy of both temple worship and synagogue worship. They continued daily in the temple courts⁹⁰ yet their worship from house to house was patterned after synagogue worship. This patterning after synagogue worship is emphasized by William Young:

Apostolic precept and example, particularly in conjunction with what we know of the worship of the synagogue in the first century, which was clearly used as a model by the Apostolic or primitive church, makes it plain what was the norm for the New Testament church. Every indication is that the worship of the New Testament church was essentially a continuation of the worship of the

89 Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, 163.

90 Acts 2:46.

synagogue, with only such modifications as were necessitated by the transition from the Old Covenant to the New.⁹¹

This emphasis on synagogue patterns must not ignore the fact that synagogue worship was not explicitly commanded by God for Israel. Rather it developed most fully out of necessity during captivity when there was no temple to attend in Jerusalem. It was the place for instruction in the law. Synagogue worship was the worship of the temple without sacrifice.⁹² The once-for-all sacrifice of Christ completed and fulfilled the sacrificial part of temple worship but other aspects were brought into synagogue worship, most notably singing of scripture and praise to God.⁹³ Werner notes a key element of understanding the relationship between synagogue and temple for the early Christians in Jerusalem:

It cannot be denied, then, that the Temple influenced the development of Christian liturgy. We may summarize the respective influence of Temple and Synagogue upon Christian cult in the following way: during the existence of the Temple and for two generations after its fall, it was the Synagogue around which young Christianity centered, both for political reasons and out of a certain resentment against the Temple and its hierarchy. When all hope for its reconstruction had vanished and the Jewish hierarchy had disappeared, the idea of the Temple no longer represented a dangerous element to the leaders of the young Church. Thereafter, Christianity inclined toward the reconstruction of a wholly imaginary and idealized Temple.⁹⁴

91 William Young, "Christian Liberty and Worship," in *Worship in the Presence of God*, ed. David Lachman and Frank J. Smith (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992), 95.

92 Horton Davies, *Christian Worship: Its History and Meaning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), 12.

93 Richard M. Spielmann, *History of Christian Worship* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966), 11.

94 Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: Liturgical Parallels in Synagogue and Early Church* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 21-22.

There are some key elements to understand regarding the musical aspects of temple worship compared to synagogue worship. Temple worship had elaborate choral and instrumental music that David had instituted as noted above. During the exile while the temple was in ruins the place of music to accompany sacrifices was non-existent. In a time of mourning the exiles refused to sing the joyful songs of Zion. Yet when they returned from captivity and the temple was rebuilt there was the restoration of music and singing.⁹⁵ After Christ's perfect sacrifice and resurrection it was fitting to establish an even greater expression of joyful music as the reality in Christ replaced and fulfilled the shadows of the Old Covenant sacrifices. The early church surely lacked the full-time trained musicians of the temple worship under King David. However they adapted to the present circumstances by utilizing the giftedness of the church to present hymns and songs of praise as evidenced in the church in Corinth.⁹⁶ And in so doing they utilized the greater discretion of synagogue worship and temple teaching as noted by Frame:

God regulated the sacrificial worship of the tabernacle and temple in detail, charging the people to do everything strictly according to the revealed pattern. He hardly said anything to Israel, however, about the synagogue (or, for that matter, about the ministries of teaching and prayer carried out on the temple grounds), leaving the arranging of its services largely to the discretion of the people. Of course, they knew in general what

95 Ezra 2:41, 65.

96 I Corinthians 14:26.

God wanted: he wanted his word to be taught and prayer to be offered. But God left the specifics open-ended.⁹⁷

Early Christian worship was the ministry of the Word and of the sacraments attended by prayer and praise. The content was Christ, the structure was Word and sacrament, and the context was the fellowship of house churches.⁹⁸ The actual detailed order of worship is not spelled out in the New Testament. Was this because it was commonly known or was it to allow diversity of application and details from one house church to another, from one culture to another, and from one generation to another?⁹⁹ As Christianity spread to different languages and regions with unique customs there was greater diversity in worship styles.¹⁰⁰

Justin gives insight into worship format in his *First Apology* written around AD 150. The Eucharist was observed weekly. The format included reading of Scripture, sermons or lessons, intercessory prayers followed by a summary prayer, the kiss of peace, an offering which included the bread and wine for the Lord's Supper, the Eucharistic prayer and extemporaneous prayers, singing, and the Lord's Supper. Justin viewed worship in his day as a reordering of the apostolic tradition and not creating anything new.¹⁰¹

97 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 23.

98 Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 62.

99 Spielmann, *History of Christian Worship*, 18.

100 Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, xvi.

The content of the songs of the early church was noted by Pliny the Younger, a Roman statesman, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan (c.AD 62 - c.AD 113) where he described the singing, "to utter in turn songs to Christ as to a god."¹⁰² This was the major change in content. It was focused on God's Messianic promises being fulfilled.

However, there was a growing concern about the use of musical instruments in worship largely because of the influence of Greek music culture on Jewish culture, even in the time of Christ:

The same instruments that Greeks used in their temple orgies, Jews used in their temple ceremonies. In revulsion, rabbis associated the instruments with immorality and banned them as unfit for the synagogues. Even instruments that had played a highly respected role in the psalter (aulos, kinnor, typanon, and cymbals) were held in contempt...If instruments had not become associated with pagan worship and debauchery, their use in worship would never have been questioned.¹⁰³

The church fathers also feared the sensuality and paganism associated with musical instruments. Contrasting early Christianity with the later patristic era McKinnon notes:

Thus early Christianity achieves a classic balance between a restrained way of life and an outlook of joyful thanksgiving. The later patristic era, not having the same close relationship to the "good news" of salvation, and under the influence of neo-Platonic dualism, will not always maintain this balance with perfect grace, a fact with specific implications for the subject of music instruments.¹⁰⁴

101 Ibid., 27.

102 David W. Music, *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Readings* (Lanham, MD and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996), 3.

103 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 199.

104 James William McKinnon, "The Church Father's and Musical Instruments" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1965), 137-138.

The Arians utilized hymns to spread their heretical teachings. Orthodox teachers like Ephraim Syrus (307-373) wrote faithful texts to well-known Arian tunes.¹⁰⁵ Here was an example of utilizing popular tunes that had been used to spread false teaching to now spread truth by a change of content alone. However, the Gnostic hymnody spread rapidly and the church took drastic measures by prohibiting the singing of non-scriptural texts in worship at the Council of Laodicea (360-381).¹⁰⁶

Gradually congregational singing was replaced by professional singers or the singing clergy. Embellished forms of song developed as the monastic movement grew particularly in the Roman church.¹⁰⁷ Songs were sung in Latin and almost exclusively by the priests or choirs. While the native Roman liturgical rite was simple, practical, sober, and dignified, it became more austere and elaborate as the years went by after the break-up of the Roman empire.¹⁰⁸

As Roff notes:

The mass became the approved liturgical pattern imposed on every congregation across the empire. There were local variations and frequent papal revisions, but the medieval mass in Latin was the official form of worship. Service music became increasingly the exclusive domain of choirs of priests and monks, serving as responses to the liturgical activity performed at the altar.¹⁰⁹

105 Roff, *Let us Sing*, 38.

106 Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, 146.

107 Ibid., 177.

108 Spielmann, *History of Christian Worship*, 39-40.

109 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 40.

By 1215 transubstantiation was proclaimed by the Lateran Council.¹¹⁰ Christ's presence physically in the bread and the cup was given more and more prominence in the mass. At the Council of Constance in 1415 the Roman church prohibited congregational singing altogether.¹¹¹

The Reformation took place in the context of such Roman Catholic abuses in worship. The Reformers sought to return worship (especially singing), the Word, and the Sacraments to the congregation.¹¹² At first there were attempts made by Zwingli, Luther, and Oecolampadius to revise the Roman mass rather than discarding it altogether.¹¹³ As further reform took place, more radical changes were made. Zwingli, for example, minimized the sacraments and only the preacher could speak the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed. He also eliminated any congregational singing or praying:

"Therefore, the psalms and praises of God ought to be treated as if our minds sing to God." The Apostle, as Zwingli interpreted him, had at no time been speaking literally of singing, and music of any sort in worship was therefore contrary both to Scripture and the practice of the early church. "As soon as it can be done," Zwingli urged, "this barbarous mumbling should be dispatched from the churches," and two years later, in 1525, music was in fact eliminated from the liturgy of Zurich.¹¹⁴

110 Spielmann, *History of Christian Worship*, 56.

111 Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 198.

112 Ibid., 199.

113 Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975), 18.

114 Charles Garside, Jr., *The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536-1543*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Volume 69, Part 4 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1979), 11.

Edgar notes the dangers of over-reaction:

The Protestant reformers, particularly the Swiss branch, were at times quite radical in their application of such a principle. Zwingli tended to avoid all music in church. Calvin favoured only unaccompanied Psalms, as we saw. But even Martin Luther, a great music-lover, was hesitant about many practices which he found in the late medieval Church, including the use of the organ. The controversy was healthy as long as it did not fall into a sort of over-reacting to the Roman Catholic practices over against which the Reformation defined many of its positions. Over-reaction did at times set in, however.¹¹⁵

Martin Bucer in Strasbourg was much more balanced in his reformation of worship. He advocated the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper with an emphasis on the sharing of a meal rather than a mass of sacrifice. He placed a table before the people rather than an altar elevated beyond the people.¹¹⁶ He also came to quite different conclusions on the use of music in public worship than those of Zwingli. At numerous points in the service of worship there was congregational singing of psalms, songs of praise, and even the ten commandments.¹¹⁷ Old quotes Bucer from the text of I Corinthians 14:26 saying:

Therefore, when the Church comes together there should be teaching, hymns of praise, and prayer. That was the way the Church of the New Testament had come together and that was the way the Church of Strasbourg was to come together.¹¹⁸

115 Edgar, *Taking Note of Music*, 115.

116 Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 26.

117 Garside, "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music", 11.

118 Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 183.

Bucer also allowed for more than the psalms to be sung and instruments to be utilized.¹¹⁹

The reformation arrived in Geneva through the cities of Berne and Zurich and the liturgy was without music. Farel and Calvin co-authored the "Articles of 1537" in which they tried to institute psalm-singing:

It is a thing very expedient for the edification of the church to sing some psalms in the form of public prayers through which one may pray to God or sing his praise so that the hearts of all might be moved and incited to form like prayers and to render like praises and thanks to God with similar affection.¹²⁰

The proposal was rejected and in 1538 Calvin was banished from Geneva.¹²¹ He went to Strasbourg and came under the influence of Bucer. Calvin held wholeheartedly to his belief that worship was a central part of the reform of the church and that with the arrival of the Reformation and the doctrines of grace there was every reason to sing and to sing enthusiastically.¹²²

After three years in Strassbourg Calvin returned to Geneva in 1541 with his views on music in worship even more firmly established. Upon his return he instituted psalm singing. The Geneva psalter included metrical psalms, the ten commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Song of

119 Garside, "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music", 25-26.

120 Ross J. Miller, "Calvin's Understanding of Psalm-Singing as a Means of Grace," in *Calvin Studies VI - A Colloquium on Calvin Studies at Davidson College*, ed. John H. Leith (Davidson, NC: Davidson College, January 1992), 35-36.

121 Ibid., 35.

122 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 47.

Simeon. As he developed the psalter from 1542 to 1562 he employed the services of Clement Marot, Theodore Beza, and Louis Bourgeois. These men were gifted in poetry and music and worked to versify the psalms into western meter and put the psalms to singable tunes.¹²³ In doing this Calvin was drawing on the greatness of past expressions of biblical worship, the Psalms, while looking for fresh expressions and applications of biblical worship that connected well with the contemporary culture of his day. The Hebrew meter of the psalms did not lend itself to western meter that was singable. Therefore, he had the words arranged in a way that captured the essence of the psalms while bridging to what would be able to be sung by the congregation he served in Geneva. He also stood against the current of his time in Switzerland (for which he had been banished from Geneva earlier) and insisted that congregational singing be a vital part of the worship of God's people. Many of the tunes used were of a very lively character.¹²⁴ His passion for the singing of the psalms is reflected in the following from Calvin as quoted by Ross Miller:

The psalms could incite us to raise our hearts to God and to move us with such ardor that we exalt through praises the glory of his name... And truly, we know through experience that song has great force and vigor to move and enflame hearts to invoke and to praise God with a more lively and ardent zeal.¹²⁵

123 Miller, "Calvin's Understanding of Psalm-Singing," 35-36.

124 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 59.

125 Miller, "Calvin's Understanding of Psalm-Singing," 39.

In limiting congregational singing to the psalms Calvin was following the opinion of the church fathers:

We have seen that Calvin in defending his preference for psalmody and hymnody taken from Scripture quotes no passage from the Bible nor invokes any theological principle. Rather, he cites the opinion of Augustine and John Chrysostom--his favorite theologian and his favorite exegete. This we suggest is no mere appeal to authority nor apologetic maneuver but an honest acknowledgment of the sources of his ideas.¹²⁶

Likewise the forbidding of instrumental accompaniment was following the church fathers:

Old Testament worship did include the use of musical instruments. The worship of the temple was accompanied by elaborate musical settings. The Church of the N.T. probably did not admit the use of musical instruments; however, this cannot be learned from the N.T. itself and certainly there is no Scriptural injunction against it. Whatever else one might say about the musical accompaniment of early Christian worship would be rather speculative. The Scriptures themselves do not even suggest that it should be restrained, simple or unadorned. If the early Reformed Church was of that opinion, it was probably more because of the warnings of the Church Fathers than because of the directions of either Old or New Testament.¹²⁷

It is crucial for later discussion regarding the Regulative Principle of Worship to note that Calvin does not root his argument for non-instruments and "almost" exclusive psalmody¹²⁸ in explicit or even implicit biblical teaching.

An interesting example of how the non-instrumental view was not carried out consistently in spheres of Calvinistic influence is seen in the Wood's Psalter dating to 1566:

Wood's MS Psalter, which dates from 1566, contains two colored drawings of musicians ... the other which is on the corresponding

126 Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 263.

127 Ibid., 268

128 Calvin's last communion service closed with a non-psalm--the Song of Simeon. Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 32.

page of the 'Tenor' part, is an elderly man playing a wind instrument like a clarinet, which he holds with his right hand, supporting his book of music with the left. On several of the other pages there are illuminated borders which contain small drawings of musical instruments, such as organs, trumpets, harps, and viols. This indicates that in certain circles at any rate reformation of religion was not held to mean cessation of the use of instrumental music.¹²⁹

Calvin showed great creativity and innovation by utilizing children in the teaching of the new versification of the psalms with their new tunes to the worshipping congregation. Miller quotes Calvin:

If some children, whom someone has practiced beforehand in some modest church song, sing in a loud and distinct voice, the people listening with complete attention and following in their hearts what is sung by mouth, little by little each one will become accustomed to sing with the others.¹³⁰

Calvin was not cold and stern in his approach to worship. William Maxwell gives insight into this as he quotes a biographer of Calvin named Doumergue:

Finally, after these acts of adoration, these prayers said kneeling, this quickening instruction, the worship culminates in the supreme ceremony of holy communion. Calvin has been very greatly misunderstood. For him the complete act of Christian worship is that at which the Lord's Supper is celebrated, and the complete Sunday morning office is that which includes the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Have men said that this worship, the true Calvinian cult, was in its nature poor and cold? Those who were present at it have told us that often they could not keep back tears of emotion and joy. Singings and prayers, adoration and edification, confession and absolution of sins, acts ritualistic and spontaneous - all the essential elements of worship were there; and what is not less important, they were combined into an organism that though very simple, was yet both supple and strong.¹³¹

129 William McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church 1550-1638* (Edinburgh: The Lassodie Press, Ltd., 1931), 95.

130 Miller, "Calvin's Understanding of Psalm-Singing," 36.

131 William D. Maxwell, *Concerning Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 27.

Here we also see Calvin's desire to celebrate the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis. He even included the singing of psalms during the celebration of the Lord's Supper itself.¹³² He designed his order of worship to be Word and Table as a unity.¹³³ Though his position was never adopted in Geneva, he ordered worship to end with prayer and praise that was setting the stage for the Lord's Supper even when it was not celebrated.¹³⁴

Calvin's influence on John Knox was significant and had tremendous impact on the reformation in Scotland. When Mary came to the throne in 1553 many Scottish Protestants and English Puritans fled to other countries. Many of them ended up in Frankfurt. While in exile there was tension over the degree of conformity to the prayer book. The prayer book group remained in Frankfurt while the more extreme reformers went to Geneva and Zurich. The most extreme Protestants were doctrinally Calvinistic yet liturgically Zwinglian.¹³⁵ Knox ended up in Geneva where he came under the influence of Calvin. These two parties returned to Elizabethan England. Upon his return to Scotland in 1559, Knox was eager to replace idols and false worship with the Word of God, prayer,

132 Ibid., 72.

133 D.H. Hislop, *Our Heritage in Public Worship* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1935), 188.

134 Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 26.

135 Spielmann, *History of Christian Worship*, 96.

singing of psalms, and the proper administration of the sacraments.

There was no uniformity of worship at this time. The Scots Confession of 1560 noted that one order could not be appointed for all ages, times, and places. Revision questions arose as early as 1584.¹³⁶ Yet the tension and disagreement from exile became more prominent as the years went by. The English Puritans reacted more and more strongly to the Church of England. Maxwell notes:

...(t)he reading of Holy Scripture in the churches, the singing of the doxology, the use of the Lord's Prayer and the creed came to be associated in people's minds with episcopacy, and consequently to be rejected by most who disliked bishops - in spite of the fact that all these things belonged to the Reformed Church in Knox's time.¹³⁷

There were some who were "latitudinarians" who believed that specific forms of worship were not prescribed but left to man to decide and would vary according to circumstances and would be adapted in varying nations.¹³⁸ On the other extreme were the "Brownists" as noted by John M. Barclay:

In England, from Elizabethan times, there was a sharp division between the parties later known as 'Anglicans' and 'Puritans'. The Puritans, while differing from the Anglicans over 'Ceremony', were just as liturgical as they were, although they preferred the Genevan Order to the *Book of Common Prayer*, but the division gave rise to a group of extremists within the Puritan party, who completely rejected the use of Service-Books and all liturgies. The extremists or Brownists were principally opposed to (i) read prayers, (ii) the use of the *Gloria Patri*, (iii) the use of the

136 Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 70.

137 Ibid., 117.

138 William Cunningham, "The Reformers and the Regulative Principle," in *The Reformation of the Church*, ed. Iain Murray (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 43.

Creed, (iv) the use of the Lord's Prayer, and (v) kneeling for prayer on entering the pulpit.¹³⁹

It is in this context that discussion of the meaning of what has come to be known as "The Regulative Principle of Worship"(RPW) emerged. A working definition for the RPW is "what God commands in worship is alone permitted." Worship is to be as God desires. The sufficiency of Scripture implies that the only place to go to see how God desires to be worshipped is His Word. The debate over the RPW comes in understanding how specific the Bible is regarding the specifics of worship. The roots of the Puritan RPW are found in the Anglican-Puritan controversy:

At this point, it is clear that both parties were unable to hear the truth that each presented. The Puritan represented that strain in Calvin's thought that demanded biblical warrant and conformity for all of worship, as well as a desire for relative simplicity. The strength of the Puritan theory was its unwavering affirmation of God's sovereign authority over all of life, including worship. The limitation of Puritanism lay in its application of this principle according to very narrow, or minimalist strictures. The Anglican represented that aspect of Calvin's thought that maintained the necessity of covenantal consciousness, a genuine exercise of dominion and creation within the parameters of what God had revealed. The Anglican further represented Calvin's regard for the ancient church. The failure of Anglicanism and its departure from Calvin lies in its lack of regard for cases of conscience in the imposition of worship. Thus, both Anglicanism and Puritanism represent elements of continuity and discontinuity with Calvin.¹⁴⁰

Much of the debate was over specific ceremonies being required in the worship of God. The English Puritans responded negatively to such things as vestments, kneeling to

139 John M. Barkley, *Worship of the Reformed Church* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), 25.

140 Ralph Jackson Gore, Jr., "The Pursuit of Plainness: Rethinking the Puritan Regulative Principle of Worship" (Ph.D.dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1988), 207-208.

receive the elements of the Lord's Supper, the use of the sign of the cross at baptism, the use of rings in marriage ceremonies, and homilies in place of sermons.¹⁴¹ The English Puritans as well as some of the Scottish Presbyterians developed a strong dislike of liturgical prayer because of the enforcement of it in Bishop Laud's liturgy of 1637.¹⁴²

The RPW was given clear expression as to its principle in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.¹⁴³ This document of the Westminster Assembly was produced by the English Puritans between 1643 and 1648 with some input from a few Scottish commissioners. It represents the mature thinking of the English Puritans.¹⁴⁴ Some have sought to make the case that this expression of the RPW is a departure from Calvin and the early Presbyterians:

...(i)t is now possible to examine the roots of Presbyterian worship and to determine that the *regulative principle* of worship as exemplified in the documents of the Westminster Assembly contains significant departures from the *regulative principle* as taught and practiced by earlier reformed theologians, particularly John Calvin. Further, the tensions that have inhered in Presbyterian worship historically, and today account for much of the confusion in theory and practice, may be explained by these deviations and other innovations canonized by the Westminster Assembly. The answer to the confusion in worship today is an old answer. The *regulative principle*, as developed by Calvin and as practiced by the early Presbyterians, provided the essential parameters necessary for biblical worship while allowing for expressions of freedom in matters not deemed essential. The *regulative principle*, as originally conceived was not intended to be an all-intrusive guide to worship, but a rule

141 Davies, *Christian Worship*, 65.

142 Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 52.

143 Westminster Confession of Faith 21-1, Westminster Larger Catechism #109, and Westminster Shorter Catechism #51.

144 Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 91.

of covenantal faithfulness for the dynamic worship of God's people.¹⁴⁵

Packer agrees with this assessment:

The idea that direct biblical warrant, in the form of precept or precedent, is required to sanction every item included in the public worship of God was in fact a Puritan innovation, which crystallized out in the course of the prolonged debates that followed the Elizabethan settlement....(w)hen the Puritans... challenged the principle that each church has liberty to ordain non-biblical ceremonies in worship where these seem conducive to edification and reverence; when they repudiated all set prayers; when they rejected kneeling in public worship, the Christian year, weekly Communion, and the practice of confirmation; they were not in fact reverting to Calvin, but departing from him, though ...it is doubtful whether they realized this.¹⁴⁶

The stricter understanding of the RPW must be understood against the backdrop of a century long struggle with state-imposed forms of church government and worship. This involved a "campaign to death" against vestments and bishops that sealed this stricter form.¹⁴⁷ The historical context included a civil war and the beheading of a king. The polemic battles they fought may at times have led to a perspective where they tried to make the RPW carry greater definition historically than it does biblically. The Puritan fear of superstitions became a superstition itself as seen in the prohibition of prayer at funerals lest prayer be thought

145 Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 5.

146 J.I. Packer, "The Puritan Approach to Worship," *Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference*, December 1963, 4-5.

147 Edmund P. Clowney, "Distinctive Emphases in Presbyterian church Polity," in *Pressing Toward the Mark* ed. Charles G. Denison and Richard C. Gamble (Philadelphia: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 102.

to be offered for the dead.¹⁴⁸ In the midst of the worship battles of their day:

Some of the Puritans, in fighting the superstitions and idolatry of their age, went to the extreme of reducing the worship of God to the absolute minimum of what was commanded by Scripture. Their fear of the abuse of freedom in worship led them to embrace only the form of the essentials. They reduced the worship of God to the bare bones of a long sermon and a few hymns.¹⁴⁹

And even those hymn-psalms were lined out in a way that presented a line by a leader that was then sung back by the congregation. This led to a tedious worship for many years.¹⁵⁰

The Westminster Divines presented the RPW in its clear form in the standards. Yet they did not include in the Westminster standards all of their ideas on worship.¹⁵¹ Even in the Directory of Worship there is greater latitude given than the prevailing practice of many of the English Puritans themselves. Even the English Puritans recognized varying applications of God's commands for worship from place to place. C.G. M'Crie quoting from the Acts of Assembly:

We have perfected and transmitted a Directory for Worship to both Houses of Parliament, which we hope will be to the joy and comfort of all our godly and dear brethren in all His Majestie's kingdoms and dominions. We have not advised any imposition which might make it unlawful to vary from it in anything ... And albeit we have not expressed in the Directory

148 Hislop, *Our Heritage in Public Worship*, 189.

149 Robert A. Morey, *Worship is All of Life* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1984), 82-83.

150 William D. Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 111.

151 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, xii.

every minute particular which is or might be either laid aside or retained among us as comely and useful in practice: yet we trust, that none will be so tenacious of old customs not expressly forbidden, or so averse from good examples although new, in matters of lesser consequence, as to insist upon their liberty of retaining the one, or refusing the other, because not specified in the Directory; but be studious to please others rather than themselves.¹⁵²

Gore also notes this freedom in use of forms:

...(t)he document was a compromise between the high church elements and the free church elements... (I)t does not actually provide orders of worship, but rather suggests possible actions and orders to be adapted to local custom and current needs... The preface to the WD makes it clear that there was to be freedom in the use of its liturgical forms.¹⁵³

The Scots were free to use the Worship Directory or the Book of Common Order. The frequency of the Lord's Supper was left to the local session and the Lord's Prayer was neither prescribed nor proscribed.¹⁵⁴

In a discussion with Dr. David Calhoun, the following summary was presented regarding the RPW from the time of Calvin to the present.¹⁵⁵ Calvin allowed far more flexibility than the later English Puritans in form and application. Knox allowed for bishops and even kneeling at the Lord's Supper so long as it was in no way being viewed as an adoration of the elements (known as the "Black Rubric"). Hooper, as an early Puritan, was "stricter than Calvin but

152 Charles Greig McCrie, *Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1892), 189.

153 Gore, *Pursuit of Plainness*, 126-127.

154 Ibid., 126.

155 Dr. David Calhoun, Professor of Church History at Covenant Theological Seminary, interviewed by Mark Dalbey, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, 26 January 1998.

still sounds Lutheran at times." Hooper allowed for diversity in time and manner of countries as well as vestments so long as they were not commanded. The later Puritans were "still not absolutely clear" though they emphasized a direct biblical warrant for every item (which was a Puritan innovation). "The Scots were more flexible than the English Puritans" and for a while had dual bishops and presbyteries under James I. Later Southern Presbyterians were "firmer" and "nineteen century southern Presbyterianism gave foremost expression to the RPW." An example of this was Dabney's view of the Westminster Confession as quoted by Gore:

... in the whole system of doctrine, not even a tinge of any human philosophy is present" and "it is for this reason that the Confession will need no amendment until the Bible needs to be amended.¹⁵⁶

Another example of Southern Presbyterian firmness was found in Thornwell. He considered instrumental music "a great evil."¹⁵⁷

Contemporary Issues and Application

While the biblical survey lays a foundation and the historical survey reveals various applications of biblical worship principles in time past, a review of the literature reflects a significant amount of attention to contemporary

¹⁵⁶ Gore, *Pursuit of Plainness*, 91.

¹⁵⁷ George Robertson, "Regulative or Relative? The Regulative Principle in Southern Presbyterianism" (an unpublished paper for Dr. David B. Calhoun, 13 April 1994), 13.

issues of worship and their proper application in our day and culture. A chief purpose of what Spielmann calls the "twentieth-century liturgical movement" is:

The chief purpose of the twentieth-century liturgical movement has always been to restore corporate worship as central and essential to Christianity, the Church, and the Christian life. The key words here are "restore" and "essential." For in the Christian Church of New Testament times, and especially in the early centuries of Christianity, the corporate worship of the Christian community was central and essential.¹⁵⁸

The proper restoration of the worship of God to its central and essential place is a critical contemporary issue before the church today.

Definition of Worship and Its Elements and Forms

What is the proper definition of worship? One comprehensive definition is offered by William Temple:

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, the nourishment of mind with His truth, the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love, the surrender of will to His purpose--and all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.¹⁵⁹

Biblical worship is reverent, joyful adoration of the holy, living God through Jesus Christ according to His Word. This kind of worship directs, focuses, and motivates all the church's life and ministry. There is no higher calling in life than to worship the true and living God. God Himself

158 Spielmann, *History of Christian Worship*, 3.

159 William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (New York: MacMillan, 1939), 68; quoted in Scotty Smith and Michael Card, *Unveiled Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, 1997), 92 n. 5.

has a deep passion and priority for His own glory that gives substance and meaning to everything else.

Two key words the Bible uses to get at the essence of worship are *proskuneo* and *latreuo*. *Proskuneo* means to fall on one's face and *latreuo* means to serve with praise. Falling on one's face is in response to the grandeur and majesty of God's very being. Serving with praise is a response of one's whole being to the majestic and merciful God who saves His people in Christ. Worship is praising God for His grace in Jesus Christ. It is a response of adoration with words and life that includes "awe, humility, gratitude, joy, obedience, surrender, and sacrifice."¹⁶⁰ Worship is focused on the worthiness of God.

Corporate worship can also be defined as a re-presenting of the gospel. Dr. Bryan Chapell states that:

Corporate worship is nothing more and nothing less than a re-presenting of the gospel in the presence of God's people for his glory and their good.¹⁶¹

This re-presenting of the gospel begins with deep reverence and standing in awe of God for Who He is in His holiness and majestic glory. It is followed by a recognition of who we are in our sinful depravity. This is followed by the message of God's saving grace in Christ and instruction in the path of grace. Finally the re-presenting of the gospel in worship

¹⁶⁰ Fredrick W. Schroeder, *Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia, Boston: United Church Press, 1966), 36.

¹⁶¹ Bryan Chapell, "A Glance at Reformed Liturgical History with Current Implications" (presentation at the General Assembly Workshop on Worship, Dallas, Texas, 20 June 1995), 4.

calls for a response.¹⁶² Webber argues that worship should be lively because the gospel is alive:

First, the principles of worship (that worship celebrates Christ, a divine action occurs, and we respond) are rooted in the Gospel. Scripture demands that we proclaim Christ boldly and energetically. It is here, in the coming together of God's actions and our response, that such aliveness occurs.¹⁶³

In another book Webber calls this "the gospel in motion":

From a theological point of view worship constitutes the gospel in motion. Worship celebrates God's great acts of salvation. During worship God communicates to the worshipers his salvation and healing, to which the people respond with faith, praise, prayer, thanksgiving, and a life of service in the world.¹⁶⁴

As we define worship biblically, the following basic principles governing worship presented by Jerram Barrs are helpful:

1. Worship is to be God-centered and God-directed,
2. Worship is to be Christ-focused and redemption-focused,
3. Worship is to be Spirit-led and Spirit-filled,
4. Worship is to be according to Word and filled with Word,
5. Worship must involve the worshipper totally,
6. Worship must embrace every aspect of our life,
7. Worship arises from the community of God's people,
8. Worship is directed out toward the world and up toward God,
9. Worship must be contemporary and culture specific.¹⁶⁵

Worship defined biblically involves both a narrow and broad definition. In the broadest biblical sense worship is the presenting of ourselves to God seeking to glorify Him in

162 Ibid.

163 Robert E. Webber, *Blended Worship* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 97.

164 Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 14.

165 Jerram Barrs, course notes from Doctor of Ministry course on Worship, Covenant Theological Seminary, St Louis, May 1991.

everything we think, say and do.¹⁶⁶ There is fundamentally no separation of the sacred and the secular. Worship and the whole of life are woven together before the Creator-Redeemer God. Scotty Smith notes worship as a way of life particularly reflected in the Book of Revelation:

Worship is presented as a way of life, and not just that which is celebrated one day a week in a special room called the "worship center." The whole of God's creation is the "worship center" and God Himself is the center of all worship.¹⁶⁷

This broad definition of worship is captured in a letter the author received from a missionary:

I'm discovering that worship should be a condition of the heart before God and a lifestyle that we live out daily, not just a thing we do on Sunday morning with music, prayer, and a sermon. Those things are definitely part of worshipping God but there is so much more depth to it that I'm only beginning to discover.¹⁶⁸

Horton Davies also presents this broader sense of worship:

Furthermore, in the widest sense, worship is the glorifying of God in common life. Unless both conversation and conduct witness to the standards of Christ, worship is mere escapism: it has ceased to be inspirational and redemptive. Devotion to Christ demands ethical proofs in daily life. 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' The seal of this relationship is that 'he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit' (Jn. 15:5). Worship is, therefore, a life dedicated to God, not a fugitive hour in a week devoted to unscrupulous business. It is a life lived out in the presence of God, for his glory and the benefit of mankind.¹⁶⁹

Public worship, or worship in the more narrow sense, should be a fruit of a week of presenting our lives to God as

166 I Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:23.

167 Smith and Card, *Unveiled Hope*, 78.

168 Rebecca Arnold, personal letter to the author from the mission field in the Ukraine, November 1997.

169 Davies, *Christian Worship*, 125.

a living sacrifice.¹⁷⁰ Public worship is a concentration of worship in the corporate body of Christ gathered together to focus on God through specific elements of worship God provides and commands in His Word for such worship. The Regulative Principle of Worship then becomes the most specific and pointed application of the regulative principle of life.¹⁷¹ This is what one writer calls a "special service" of worship and God's "special presence" in corporate worship.¹⁷²

What are the elements of worship God's Word commands for corporate worship? According to the reformed understanding of biblical worship these include the following, as quoted in the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America:

The Bible teaches that the following are proper elements of a worship service: reading of Holy Scripture, singing of psalms and hymns, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the presentation of offerings, confessing the faith and observing the Sacraments; and on special occasions taking oaths.¹⁷³

Elements are the regular parts of worship that the Bible requires for Christian worship. Elements are the building blocks of a worship service.

170 Romans 12:1-2

171 Gore, *Pursuit of Plainness*, 272.

172 Lachman and Smith, *Worship in the Presence of God*, 11-12.

173 *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*, 47-9.

The Westminster Confession of Faith also addresses circumstances in worship. In Chapter One, Section Six we read:

...and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.¹⁷⁴

These general rules are to be consistent with Paul's teaching that all things are to be done with decency and order.¹⁷⁵ Circumstances are those things that are logistically necessary but morally neutral such as the specific time of the worship service, having pews or chairs, and other such matters. This is noted by Smith:

...there is liberty in regard to the circumstances of worship. They are to be determined by a wise discerning of that which is best in any given situation.¹⁷⁶

As one approaches worship today there is another aspect that falls somewhere between elements of worship commanded in the Bible and circumstances ordered by the light of Christian prudence and good order. That aspect is what has been called variously components,¹⁷⁷ forms,¹⁷⁸ and modes.¹⁷⁹

174 *The Confession of Faith* (n.p.: The Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1976), 22-23.

175 I Corinthians 14:40.

176 Lachman and Smith, *Worship in the Presence of God*, 18.

177 Chapell, "A Glance at Reformed Liturgical History", 5.

178 *The Book of Church Order*, 47-6.

179 John Frame, "Some Questions About the Regulative Principle," *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 359.

Frame explains this qualification:

The modal qualification is simply this: that although Scripture prescribes the elements of worship, it does not always describe in detail how those elements are to be carried out. Preaching is an element of worship, let us say; but Scripture does not specify how many sermons there must be in a service, whether there should be only one preacher or several, how loud or softly one should preach, what text a preacher should use on a particular occasion, etc.¹⁸⁰

The Book of Church Order allows freedom as to the forms the elements take in the context of a corporate worship service. A "large measure of liberty" is given in this.¹⁸¹ When it comes to forms, primary concern is with the content of the elements. Darryl Hart states:

Forms concern the content of the elements. We are commanded to sing, but what do we sing, How Great thou Art, Psalm One, or Shine Jesus Shine? We are commanded to pray, but what prayer do we use, one from Baird's Book of Liturgies, one written by the worship committee, the spontaneous prayer of an elder, or the Lord's Prayer?¹⁸²

Even when the biblical elements are being carried out with appropriate forms there is still one more critically necessary ingredient for true worship: the Holy Spirit working. Liesch notes:

It is unfair (and dangerous!) to equate spirituality with any form... Ultimately, the Spirit of God must animate any form with his presence and power if we are to experience authentic worship. We are dependent on God, not forms.¹⁸³

Fundamental to worship is the place of biblical content in all the forms that are utilized as well as a right

180 Ibid.

181 *The Book of Church Order*, 47-6.

182 Darryl G. Hart, "Hart's Reply to Mr. Irvine's Question," *Warfield List*. bbwarfld@erols.com. 4 March 1998, (4 March 1998).

183 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 21.

relationship with the One being worshipped. Content is far more significant than style and structure:

The primary factor in worship concerns not the structure, nor the style, but the content...Liturgical worship, charismatic worship, and every other style of worship must be judged by its content.¹⁸⁴

Whether it's a new song being considered or prayer of confession from an old liturgy, the most fundamental question must always be one of truth. Are the words and theology faithful to the revealed truth of the Bible? Keller states that "worship soars where truth shines."¹⁸⁵

Each aspect of a worship service may be expressed through a variety of worship forms or components where the truth of God's Word is expressed. As Chapell states:

As long as its gospel purpose is fulfilled, each aspect of the service may be expressed through a variety of worship components. For example, corporate confession may be expressed through: pastoral prayer (form or extemporaneous), private prayer, unison prayer (ancient or contemporary), responsive reading, scripture reading, corporate hymn of confession, solo with appropriate message, choral piece....Often worship becomes stifled when particular aspects of worship are arbitrarily or traditionally limited to expression through particular components of worship.¹⁸⁶

The Great Commandment of Mark 12:30-31 teaches that true worship is also about relationship. Worship is to be a response from the heart toward the One Who is loved deeply for Whom He reveals Himself to be. This means worship is to be Christ-centered from start to finish in corporate worship.

184 Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 149.

185 Tim Keller, *Developing a Worship Service*, audiotape of pre-assembly seminar, General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in America, 1991.

186 Chapell, "A Glance at Reformed Liturgical History with Current Implications", 5.

As Webber states:

Christ is to be experienced by the people from the beginning to the end of a worship service. This happens through song, prayer, Scripture ... and at the Table of the Lord ... Christ is the central figure of the whole of Scripture. The Service of the Word, then rightly proclaims Christ as the Lord over all ... Those people responsible for planning worship need to keep this Christocentric purpose of worship foremost in their mind.¹⁸⁷

As various elements and forms are utilized in worship it is crucial for the spotlight to be placed on God and not even on the biblical elements and proper forms to express worship. Rayburn emphasizes this focus in true worship to be directed Godward:

It is fundamental that we recognize that all true Christian worship must be theocentric. It is objective in the sense that the primary motion and focus of worship are Godward. This is why I would insist that if one goes to a worship service essentially for what he can "get out of it," he has missed the most vital concern that a true worshiper should have, that God be praised and glorified. At the same time I consider it obvious that the worshiper who seeks with all his heart to magnify and adore God and to listen reverently to His Word will be the one who goes away from the service with the deepest sense of personal blessing.¹⁸⁸

Approaches to the Regulative Principle of Worship

There are two approaches to the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) within Presbyterian and Reformed circles. One approach applies the RPW in a strict sense that follows closely past historical forms of expression. The other approach allows far more freedom of application of the RPW with a desire to be faithful to Scripture yet more flexible

187 Webber, *Blended Worship*, 91-92.

188 Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, 130.

in the forms the biblical elements take in particular cultures and generations up to the present day.

Those holding to the stricter application of the RPW have problems with pictures of Jesus (even in a pedagogical setting with children), holidays, altar calls, hymns of "dubious" origin, musical concerts, or solos.¹⁸⁹ Concern is raised about big problems that will follow from "opening the door a crack" to anything without direct scriptural warrant:

When you make an opening in the door of God's house large enough to admit divided chancels, candles to aid worship, holy days and seasons such as Ash Wednesday (dare I say Easter and Christmas?), that same hole is likely in time to admit the worship of the Virgin Mary, prayers to St. Peter, confession to a priest, holy water, kissing the Pope's toe, and a whole host of pollutions and monstrosities from which the Church, by God's grace, escaped in the great revival of biblical Christianity during the Reformation of the sixteenth century.¹⁹⁰

Even those holding to such a strict application of the RPW allow room for some matters being left to the discretion of the worship leaders. For example, while believing that only psalms should be sung in corporate worship, Frank Smith grants that which psalms are sung, how many psalms are sung, when in the service the psalms are sung, and which tunes are used are left to the leaders of worship.¹⁹¹ The discussion then logically extends into the realm of how much discretion

189 Kevin Read, introduction to *True and False Worship* by John Knox (Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publishers, 1988), ix.

190 Carl W. Bogue, *The Scriptural Law of Worship* (Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publishers, 1988), 11.

191 Lachman and Smith, *Worship in the Presence of God*, 199.

and how much flexibility of application of the RPW is within biblical parameters.

One of the dangers associated with the stricter application of the RPW is what Skip Ryan calls "powerless orthodoxy." He states that believing one has every detail exactly right in areas the Bible does not directly address can lead to legalism, moralism, and a shallow understanding of grace that is somber, dower, and self-righteous.¹⁹² Most often the RPW is stated negatively in terms of what is not permitted. Morey agrees with this assessment that strictness without flexibility where Scripture gives flexibility leads to legalism:

It is impossible consistently to carry out this position. It ultimately leads to legalism, absurdity, and dead orthodoxy.¹⁹³

There is a great danger in freezing a particular historical expression of the RPW in time and making it the norm and standard for all future generations and cultures of Christian worshipers. The RPW did not develop in a vacuum but in the dynamics of a particular historical setting that had its own reactions and polemics:

In the past ... reformed theologians were often guilty of an absolutizing principle of worship that had been determined in the reactionary setting of Reformation/Post-Reformation European polemics.¹⁹⁴

192 Skip Ryan, "Reformed Worship" (presentation delivered at the Presbyterian Church in America General Assembly Workshop, Dallas, 20 June 1995).

193 Morey, *Worship is All of Life*, 87.

194 Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 329.

This stricter view of the RPW appears to be rooted in making normative a particular historical expression of worship. Yet Scripture does not command the church in all ages and cultures to do things as the seventeenth century Puritans did. There should always be a concern for doing what God commands in worship that honors history as significantly instructive. Yet at the same time there is to be a concern for how to best carry out those commands in our place and time.¹⁹⁵

The other major approach to the RPW allows for much greater freedom of application and use of a variety of forms or components in corporate worship. This position roots the RPW more directly in scripture and only secondarily in historical expression of the RPW. Morey presents the reformation view through Paul's perspective and instruction to the Corinthian church:

The Reformation position is reaffirmed through Paul's dealings with a church which was confused on how to order the non-essential aspects of worship. He pointed them to the general principles which guide Christian freedom and the edification of the church... Paul does not refer the Corinthians to a prescribed order of service revealed from God. He points them instead to a mature and responsible exercise of their priestly freedom in the non-essential aspects of worship.¹⁹⁶

There is freedom within the biblical parameters of worship. Frame believes that much of the discussion of worship and the

195 Frame *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, xv.

196 Morey, *Worship is All of Life*, 82.

RPW underestimate the degree of freedom the Scripture gives in worship.¹⁹⁷

Is it possible to be firmly committed to the RPW yet hold to greater freedom of application of biblical elements than the seventeenth century Puritans? Frame argues a strong yes as he presents a "somewhat revised paradigm for Presbyterian worship":

...one thoroughly Reformed in its assumptions, affirming the regulative principle and the statements of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, but allowing much greater flexibility than the Puritans did in applying God's commands for worship.¹⁹⁸

Gore argues that this more flexible understanding of the RPW is actually more consistently held even in the overall context of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches:

...it is now possible to examine the roots of Presbyterian worship and to determine that the *regulative principle* of worship as exemplified in the documents of the Westminster Assembly contains significant departures from the *regulative principle* as taught and practiced by earlier reformed theologians, particularly John Calvin. Further, the tensions that have inhered in Presbyterian worship historically, and today account for much of the confusion in theory and practice, may be explained by these deviations and other innovations canonized by the Westminster Assembly. The answer to the confusion in worship today is an old answer. The *regulative principle*, as developed by Calvin and as practiced by the early Presbyterians, provided the essential parameters necessary for biblical worship while allowing for expressions of freedom in matters not deemed essential. The *regulative principle*, as originally conceived was not intended to be an all-intrusive guide to worship, but a rule of covenantal faithfulness for the dynamic worship of God's people. It is time to explore the biblical and historical arguments against the *regulative principle* as formulated by the Puritans. It is time to recognize that the plainness and restrictiveness of the Puritan *regulative principle* represents an important departure from

197 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, xvi.

198 Ibid., xiii.

Calvinist and early Presbyterian theory and practice. The Puritan Regulative Principle is not generally representative of the reformed tradition.¹⁹⁹

To reject some applications of the RPW in particular historical settings is not the same as rejecting the RPW. A flexible understanding of the RPW is not in itself a denial of the RPW. Individual application of the RPW to particular congregations is envisioned even in the Westminster Directory of Worship itself as noted above. Each church has its own unique setting in which to develop meaningful applications of the RPW as noted by Bannerman:

....the worship of each particular congregation ought to be worthy of that congregation as a whole in view of its special history, character, and gifts. The true genius of Presbyterianism aims at the natural and wholesome development of *individuality* within due limits in the congregation, as well as in each Christian man and woman who is a member therein.²⁰⁰

The Relationship Between Reverence and Joy

Another key issue in a contemporary understanding of worship is the relationship between reverence and joy in the presence of God. Is a deep sense of God's holiness and transcendence at odds with celebrative joy? Darryl Hart criticizes John Frame for not taking worship with enough seriousness. Hart states:

In fact, the RPW was designed precisely to safeguard a God who is zealous for his worship ... A somber, serious, dignified service ... is one that I would think more compatible with a

199 Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 5.

200 David Douglas Bannerman, *The Worship of the Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1884), 9.

God who could have the kind of exchange with Job recorded at the end of that book.²⁰¹

Frame responds by pointing out the limitations of Hart's overemphasis on the reverence of God in worship to the exclusion or at least minimizing of joy:

What Hart says nothing about is the other side of the biblical teaching, also precious to Reformed people. God is not only transcendent, but also immanent. God is not only the judge of all the earth, but is also our loving Father for Jesus' sake. At Christ's death, the veil of the temple was torn in two, and the New Testament calls us to come boldly into the holiest place, the place that struck terror into the hearts of Old Testament worshipers. New Testament Christian worship is celebration of the Resurrection, so it is typically to be joyful.²⁰²

Because the gospel of grace is rooted in the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, and the grace of the cross, worship is filled with reverence and awe as well as celebrative joy. James Jordan notes the relationship of the release from sin through Christ and great joy resulting:

It is noteworthy that in times of great revival in the church, as at Pentecost and at the Reformation, there is a great release from the bondage of sin and fear, and consequently great joy and strength. This comes to expression in music characterized by vigor. This is why Reformation music, in its original meter and tempos, is so lively, rhythmic, and forceful.²⁰³

Jordan also states that "the purpose of worship is not entertainment, although worship is not incompatible with

201 Darryl G. Hart, "Hart's Answer to Frame's Third Question," *Warfield List*. bbwarfld@erols.com. 17 February 1998, (18 February 1998).

202 John Frame, "Frame's Fourth Question to Hart," *Warfield List*. bbwarfld@erols.com. 19 February 1998, (20 February 1998).

203 James B. Jordan, "Puritanism and Music," *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1979-80): 131.

pleasure."²⁰⁴ Joy in God's presence is normative for the redeemed sinner.²⁰⁵ Joyful worship can also be "loud and energetic ... expressed in shouts and clapping (Pss. 47:1; 100:1; Zeph. 3:17)."²⁰⁶ People fully alive in Christ will at times make great noise of praise to God:

Noise wakes people up. Wide awake people make noise. Christians inherited a command to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. The words of the *Te Deum* they sing claim that angels and all the powers of heaven cry aloud in praise to God. At about the time that *Te Deum* was written, St. Jerome was able to describe worship in the Roman basilicas as a very noisy affair. The Amen of the people he says, 'resounded like heavenly thunder.' Nothing in the central tradition of Christian worship appears to account for the tiptoe and hushed whisper which many middle-class Americans reserve for churches and funeral parlors.²⁰⁷

Reverence and joy must be kept in proper biblical balance. Frame argues that contemporary worship music (CWM) maintains this balance when utilized appropriately:

I confess that I have always found reverence to be one of the *strengths* of CWM. The emphasis on praise, on God's transcendence, his sovereignty, holiness, majesty, and power, is very strong. Of course, there is also an emphasis on God's immanence: God with us, Immanuel. He is near to us in providence ... we must worship in awe and wonder, but also in boldness and holy joy (Ps. 2:11). Like the other balances of emphasis ... that balance is not always easy to achieve. But we must not simply emphasize one aspect to the exclusion of the other.²⁰⁸

204 Ibid., 130.

205 Psalm 16:11.

206 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 80.

207 Marianne H. Micks, *The Future Present* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 66.

208 Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 85-86.

Rayburn points out how music is a particularly effective vehicle through which the joy of the heart finds expression as exhorted in James 5:13:

The note of joy is one which we should expect to find especially prominent in our church services and therefore in our church music. One cannot fail to be impressed with the frequency with which the note of joy is sounded in the Psalms.... members have the right to demand music with a note of true joyfulness about it, music which is suited for use by those who with joy and gratitude welling up in their hearts long to sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.²⁰⁹

The Balance of Worship, Preaching, and Sacraments

Finding the right balance between preaching, the sacraments, and other aspects of worship is another matter of significant attention in worship today. Presbyterian worship has had a tendency to be overly didactic in a way that has minimized the role of other worship elements and components including the Lord's Supper. This has brought about a focus almost exclusively on the sermon with other aspects of worship being considered as preliminaries or warm-ups. As Maxwell writes:

That aspect, the passive aspect, is generally acknowledged. What is sometimes undervalued is that part of the action where we give and offer in praise and prayer. Too often in the Reformed Churches this has been regarded as merely preliminary and subsidiary to the main business in hand, the sermon. Whereas the proper function of the sermon is to contribute to the whole action, leading on to thanksgiving, penitence, and consecration--the dedication of all that we are and have to His service. The primary purpose of any diet of worship is to offer to God and to adore Him. It is designed not for our private enjoyment--though joy may flow from it--but to provide us with a vehicle of common action whereby we can give due praise to God's most holy Name.²¹⁰

209 Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, 159.

210 Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 42.

The sermon is properly a central focus of worship. Yet it is most likely to be impacting both for God's glory and the edification of the gathered believers when it is set in the context of the overall worship service as well as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Scotty Smith notes adjustments he has made in this regard:

Too often we settle for a "hymn sandwich" in our worship services: a big, fat slice of meaty sermon between an opening and closing hymn. Surely God's worship is to be more creative and participatory than this! As a pastor who loves to teach, I have had to repent of an unbalanced view of how much time I demand for my "preachment" in the worship service. The ministry of the Word is still prominent, but it is not exclusive to the other vital elements of biblical worship.²¹¹

Terry Johnson elevates leading public worship to the place of the minister's primary calling:

... given that leading public worship is the minister's primary calling, and that public worship is not only the most important but the most fruitful of all our activities as ministers, it is amazing to observe the prevailing mindlessness of most of what passes for worship, with the exception of the sermon. Most of the ministers in evangelical circles work hard at their sermons. But few, it seems, give much thought to anything else. There is usually little discernible logic, or flow, or pace to the average service. Seldom does there seem to be much of a rationale for the hymn selection. Rarely can one discern any planning behind the content of the prayers, most ministers, one imagines, praying whatever happens to pop into their minds. Transitions between elements have the "and now, this!", quality found on television variety shows, where in fact there is no connection between what went before and what comes after ... The key to reform lies with the "clergy" and the kind of leadership that they will give to tomorrow's worship. How will tomorrow's ministers preach? How will they pray? How will they administer the sacraments and lead the church's public services?²¹²

211 Smith & Card, *Unveiled Hope*, 90.

212 Terry L. Johnson, "The Pastor's Public Ministry: Part One," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998): 131.

This kind of worship preparation is as difficult as preparation for preaching.²¹³

Worship Controversies

Various controversies over worship, and especially music in worship, have both historically and today produced battles that have led several to describe worship differences in the language of warfare. Blackwood wrote in 1939:

Sometimes he [the minister] is tempted to exclaim, "The choir is the war department of the modern church!"²¹⁴

John Throop also utilizes the language of war regarding worship:

...the "worship wars" are ever present in the mutual suspicion and misunderstanding between advocates of liturgical or contemporary worship.²¹⁵

Chapell lists eleven worship tandems such as "emotional vs. cognitive" and "structured vs. free" and observes the following:

... there is biblical warrant for each of these characteristics in the presentation of the gospel. The church tends to go to war with itself when it attempts to eliminate any one of the elements in these tandems with regard to worship form, structure, expression, prayer, preaching, music, translation, etc.²¹⁶

213 Jerram Barrs, *Can Biblical Worship Be Contemporary?* (Michigan City, IN: Sound Word Associates, 1990), cassette.

214 Andrew W. Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1939), 95.

215 John R. Throop, "Ending the Worship Wars: Learning to Love Liturgy," *Worship Leader* 7 (Jan/Feb 1998): 20.

216 Chapell, "A Glance at Reformed Liturgical History with Current Implications", 4.

Smith observes similar battlegrounds for "proud combatants":

Painfully, and oddly enough, our disunity is nowhere more clearly pronounced than when the topic of "worship" emerges for discussion and planning among Christians. That which is meant to be an expression of Spirit-wrought humility and other-centered adoration of God often becomes a battleground for proud combatants to vie for the right to define liturgy and control the elements of the worship service. More often than not, this is usually only determined by a person's aesthetic sensibilities and preferences--not theology.²¹⁷

Elmer Towns titled his book on worship as *Putting an End to Worship Wars*. In this book he states:

Worship is the battleground today. Some disagreement may result from theology, but most disagreement is over methods ... the differences in worship deal with method, not principle. The principle of singing (Col. 3:16) is a biblical principle, but the method of singing may change from culture to culture. The principle of public prayer is commanded, but the method may be pastoral prayer, lay prayer, concerts of prayer, responsive prayer, or corporately praying the Lord's Prayer.²¹⁸

Towns argues that the differences in worship views is a reflection of differences between people:

Christians worship differently. That's because we are different: different mixtures of spiritual gifts, different callings, different personalities, different backgrounds, and different doctrine. We also have different methods of teaching and different ways to express worship. Our differences produce as many different individual responses to worship as there are different expressions of worship. And the intensity of people's response to our differences in worship is as deep as the differences among people.²¹⁹

These differences are also reflected in the generational breakdown of our culture. In the United States today there is a fairly equal division of people into five diverse

217 Smith, *Unveiled Hope*, 77.

218 Towns, *Putting an End to Worship Wars*, 52-53.

219 Ibid., 123.

categories as the following statistics of when people were born show:

1908-1926: GI gen. (55 mil.)
 1927-1945: Depression gen. (49 mil.)
 1946-1964: Baby Boomers (77 mil.)
 1965-1981: Gen X (66 mil.)
 1982-1999: Busters (70 mil.)²²⁰

One approach to ending some of the worship wars that exist in our time is to blend together past expressions of biblical worship with present expressions of biblical worship. After exhaustive study of worship historically and in the present day, Webber observes a convergence of worship traditions in a blending of old and new, past and present.²²¹ This involves a healthy respect for the past plus a desire for relevance in the present. A key question for consideration in light of this blending and convergence of worship is how the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) guides our selection of various worship elements and forms from past and present. The focus must be on faithful worship and not simply blended worship. As Webber points out this selection of available worship resources past and present must be guided by the Scripture:

...an evangelical commitment to a Scripture-driven worship that relates to the contemporary world. Unfortunately, many evangelicals are drawn to a market-driven worship that views worship in a mere functional, presentational manner. Eventually,

²²⁰ Daniel Benedict and Craig Kenneth Miller, *Contemporary Worship for the Twenty-First Century* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1995), 8.

²²¹ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 12.

such worship will produce shallow believers. Hence, the urgency to perfect a biblically informed worship.²²²

Certain dangers arise when God's people uncritically embrace certain traditional expressions of worship from the past as well as when God's people uncritically embrace certain contemporary expressions of worship in the present. Gore comments on this:

There are two dangers that may arise in any attempt to evaluate the work of the past and point the direction for the future. The temptation toward either a radical discarding of the wisdom of the past, or a reactionary embracing of tradition is an every-present reality. However, either extreme would be an incorrect response... cautions against trendiness and subordination of eternal truth to the seductive claims of a particular cultural context. On the other hand ... warns also against the uncritical acceptance of all that has preceded...the hope is that this analysis will point the way toward a greater coherence in Presbyterian worship, as well as greater freedom from strictures that now may be viewed more accurately as culturally-conditioned, and not as eternally revealed.²²³

It is important to remember that all forms of worship that express biblical elements of worship are first offered in the context of a particular cultural and historical setting. The words of hymns and songs as well as the musical forms through which they are presented to God in worship are the particular worship of God's people in a context:

Many hymns possess a timeless quality ... but these hymns were created within specific time frames. They were therefore culturally, theologically, and liturgically shaped by the environment within which they were written.²²⁴

222 Ibid., 261.

223 Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 19-21.

224 Music, *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Readings*, ix.

The challenge then is to draw on all the biblically valid resources available past and present and adapt them to the particular ministry setting in which one plans and leads worship. Gore argues that reformed liturgy drawing from a covenantal approach to life in God's presence is uniquely able to carry forward biblical worship into every generation and culture:

The biblical imperative for the Church in relation to culture, then, is adaptation and transformation ... The Church then, must be able to relate the truths of Scripture, particularly the positive commands regarding worship, to the context in which an indigenous culture exists... The genius of reformed liturgy is revealed every time cultural adaptation of the liturgy is achieved.²²⁵

A desire to honor God in worship is enhanced as one draws on the richness of worship past and worship present.

Rayburn captures this thought:

We must encourage the use of everything that is contemporary and good. We should encourage the Church to produce the future Isaac Watts and John Newtons and Wesleys. Our interest is not to keep everything that is old. Clearly there are some things, even in our hymnal, which cannot be used any longer because of antiquated lyrics and tunes. We want to offer what is best to the Lord, old or contemporary.²²⁶

Our determination of what is best for the Lord offered from our present ministry context should be biblically and theologically driven rather than tradition or personal preference driven:

...it can be said that the New Testament contains no apostolic liturgy that embodies the very essence of Christian worship. We refer to the New Testament not to find a pattern of worship but to discover the spirit and theological principles that the liturgy of

²²⁵ Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 331-2.

²²⁶ Robert S. Rayburn, "The Whole Bible for Worship," address to the staff of Covenant Presbyterian Church, 25 January 1994.

the church should embody. Not tradition but theology is definitive for determining the shape of the liturgy.²²⁷

Each congregation has a unique history and make-up that is reflected in its expression of biblical worship elements.

Bannerman reflects on this at some length:

... the worship of each particular congregation ought to be worthy of that congregation as a whole in view of its special history, character, and gifts. The true genius of Presbyterianism aims at the natural and wholesome development of *individuality* within due limits in the congregation, as well as in each Christian man and woman who is a member therein...the individuality of a congregation in a purely mining district is quite distinct from that of a congregation in a pastoral one; and both of these, again, are very different in history and character from a congregation in a fishing village, or from a West-end city charge. Given an equally high spiritual condition in all the four cases, the congregational individuality will and should develop itself differently in worship in each of them respectively... It will be objected, perhaps: 'This is making class distinctions where none ought to be admitted.' But the answer is very plain. It is not *making* distinctions. It is simply recognizing facts in Providence, which are *there*, whether you recognize them or not, and seeking to act accordingly. In what is highest and deepest in their worship, in the great essentials of it, all Christian congregations, worshipping in a spiritual and Scriptural way, are one, and rejoice to know and feel that they are so. But, in the circumstantials of their worship, there may be, and there ought to be, a good deal of difference.²²⁸

Music in Worship

Music in worship is perhaps the most frequently debated issue in church worship today. Since the Reformation restored worship in song to the congregation, music has been a vital part of Protestant worship. As George Grant notes:

Ours is a singing faith. At every turn, on every occasion, and in every age the Christian church has been marked by a prolific love of music. Wherever the gospel has been preached, it has simultaneously been sung. Wherever the praises of our God have

227 Schroeder, *Worship in the Reformed Tradition*, 26.

228 Bannerman, *The Worship of the Presbyterian Church*, 9-12.

been expressed in words, they have simultaneously been expressed in melodies. As a result, some of the most glorious music ever produced has been the fruit of faithful worship ... According to Martin Luther, 'Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in this world.'²²⁹

Music is part of life activity under the mandate God gave to Adam and Eve to subdue the earth and rule over it. Edgar explains music as covenant activity before God:

The meaning-structure of music, which is cultural activity, is rooted in the covenant...Music, then, is human, cultural activity, ordered by the covenant, in the aspect of sound.²³⁰

Music is all around us and it impacts our lives. The nature of music and its richness is part of God's good creation. People make music by utilizing the voice God gave them. Musical instruments are made by human hands. Roff notes the special power music possesses to "create and intensify our emotions; to engage our memory; to activate the imagination; and to comfort the soul."²³¹ Music is a kind of heightened expression of the spoken word. Frame gives insight into this:

Music is closely related to the spoken word. Human speech has a kind of natural music about it: rhythm, timbre, and pitch play important roles in verbal communication, and not only in tonal languages. In one sense, then, all language is musical. When we enhance that natural music with well-crafted melodies, harmonies, and instruments, our words often take on a new kind of vitality.²³²

Because of this vitality of music in worship it has the capacity to be a vehicle for enhancing the effectiveness of

229 George Grant, "Hymns of the Church," *World*, 22 November 1997, 24.

230 Edgar, *Taking Note of Music*, 47.

231 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 24-25.

232 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 111.

the Word preached and the Lord's Supper observed. Webber states:

Music is the wheel upon which the Word and Eucharist ride. Music proclaims the Scripture in a heavenly language and provides a means through which the mystery of God in Christ is approachable.²³³

One area particularly impacted by music is human emotions. Music of instrument and voice are able to interpret and express our emotions very effectively.²³⁴

Webber shows the role music plays in worship in this regard:

Music witnesses to the transcendence of God and to his work of salvation. God's heavenly court uses music to praise him. Music in worship draws the earthly worshiper into the heavens to stand with the heavenly throng as they offer praise to God. This posture of worship was recognized by the early church especially in the singing of the *Sanctus*. Music also induces an attitude of worship. It elicits from deep within the person the sense of awe and mystery that accompanies a meeting with God. In this way music releases an inner, nonrational part of our being that mere words cannot set free to utter praise. Music also affirms the corporate unity of the body of Christ because it is something that the entire congregation does together.²³⁵

Discussion of emotion in worship inevitably leads to a discussion of manipulation and hyped "emotionalism." Certainly there are abuses that must be guarded against. However, the way to guard against "emotionalism" is not to have "emotionless" worship. The biblical view of humankind as expressed by Jonathan Edwards is one where intellect, will, and emotions are interdependent.²³⁶ Emotions are more subjective than the content of written or sung words.

233 Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 195.

234 Davies, *Christian Worship*, 93.

235 Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 195.

236 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 78.

Therefore keen discernment is required for utilization of vocal and instrumental music to carry the truths of God's Word in congregational song.

Edgar states, "Both the enjoyment and the responsibility of music should be rooted in the will of God."²³⁷ Harnessing the gift and resource of music into corporate worship as God commands is a challenging task for elders and church worship leaders. Many questions regarding music in worship abound. Some of these questions reflected in writings on worship music today are the quality, singability, communicability, biblical content, and appropriateness for corporate worship of the music under consideration. Does the music reflect both reverence and joy? What, if any, instruments should accompany congregational singing? Should choirs, soloists, and ensembles be used? Should there be background instrumental music during prayers, scripture readings, and sermons?

The question of style or form of music is central to much of the debate today. What styles of music are appropriate to utilize in worship? Liesch makes some interesting points about style of music utilized in the Old Testament:

... scholars believe Israel followed the uses and styles of her neighbors in her music. There is no style that is definitively biblical... Mowinckel concludes that temple singing "can be traced back to Canaanite patterns." ... Old Testament music style had no harmony as we know it, no scales comparable to ours, no music notation, no rhythmic meters akin to ours ... If the Hebrew music differed so greatly from ours and was acceptable to God, must we

237 Edgar, *Taking Note of Music*, 2.

not beware of imposing or elevating any one style as intrinsically sacred? There is no intrinsically sacred style. Any given style, however, may be a happy fit as determined by a particular people at a particular place and at a particular time.²³⁸

If there is no intrinsically sacred style, then style questions cannot be answered with a de facto elimination because of a particular style being necessarily evil. The range of styles can be from classical to southern gospel to rock and jazz. The issues in selection of music styles must relate to other factors such as connection with and singability in the worshipping congregation. The problem often comes with associations of styles with particular content. Edgar points out the problem of association:

It is not that Christians cannot use style elements from rock music. But it is quite artificial to embrace an entire complex of style elements which were grown on the soil of the rebellious drug-and-sound culture of the late sixties, only changing the words (which are usually hard to make out anyway). This is the difficulty of writing music that is modern, yet free from certain connotations.²³⁹

What needs to be remembered in the discussion of elements of rock music and worship is that much of what is now contemporary worship music was developed by Christian musicians at the same time rock music was being developed--rather than a later imitation of a mature music form. Matt Creamer notes:

... most contemporary Christian styles evolved side by side with secular contemporary styles. Southern Gospel evolved right along side of Country and Southern Rock. Black Gospel evolved along side Jazz and Blues. And there were Christians writing in the rock idiom in the mid to late 60's and 70's right along side the Beatles and the Stones; artists that decided to take a stand and

238 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 198.

239 Edgar, *Taking Note of Music*, 117.

use new styles to glorify God instead of rebellion. Contemporary Christian Music is not something that happened in imitation of secular rock after it had already reached maturity.²⁴⁰

Sometimes the bad associations are with contemporary music and sometimes they are with classical music. Liesch gives an example of the latter concerning a recent convert from a satanic cult that used Bach's music as a mainstay. When the organist played Bach in the evangelical church the convert attended, the man was traumatized and ran out of the church.²⁴¹ The problem was not that Bach's music was evil but that evil associations had been connected to it. This weaker brother needed to be treated with sensitivity while being educated that Bach's music was not evil--people are evil even in their utilization of musical genres from God's creation.

Choosing music styles and instrumental accompaniment that most connect with the worshipping congregation and best convey biblical truth is important. However, the major consideration in selecting music for worship remains content centered. Singing about and to the Triune God of creation and redemption is to be truth based. Our music is to be saturated with the Word of God. Music is to serve the text of truth in the words sung. Webber notes the importance of keeping this before the church as musical styles are mixed:

240 Matthew Creamer, "Style," an unpublished paper in a series on *A Philosophy of Worship* for South Dayton Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Centerville, Ohio.

241 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 204-205.

As renewing churches learn to mix musical styles effectively, they also need to find a way to use music in worship so that music serves the text rather than dominates it.²⁴²

Church Unity and Worship

One of the major struggles in church worship today is maintaining the unity of the body of Christ while utilizing a variety of styles from both the past and the present. Personal preferences are often considered the biblical standard and all who fail to hold similar preferences are condemned as unbiblical. The call for unity over use of elements while allowing some latitude in exact forms utilized in worship is made in the Westminster Directory of Worship itself as M'Crie pointed out:

In the Church of Scotland, on the other hand, we have...our agenda and an order to be observed in conducting divine service; and yet no one is tied down to the prayers or exhortations which are given as so many examples, in which, while structure and substance are indicated, there is no intention of binding ministers to the exact terms employed. For a book the compilers of which aimed at conserving ministerial liberty, giving scope for the exercise of gifts and graces, but at the same time preserving order and a measure of uniformity, no more felicitous term than 'Directory' could have been employed.²⁴³

Insistence on one particular style for all cultures and generations can be held in a way that divides the church. Roff shows how we can become too attached to a particular musical style:

It is common to hear criticisms of new musical styles being introduced in churches today ... Unfortunately, we often become attached to the musical style we grew up with and resist anything new. But our study of hymnody has shown that, with each new age

²⁴² Webber, *Blended Worship*, 109.

²⁴³ M'Crie, *Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland*, 194-195.

in church history, fresh musical forms have arisen spontaneously to give expression to the reviving work of the Holy Spirit in the church. No one style has been, or ever can be, sufficient to serve effectively as the sole and permanent church style.²⁴⁴

Sometimes when style preferences are elevated to biblical standards of what is right, then sinful snobbery can result.

Frame describes different kinds of "snobs":

Snobs are of many types: high art lovers who cannot bear to hear anything from mere popular culture, but also "with-it" modern types who look down on others for being less than fully up-to-date. Such snobbery is, more evidently than the problem of a lack of education, one that God has called his church to deal with. But the church must also reckon with the fact that while we are on this earth, we are imperfectly sanctified. And until we all develop a perfect openness to everybody else's music, how shall we worship?²⁴⁵

Responsibilities for loving one another and being forbearing with one another are there for both sides of the worship debates and wars. Growing maturity is needed on both sides. Frame goes on to exhort the body of Christ to love in the midst of worship music tension and disagreement:

How do we love one another and defer to one another in the selection of church music? First, we must constantly search our hearts for evidence of selfishness. Are we seeking to have it our own way or to serve our brothers and sisters? Forsaking selfishness means seeking to honor the preferences of others as much as we can. Yes, we must also consider questions of quality and appropriateness...but we should be aware of our tendency to confuse those questions with questions of taste. And we should resolve that if anyone in the church is to be offended over a mere matter of taste, it should be us rather than someone else. Therefore, unless it can be shown to be inappropriate for worship, everyone's music should be heard: old people's and young people's music; European, African American, and other ethnic music; complex music and simple music. This is how we defer to one another--serve one another--in the body of Christ.²⁴⁶

244 Roff, *Let Us Sing*, 149.

245 Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 19-20.

246 Ibid., 25.

Even Knox exercised great forbearance in his day over issues related to the Book of Common Prayer and certain practices as noted by Gore:

While Knox was not overly fond of the Book of Common Prayer, he was willing to subordinate his personal opinion for the common good (on kneeling without interpreting it as adoration of the elements).²⁴⁷

Music seems to uniquely bring tension in the church to the surface, making it a major divisive issue.²⁴⁸ The person offended should raise the issue with the church in a manner such as Frame outlines:

I believe this problem should be handled in terms of Romans 14. The one offended should raise the issue with the church. If the church does not accept his complaint or persuade him to abandon it, then it should treat him as a believer with a "weak conscience." A "weaker" believer is one who loves the Lord, but his conscience is bound by scruples without basis in God's word. The church cannot be captive to the false scruples of weak believers. It should seek to instruct them. But if they will not be instructed, and if they cannot persuade the church to change its practice for their sake, they may have to seek other fellowships in which they can worship without violation of their conscience... Paul urges believers in such disputes to stay together, loving one another in Christ, neither despising nor judging one another. But, as we know, sometimes these disputes do lead to divisions. Such divisions are defeats, not triumphs. The goal of history is the gathering of a vast multitude from every kingdom, tongue, tribe, and nation, joining in praise to God together... We should be expecting in our churches--particularly in our worship, when God draws near to us--surprising discoveries of unity. One way God works among us, then, is when we learn one another's music.²⁴⁹

One has to wonder whether controversy over worship music styles is the root of unity problems in some local churches or whether it is the fruit of other deeper rooted problems in local churches. In either case it seems as though a

247 Gore, *The Pursuit of Plainness*, 55.

248 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 175.

249 Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 141-142.

willingness to be forbearing in worship styles will facilitate greater unity of the body of Christ in other areas as people mutually submit to Christ and put the worship focus on Him.²⁵⁰

In light of the depth of controversy and potential division over worship styles, it is important to make changes slowly and with sensitivity to the whole body of believers in the local church. Liesch encourages changes "where people feel safe"; when "there is a certain amount of calm in the church"; giving "people lead time to process"; and while trying to "obtain consensus."²⁵¹ Blackwood encourages gradual change in the following:

Since the peace of the local church is more vital than any improvement in the music, the pastor is careful about suggesting radical changes.²⁵²

Leadership and Participation in Worship

The issue of leadership and participation in worship is another fundamental matter reflected in much of the literature on worship today. The Protestant Reformation restored worship to the people of the congregation. To keep songs and responses from the people would be to perpetuate the unbiblical practices of Roman Catholicism. Based on Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 11 through 14 the giftedness

250 Philippians 2:1-4.

251 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 201-204.

252 Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship*, 97.

of the congregation is to be drawn upon in worship.²⁵³ People were encouraged by Paul to bring a hymn or a word of instruction when gathering for corporate worship.

Women are encouraged to pray and prophesy in I Corinthians 11:5 yet to remain silent in I Corinthians 14:34. Therefore the silence in I Corinthians 14:34 must be qualified in some way. In Presbyterian and Reformed circles all would agree that all believers--male and female--as well as covenant children are to participate in a meaningful way in corporate worship in singing, responsive readings, and other aspects of corporate worship involving the whole congregation where the congregation speaks as a united voice. The question is more along the lines of who is to lead in worship through a single voice in prayer, reading of scripture and preaching or instruction. Calvin allowed children to lead the congregation in the learning of new psalms.²⁵⁴ There needs to be a proper balance of elder oversight of the content and form of worship with congregational participation. People alive in Christ are to come to worship with an eagerness to fully enter in as Ogden pictures:

In contrast, there is found in many places today a people alive in Christ who come together ready to pour out their hearts to God. It matters little whether the worship is highly structured or spontaneous. The difference is that people are prepared to give

253 I Corinthians 14:26.

254 Miller, "Calvin's Understanding of Psalm-Singing," 36.

themselves in song, prayer, praise, and response to the Word of God.²⁵⁵

However the specific lines are drawn between elder and laity in specific places of participation in worship, congregational involvement should not be overshadowed by clergy and the clergy should not stifle the giftedness and participation of the congregation. The priesthood of all believers should be applied to worship. Maxwell champions this reformation principle:

Throughout the history of the church, both before and after the Reformation, there has been a recurring propensity on the part of the clergy to arrogate to themselves the whole action of worship and on the part of the laity to shift the burden of active participation in worship on the clergy. This should be resolutely discouraged wherever encountered as contrary to the spirit of Christianity.²⁵⁶

There is also an important horizontal side to worship reflected in participation of the congregation. Rayburn presents fellowship as an element of worship in the early church:

Perhaps there are those who would insist that while fellowship is important in the life of the body of believers, it has little to do with their worship. However, I would insist that fellowship is a particularly important element in corporate worship, and especially in the observance of the sacraments if one is to experience all the fullness of true Christian worship.²⁵⁷

Frame agrees with this in emphasizing the worship service as a gathering of God's family. To fail to show love

255 Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 24.

256 Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 43.

257 Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, 91.

for one another is a lack of reverence for God Who calls His children into relationship with Himself and one another.²⁵⁸

Discussions of leadership in worship also raise the issue of the worship leader and performance. Many dislike the use of the word performance in that it is associated with the entertainment world. Ryan emphasizes the importance of the person leading worship being a worshipper himself and says that if in so doing there is an appearance of performance in a negative way--that is to be risked.²⁵⁹

Liesch actually defines performance in a way that is compatible with Christ-honoring leadership in worship:

To perform is to do something complicated or difficult with skill in public with a view toward serving and ministering... Notice in the last quote that the words *minister*, *perform*, and *service* occur together in a single verse [Ezekiel 44:16]... I believe these three words ... are practically interchangeable and that the idea of connecting serving and ministering with performance is immensely helpful in clarifying the biblical attitude toward performance.²⁶⁰

This concept leads to the importance of properly trained pastors who understand the biblical elements of worship as well as the varying aspects of implementing those elements through various components and forms. It is especially important for pastors to sufficiently understand the dynamics of music in relationship to worship to be able to spiritually and relationally oversee musical leaders in the local church. This is true whether or not the pastor is musically gifted or

258 Frame, "Frame's Fourth Question to Hart."

259 Ryan, "Reformed Worship."

260 Liesch, *The New Worship*, 127.

not. Seminaries need to place more of an emphasis on such preparation for worship leadership in the curriculum.²⁶¹

Other Contemporary Worship Issues

Another issue in contemporary worship involves the place of the whole person in worship. Worship involves more than just the mind. Webber states:

...God meeting with us in worship--calls for an open and total response from us. Worship calls for the involvement of our mind, body, and soul.²⁶²

Such aspects of worship as sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell have historically been part of worship. The raising of hands, falling prostrate on our faces, and kneeling are biblical images of worship. Whatever place we enter for worship will have a visual impact of some sort. Addressing posture in worship Smith notes:

Though not mandated, it is quite appropriate for us to lift our hands, to kneel, to prostrate ourselves, to respond with our whole person to the whole gospel.²⁶³

The scripture calls us to glorify God with our bodies.²⁶⁴

Given an eternal state of worship in glorified bodies--this is not a temporary matter but an everlasting one.

Worship also has an important outward feature to it. Peter states that we are a people belonging to God who

261 Ibid., 235-239.

262 Webber, *Blended Worship*, 94-95.

263 Smith, *Unveiled Hope*, 88.

264 I Corinthians 6:20.

declare His praises into the dark world around us.²⁶⁵ Maxwell reflects on this outward nature of the church:

Those who plead for "inward" worship only, ignore two facts. First, that public worship is the manifestation of the worth of God before the world; it is therefore part of its nature to be "outward."²⁶⁶

The gospel goes to the nations in order to have the nations join in the praises of God in worship.²⁶⁷

One final much-debated question in worship discussions today relates to the relevance of worship to contemporary culture. What is meaningful to worshippers living in this current culture is not the same issue as what is meaningful to unbelievers. Worship is a gathering of redeemed sinners in Christ. While unbelievers are welcome and encouraged to be part of worship services--worship as such must not be seeker driven but rather seeker sensitive. I Corinthians 14:24-25 envisions unbelievers present observing worshippers in the presence of God. The goal is not to make unbelievers comfortable with where they are before God but to make worship intelligible to them as Christ is shown forth. The truth of the gospel will be painful before it is wonderful. Unbelievers should be loved and accepted, but it is not comfortable to have the light shine on a person's darkness. Yet the marvelous works of God must be communicated in the vernacular. Styles of worship should fit the culture and

265 I Peter 2:9.

266 Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 79.

267 Psalm 47:1; 100:1; 105:1-3; 117:1; Revelation 5:9-10.

community.²⁶⁸ Frame says that in order to make Calvin's worship forms fit the end of the twentieth century, "we may have to change the order, or the emphasis, in order to convey the same meanings, and the same quality of edification, that the Reformers conveyed in their time."²⁶⁹

The best way to close this chapter is with an extended quote from John Frame reflecting on biblical principles that impacted his changing views of appropriate application of biblical elements in worship today:

God's grace enabled me to persevere through the discomfort. The main biblical considerations motivating me through this time were the Great Commission and the emphasis on intelligible worship in I Corinthians 14. We wanted to have a form of worship that spoke intelligibly to the community we sought to reach: not only long-time Presbyterians, but also non-Presbyterian Christians and the unchurched. To reach that goal, we all needed to put aside, to a large extent, our own prejudices and preferences, to esteem the interests of others above our own. God blessed that desire, and many came to a saving knowledge of Christ through the church's ministry.... Both those who love traditional hymns and those who love the new songs need to be flexible, to understand one another and minister to one another.²⁷⁰

268 Barrs, *Can Biblical Worship Be Contemporary?*

269 John Frame, "Frame's Answer to Hart's Last Question," *Warfield List*. bbwarfld@erols.com. 26 February 1998, (27 February 1998).

270 Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 143.

CHAPTER THREE
PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The design of this study has included case studies of three churches where I have past or present direct involvement; a survey to identify churches of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) meeting a particular worship profile for follow-up interviewing; interviewing of worship leaders at five churches; personal observations of seven churches; a worship workshop at Christ Community Church in Franklin, Tennessee; extensive time with a worship leader from Guadalajara, Mexico to get a cross-cultural perspective; and a variety of other observations and readings that were timely and relevant to the study.

The first case study is of The Church of the Covenant (PCA) in Cincinnati, Ohio where I pastored from 1977-1984. During my time there, steps were taken to move to a style of worship that included more contemporary forms while maintaining what would be considered a rather traditional style service. After I left, there was considerable tension and controversy over worship issues that contributed in some degree to a significant number of people leaving the church, including the pastor.

The second case study is of Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Richmond, Indiana where I have pastored from 1992 to the present (1999). During my time at Christ Presbyterian Church we have moved gradually from a traditional service with a few contemporary choruses sung before the worship service to a blended service with a number of contemporary forms including the use of drums, electric guitars and keyboards on over one half of the songs on a weekly basis in Sunday morning worship. There has been some opposition to these changes along the way. The elders have done extensive study of worship and the worship ministry team has dialogued over a variety of issues. A seminar has been conducted as well as teaching and preaching on worship with the congregation as a whole. The teens of the church have also been involved in the instruction, interaction, and implementation of some of the changes.

The third case study is of South Dayton Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Centerville, Ohio where I have served as moderator of the session for twelve of the past sixteen months. This was a church plant in 1986 that began with a contemporary style approach to worship. Due to several factors, including worship style tensions, the church added an early traditional service to its normal contemporary service. I have conducted an interview with the staff worship leader and I recently conducted a weekend worship seminar which included a before and after survey at this church as part of the project design as well.

In June of 1998 I designed a survey (see Appendix A) to be made available to the teaching and ruling elder commissioners to the 25th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America in St. Louis, Missouri. The purpose of this was to identify several churches that met a particular worship profile. The plan was to pick a few churches from the survey that met the profile and do a follow-up interview (Appendix B) with the pastor or worship leader of selected churches. One hundred and ten surveys were returned and, from those, five interviews were conducted.

While on study leave, mostly in Kansas City, Kansas at my mother's home in January of 1998 and January and February of 1999, I took the opportunity to observe worship services at seven different churches. These churches ranged in denominational background from Missouri Synod Lutheran to Vineyard to Presbyterian Church USA to Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The styles ranged from very traditional to very contemporary and seeker-driven.

In January of 1998 I had opportunity to attend "The Worship of God" symposium, forum, and workshop at Christ Community Church (PCA) in Franklin, Tennessee. In addition to excellent teaching on worship we experienced wonderful worship in God's presence. While there I was exposed to traditional hymns sung to mostly traditional tunes but arranged in a praise band setting for congregational singing.

I remained there for Sunday morning worship for further experience and observation.

An opportunity to teach and test the study with a worship leader from another culture presented itself in October of 1998. Christ Presbyterian Church in Richmond has established an ongoing relationship with a mission team in Guadalajara, Mexico. We have sent short-term mission teams there the past two summers. I was a member of the team last year. While there I talked with Mission to the World missionary Larry Trotter about my doctor of ministry project on worship. These discussions grew out of the sermon (Appendix D) I preached on worship--once in English and once with translation into Spanish--in two churches there. Larry asked me to spend a week instructing and interacting with a man named Alejandro Martinez who serves as the worship leader of four churches in Guadalajara. This experience gave a cross-cultural challenge and test to my study.

Adding to this cross-cultural input was a time with the late Mission to the World missionary, David Vos, telling of his experience with Algerians in France.

Other relevant and timely information that confirmed my design was the in-depth reading about worship, past and present. Among these were descriptions of worship at the time of John Calvin at Geneva, Switzerland and innovations he made at that time. An interview in *Leadership* with PCA pastor Tim Keller in New York City also proved very helpful. Both of these are referenced above. Other discoveries that

will be noted below as verifying the purpose of this study include a description of an Eastern Orthodox worship service in the book *Blended Worship* by Robert Webber; a study of the background to Handel's *Young Messiah*; and a song "Arise, My Soul, Arise."

Survey and Interview Design

The design of the survey sheet (Appendix A) at General Assembly was to find out important information that would help me identify key churches that fit a particular profile in worship. Those that fit the profile could be followed up to discover if they had experienced some movement in their recent history from either a traditional or contemporary style of worship to one that was more of a blending of the two styles. In order to gain this information I had a section where the teaching or ruling elder described the church's worship style as traditional, contemporary, or blended. To help me evaluate this further, I had sections listing frequency of utilization of various instruments as to never, weekly, monthly, or yearly. Up front leadership in worhsip was another section. Did elders only lead compared to lay people leading? If lay people led, were any of them youth or female? Use and frequency of creeds, Lord's Supper, readings, drama, and dance was another section. The last section was an evaluation of where the church was on a list of twenty worship continuums. The survey helped me in

selecting which churches I wanted to contact for a possible interview.

The questions used for the interviews (Appendix B) were seeking to discern answers to questions surrounding why churches moved to a more blended service and how they went about doing so. Questions probed as how the congregation was informed and instructed; how opposing views were handled; what degree of unity was there among the musicians involved in the change or addition of new musical forms; how the worship leader selected songs that are sung; what kind of tension was there and how it was overcome; what pitfalls needed to be avoided; and if unity could be maintained during change.

The before and after questions for the worship workshop (Appendix C) sought to identify the participants' worship style preferences; perspective on how unified the church was; where the focus should be on certain worship continuums; and amounts of worship expressions from the history of the church compared to the past twenty years. The same ten questions were asked before the workshop and after the workshop. The design was to discern any change in perspective after the weekend seminar in a church that had known tension in worship styles and separate traditional and contemporary services.

Program Design

The program was designed to help people understand worship from a biblical, historical, and contemporary

perspective. The material is to be presented in a way that gives instruction in the biblical principles of worship that are to be applied today. An understanding of the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) with insight into its range of application in the Bible, in history, and today is central to the presentation. The goal is to have people see the value of drawing on past and present expressions of biblical worship as a key to unity in the body of Christ in worship today.

Learning activities were designed to include an experience of worship styles that are biblical but varied in the context of teaching the value of drawing on both past and present expressions of biblical worship. The teaching tool (Appendix E) covers the scope of the biblical, historical, and contemporary aspects of worship, the RPW, and application to today. In the context of the workshop the preaching of the Word in corporate worship includes a sermon on John 4 (Appendix D). At key points in the workshop are times of discussion and feedback.

The learning indicators include the before and after surveys and the discussion and follow-up response of the congregation with the elders and worship leaders of the church. Worship practices over time would be another learning indicator as reflected in components of worship utilized and style of music incorporated into the worship services.

The overall lesson plan (Appendix E) begins with a presentation on "Worship with Reverence and Joy: A Working Model for Biblical and Relevant Worship in the PCA." This seeks to answer the questions: "What is biblical worship and what is relevant worship?" It also presents the balance between reverence and joy in biblical worship and the balance between past and present expressions of biblical worship. Unity in the church is discussed with a conclusion on the importance of worship in all of life.

A second presentation is on "A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Look at Worship." This presentation breaks out each of these aspects of worship in survey fashion.

A sermon from John 4:19-26 is preached on "The Kind of Worshipers the Father Seeks." The emphasis is on God seeking worshipers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Yet only God the Son in human flesh worships the Father in this way. Our only hope for true worship is to be in Christ Who takes our worship and perfects it as He offers it to the Father. The kind of worship style Christ perfects and offers to the Father is as diverse as God's creation, as is reflected in Hebrews 2:11-12, expounded in the context of Psalm 22:22-31.

Assessments of the effectiveness of the presentation are made in the short term through the before and after survey and verbal feedback and discussion. Longer term assessments must be made through follow-up in congregations with the elders and worship leaders as to a greater blending of past

and present expressions of worship and the deeper unity in the local church as a result.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by the seemingly endless resources available on the biblical, historical, and contemporary aspects of worship. The study is also limited by the relatively small sampling of even PCA churches that would fit the profile. It is also difficult to gain objective information from people, given the somewhat subjective nature of worship preferences. The cross-cultural samplings were limited to one significant one and one small one.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

When I arrived in Cincinnati in 1984 the worship style of The Church of the Covenant was quite traditional. The church utilized a variety of worship expressions from week to week but most all of them were drawn from the church past. This was reflected in the singing of great hymns of the church (accompanied by piano only) and the utilization of creeds and responsive readings. Only the pastor and elders would lead in worship. The order of worship was well planned and carefully followed. There was a dignity and reverence in worship throughout. The note of celebration was not absent but it was in the background. A few worship choruses and scripture songs were utilized at times such as "Seek Ye First"; "Thank You Lord"; and "Spirit of the Living God."

In 1991 I began the Doctor of Ministry program at Covenant Theological Seminary. My first class was on worship and was taught by Jerram Barrs. There I was exposed to many of the principles regarding worship that have been foundational to this study. I was introduced to contemporary hymns by such writers as Graham Kendrick. As I returned from that class I wanted to gradually introduce new worship songs at the church. I worked closely with the elders and worship

committee and over the next six months we introduced some key biblical principles related to worship that included a rationale for contemporary songs. A notebook of more contemporary songs was assembled and utilized as a supplement to the hymnal. An increasing number of these songs were introduced and sung by the congregation. At this time the only instrument used to accompany the singing of the congregation was the piano.

About this same time there were a growing number of individuals coming forward with a desire to play musical instruments in worship. These included musicians trained mostly in a more classical style. The instruments were cello, violin, trumpet, and french horn. As a result the congregational singing of traditional hymns was increasingly accompanied by these instruments along with the piano. The result was a richer and fuller expression of song in worship with new songs being introduced and old songs enhanced by additional instruments. The combination of these things brought increased expression of joy without minimizing any of the reverence in worship. Congregational acceptance of these changes was positive and unity was not only maintained but deepened as more gifts were expressed and the depth and breadth of worship was expanded.

A few years after I moved to another PCA church there was growing tension and disunity in the church I had left. While the issues seem to have been deeper than musical styles, it was worship style that was most often given as the

obvious problem in the church. While my observation was more from a distance, it appears to me that the careful instruction and desire for unity in worship was neglected and worship became a battle ground for control of the church. This shows how delicate worship matters can be.

When I arrived at Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Richmond, Indiana in 1992, the worship style was also very traditional. The previous pastor was moving in a direction of higher and more formal liturgical elements in worship. There were contemporary choruses sung and accompanied by guitar for the ten minutes prior to the worship service, as there were a number of people who desired them. However, by keeping them before the service, it allowed some people to also avoid singing any contemporary songs.

One of the first things I did as the new senior pastor in the fall of 1992 was to incorporate the choruses into the service itself. The response was only positive and it seemed as though the congregation had been ready for that to happen for quite some time. About one year later we had identified about five or six guitar players in the church and began to compile a book of contemporary choruses and scripture songs that would be utilized in worship. One or two times we had Sunday evening prayer and praise services utilizing contemporary songs almost exclusively, with several guitarists.

In May of 1995 we had a meeting of worship and music leaders and other interested people to have some open

discussions of ways to enhance effective worship at Christ Presbyterian Church. There were many good ideas put forth. Some of the key issues discussed included a desire for fuller, deeper, richer expressions of heart-felt worship drawing on the rich diversity of the church in ages past and the present. A desire was clearly expressed to keep strong biblical content and not to compromise that in any way. There was an expressed desire to utilize more of the giftedness of the congregation and to involve more people as active participants in worship based on I Corinthians 14:26. Some of the suggestions included additional instrumentalists; mixing some singers and instruments for more effective congregational singing; having a block of songs sung as a segment together; opening up opportunities for congregational prayers being spoken openly; and providing time for testimonies. It was suggested that we make changes slowly on Sunday morning but begin a Sunday evening worship time where some new ideas could be tried right away. The summary statement I presented from that meeting to define worship at Christ Presbyterian Church was "heart-felt, Spirit-led worship of the Triune God in accord with biblical truth with a focus on the gospel of grace being expressed with reverent joy in Christ."

A development that grew out of that discussion was the formation of a praise band in September of 1995. The band was made up of three guitar players, one pianist, one flute player, one electric bass guitarist, and two additional

singers not playing instruments. We had one Sunday evening a month of praise and worship times. The response was positive. The praise band led music at some area-wide prayer gatherings and were well received in those settings also. Once or twice over the next year we utilized the praise band during a Sunday morning worship service when contemporary choruses were sung.

From September 1996 to August of 1997 the praise band played once per month on Sunday morning, on the same Sunday they would lead the evening praise and worship time. Since we had an adult choir and three children's choirs, the challenge to coordinate the utilization of space, instruments, and microphones became greater.

In the fall of 1997 we were faced with a growing desire by many to have the praise band accompany all of the contemporary choruses and Scripture songs on a weekly basis. As we were about to discuss this as elders, there was opposition expressed by some in the congregation. This launched the elders into a two month study and discussion of worship, particularly music in worship and the use of certain instruments like drums. The elders read selections from *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* by Marva Dawn and *Worship in Spirit and Truth* by John Frame. One of the particular complaints was against the use of music in the background during pulpit prayer. The thinking was that we were feeding emotions and utilizing a manipulative gimmick to get in the right mood for worship. The arguments included ones for

simplicity and quietness in worship. A quote from a letter received at this time reflects the struggle some were having:

... there is dissonance and inconsistency. I'm so busy figuring out how I feel about it, it is a struggle to worship. And every new idea makes me nervous about what is coming next week, and why. Maybe it is fair to say our worship doesn't know who it is yet ... But new methods or ideas, creative and sincerely driven as they may be, aren't in harmony with old formats. If we're going to move toward a more charismatic form of worship with emphasis on raising hands, exuberant songs, praise bands, and zealous worship leadership, then make that decision and go for it with consistency. Those of us who are unable to enter into worship that way will have to decide what to do next. If our commitment is to a pattern of simple movement through a more conservative and traditional format, seeking meaningful content and allowing the Spirit to move the emotions, then let's do that, and understand why we have taken that stand.

This input gave us a sense of urgency and responsibility to make sure we were pursuing biblical worship, whether we were drawing on expressions of worship from the past or more recent expressions of worship. In fact, out of this struggle came a deep desire to study the subject in depth and has led to this present doctoral study. After study and prayer the Session concluded that we were in general agreement with John Frame in his book *Worship in Spirit and Truth*. We also realized we needed more study on the regulative principle of worship and its proper application today. At the same time we agreed that it was proper to utilize worship with greater intensity and joy and with all of the instruments of the praise band as being appropriate biblically. So the contemporary choruses were accompanied by the praise band on a weekly basis.

It is important to note in this that our decision was for a third option--blended worship--that was not considered in the quotation in the above letter. We had not changed the

content of what we do in worship or even of the songs we were singing (with the exception of adding new ones). The only difference was the songs were accompanied by more instruments than just the piano and occasional guitar.

We sought to instruct and inform the congregation as we proceeded. Some resisted the weekly drums while others thought the four singers at microphones up front were too showy and entertaining in their presentation with the occasional lifted hands. The individuals who expressed concern were responded to with love and understanding and the types of songs were adjusted so the drums were less prominent for a period of time.

By May of 1998 the worship team was growing and developing and implementing a blended worship service, with growing enthusiasm from the vast majority of the congregation. One of the new forms utilized was the hymnbook produced by Christ Community Church in Franklin. There were 150 traditional content-laden hymns with lead notes and chords arranged for praise band instrumentation. This allowed the blending of traditional hymns with contemporary choruses within a grouping of three to five songs sung together--often in response to the preached word. At a worship leadership team meeting on May 30, 1998 I presented the following summary of worship at Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC):

1. Greater utilization of the giftedness of the current members of CPC;

2. Overall content of worship unchanged;
3. Additional instruments beyond the piano utilized;
4. Appropriate balance of sound of instruments to facilitate congregational singing;
5. Growing desire to facilitate greater participation by the congregation in worship;
6. Elevating worship on Sunday morning with a desire to impact worship every day;
7. Greater balance of Word, Spirit, and Sacraments;
8. Greater balance of mind, heart, and will;
9. Worship more Christ-centered and grace-centered.

We made great plans to involve more people in weekly planning and preparation but they would have to wait until the fall for full implementation.

As we progressed toward involving more people that fall in the direct planning of worship we encountered some struggles in relationships, communication, and overlap of responsibilities. This was particularly true between myself in my role of what might be called "worship director" and that of our director of music. The director of music was also choir director and when the Session gave her the additional position of director of music in 1995 we failed to define it clearly enough--especially as the implementation of our worship philosophy involved more people and groups with greater regularity. As I worked on my doctor of ministry project and got enthusiastic about implementing more changes, I did not go back to the elders and the director of music to

work out some areas of tension philosophically and in relationships among the music team. This revealed the importance of the elders providing greater oversight of worship as directed in the Book of Church Order.²⁷¹ We have found that clearly defined roles, good working relationships, a vision with equal passion for the entire music ministry, and regular communication between pastors, elders, and music leaders is vital for keeping effective worship with deep unity in the church.

There is a person in the church who prefers the higher liturgical style of traditional worship who met with me on a couple of occasions to discuss the changes we were making. This person had particular concerns about the use of drums. Yet she was willing to forbear in love and stretch her personal preference to include worshipping when it was a struggle. A few weeks ago she made an announcement that was highly complimentary of our worship, following an extended time with the praise band leading several contemporary songs, within which was woven a traditional hymn.

One of the blessings of the changes that have been implemented in worship at Christ Presbyterian Church has been the growing involvement of our teen-agers in aspects of worship, including choir and praise band as well as the teen choir. We have four teens playing in the praise band out of the nine members. We have four teens singing in the adult

271 *Book of Church Order*, 12-5 (e) and 51-4.

choir. We have 15-20 teens singing in the teen choir, which is used to teach the congregation new songs when the teen choir sings once per month. The teen choir has increasingly been accompanied by the praise band rather than taped music. This has added a wonderful live aspect to our worship that tapes cannot achieve.

I taught an abridged version of the worship workshop to the teen Sunday School class on February 14, 1999. At the end I took a survey of the eighteen present. I asked them to describe their view of what our present worship was on a scale of 0 being all traditional and 10 being all contemporary. The lowest number was 4 and the highest was 7. I asked them to vote what direction they would want it to change if they could change it. Two people wanted it to move one number in the contemporary direction and two people wanted it to move one number in the traditional direction. I believe the willing heart for worship reflected in our teens and their participation in worship is a fruit of worship that draws on both past and present expressions of biblical worship.

One additional change we have made in 1999 is to have the Lord's Supper twice per month instead of only once per month. We want to increasingly emphasize the unity of worship, Word, and sacrament as normative for worship. We also have begun quiet singing during the distribution of the elements to bring celebration and joy to the table.

Overall at Christ Presbyterian Church we have found that a worship service that draws on both past and present expressions of worship enhances the heart-felt worship of God according to His Word. This helps create a deeper unity as we stretch toward one another without insisting on our own personal preferences.

A third congregation where I have had opportunity to do a case study is South Dayton Presbyterian Church in Centerville, Ohio. For twelve of the past sixteen months I have been involved as moderator of the Session. I have also preached several times; interviewed the Director of Celebration, Matt Creamer; and conducted a worship workshop on March 20-21, 1999.

This church was started in 1986. The design was to follow a seeker-sensitive model with contemporary worship. As the gospel of God's sovereign grace was faithfully preached there were a number of people from Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds who joined the church. Several people from this background were upset with the worship style being only contemporary. At about the same time the worship space was overcrowded so the decision was made to add an early traditional service. This was about four years ago (1995). It was also noted that there were some seekers who wanted a traditional service because of a positive connection to their childhood experiences.

There has been quite a bit of stress in this church. The question can be raised as to whether this stress is

because of worship style differences or because of other differences that then show forth in the different worship preferences. It appears that there are underlying differences in theology and philosophy of ministry that attract people to different styles of worship. The people who prefer contemporary worship view traditional worship with hymns, creeds, and more formality as "churchy" and unappealing to unchurched people. The people who prefer traditional worship view contemporary worship as loud and lacking the theological depth the hymns and creeds provide.

One helpful development has been the efforts made to have blended services when the congregation is together in one service on special occasions. This happens one time a month at a Sunday evening service. Perhaps the most meaningful blended service in the history of the church took place at the memorial service for their new pastor who died five months after beginning his work there. There seems to be some growth in openness to the value of drawing on both past and present expressions of worship. This growth and openness happens the most when there is exposure to styles different from personal preferences.

On March 20-21, 1999 I conducted a weekend worship seminar at South Dayton Presbyterian Church (Appendix E). We had a three hour session on Saturday night on the topic of "Worship with Reverence and Joy." The evening included extended times of worship as well as instruction and discussion. The worship included combining the

instrumentalists from their praise band and ours which, combined, totaled sixteen musicians. The songs sung ranged from traditional hymns to brand new contemporary songs. Some of the traditional hymns were sung to new music and others to their original tunes. Songs written by the Director of Celebration, Matt Creamer, were sung as well as a newly composed song by my son, Steven.

The plan for the two worship services the following morning was to design them both to be blended worship services. The traditional service included many contemporary expressions and the contemporary service included many traditional expressions. This was to help expose each service to more of a breadth of drawing on both past and present aspects of worship. The sermon was from John 4:19-26 on "The Kind of Worshipers the Father Seeks." The Sunday School class between services was "A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Survey of Worship."

I had designed a workshop questionnaire (Appendix C) with questions on a before and after side. The purpose of this was to discover where people stood on certain worship issues and track any changes in their views as a result of the worship seminar. The results showed some changes did take place:

Number of people taking survey:	25
<u>Worship Styles</u> (Before)	
Number of people on contemporary side	17
Number of people on traditional side	04

Number of people at 50-50 blend	04
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Worship Styles (After)

Number of people changed	07
--------------------------	----

Number of people changed toward traditional	07
---	----

Number of people changed toward contemporary	00
--	----

Unity of Church (Unchanged Before and After)

Number of people viewing church on unified side	17
---	----

Number of people viewing church on divided side	04
---	----

Number of people viewing church in middle	04
---	----

Expressions from History and Past Twenty Years

Number of people wanting some/many expressions both	24
---	----

Number of people wanting no expressions past twenty	01
---	----

Number of people wanting no expressions history	00
---	----

Note: Of the seventeen people originally on the contemporary side of the scale--all seventeen before the seminar wanted at least some expressions from the history of the church. Of the five people who started out wanting many expressions from the past twenty years, three of them changed to some expressions from the past twenty years.

This survey confirmed some tension and disunity related to and reflected in worship styles and philosophies. The seminar seemed to influence some with a contemporary style preference to appreciate and value more aspects from the past history of the church in worship. Based on the discussion time and comments made to me after the seminar, this came about as a result of greater exposure to the richness of worship in the history of the church in the past. To affirm

the value of fresh expressions of worship while showing the value of past expressions seemed to create an openness to consideration of the value of "traditional" worship.

At the PCA General Assembly in St. Louis in June of 1998, I made available to all the teaching and ruling elder commissioners a survey on worship practices (Appendix A). The survey was available on a table at registration with a return box. The purpose was to identify some churches for follow-up interviews that met a worship profile for my study.

Though the purpose of the survey was not designed to gather statistical information, an interesting flavor of worship in the PCA was picked up through this survey. There were 107 surveys returned with the following self described worship styles:

Traditional	55	51%
Contemporary	03	03%
One of Each	04	04%
Blended	45	42%

This sampling of PCA worship reveals that nearly one-half of the PCA churches responding to this survey have more than traditional worship styles.

In addition to interviewing Matt Creamer of South Dayton Presbyterian Church I interviewed four others pastors and worship leaders. Three of these were selected from the General Assembly survey results. The other church is my mother's home church in Kansas City, a member church in The Presbyterian Church (USA).

On February 4, 1999 I interviewed Gene Campbell, Director of Worship Ministries at Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Lecanto, Florida. Seven Rivers has three identical blended, theme-driven worship services each weekend. About five years ago they moved from a traditional-only style to a blended style out of a desire to bring more vitality to worship. The decision was made by the elders with the senior pastor leading the way. The changes included the addition of choruses, a praise team, and instrumental additions, including a rhythm section. The congregation was instructed and informed through the church's monthly newsletter and from the pulpit as the changes were about to be made. Gene emphasized the importance of the pastor patiently teaching, listening, and preparing the way for changes appropriate to the congregation. The decisions on a weekly basis as to balance and utilization of past and present worship expressions are determined by the worship theme of the week. Therefore, some weeks lean more heavily to the traditional side and other weeks more to the contemporary side. The congregation has been very open to styles of worship different from their preferences and backgrounds. Gene believes this is because people were listened to and instructed well.

On March 8, 1999 I interviewed Daniel Perrin, senior pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Cincinnati, Ohio. Faith has two nearly identical blended services each Lord's Day. About five years ago they moved from a

traditional style to a blended style. This was a result of prayerful consideration by the elders in response to a worship seminar Paul Engle presented prior to that time. Dan established a team of people including music people and others interested in worship to talk and pray through appropriate changes that would enable the congregation in its worship. The changes included adding praise songs with guitars and organizing worship around a theme. The changes were communicated from the pulpit through a series of sermons and an eight week Sunday School class for adults with plenty of opportunity for discussion. The changes took place over a two year period with the congregation trusting the Session's leadership and decision making. Opposing views, which were minimal, were listened to carefully, while pointing to scripture and giving people plenty of time to adjust to change. The people in the congregation come from many different backgrounds and seem to want either contemporary or traditional styles. This is why the changes were made so gradually and the result has been good unity and responsiveness. Dan recommends much prayer and having the Session in unity and in charge of making changes.

On March 9, 1999 I interviewed Daniel Dermeyer, senior pastor of Olathe Presbyterian Church (PCA). In 1992 the transition was made from a traditional style only, to a more blended style. The decision was a compromise in an attempt to please several groups in the church. The outreach committee recommended a change to a more contemporary service

in an attempt to reach the many younger people moving into the community. There was disagreement on the Session and a survey was suggested and carried out. About 75% of those surveyed were in favor of adding contemporary music. At the time of the change there was a split in the church with a group leaving.

The original change was to add ten to fifteen minutes of contemporary praise music at the beginning of the service. Instruments such as digital keyboard, saxophone, flute, and guitar were utilized. Then the service shifted to 55 minutes of traditional worship. When Dan arrived in 1993 he started to modify the entire service to create more of a thematic structure that utilized more songs--especially contemporary--to guide through confession of sin and profession of faith and other aspects of worship. The major questions Dan keeps before the worshipping congregation are: "For Whom are we here?" and "How should our worship reflect that?" Dan continually stresses the importance of worship being greater than the form it takes. Those who disagreed with the changes left before Dan arrived and there has been general acceptance with those who remain. One major conflict was wrapped in worship issues but was more a matter a striving for power and control. Unity in worship flows out of keeping Christ preeminent in all things. Decisions about balancing past and present are more determined by what expressions of biblical worship are available and most likely to be effective with the worshipping congregation. Mission is far more important

than style. That focus keeps unity. Dan believes we must be more focused on proclaiming the truth than on keeping from error and that some of that is reflected in the way we worship.

On January 31, 1999 I interviewed Gerald Janssen, Praise Service Worship Leader at Colonial Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Kansas City, Missouri, and on February 1, 1999 I interviewed Karen Potter, Interim Music Director at Colonial Presbyterian Church. Colonial is a large church of over 2000 members that has historically had traditional worship only. About five years ago some changes were made by introducing a separate contemporary service. Many people who came to know Christ through para-church ministries or outreach ministries of Colonial in the late seventies had little or no traditional worship background. They would attend Sunday School at Colonial for the good teaching and fellowship but go elsewhere for blended or contemporary worship. The evolution of the change included an 8 am contemporary service; a 6 pm praise service; and finally--after hearing of the success of Coral Ridge (PCA) holding different style services in the same time frames--going to two contemporary and two traditional services held at 9 am and 10:45 am.

The process of change included going to the senior pastor for pre-approval and then the session with a proposal that was approved. This was communicated to the congregation through newsletters and announcements. There was about a six month lead-in time to the actual starting of the services.

Recently there has been an additional worship site in anticipation of a new building project, and that service is blended. Colonial established point pastors for the various style services and there is advance planning by a worship and pastor team to coordinate themes, announcements, and prayer concerns. There has been some tension among the music directors, who at times have viewed the different services as competitive. However, there are good working relationships and mutual support currently with weekly prayer, yearly retreats, and relationship building.

A recent development has both fostered and resulted from deeper unity in the congregation. There have been a few joint services that have taken on a blended worship style. These included an anniversary worship celebration and a Christmas service. There have been very positive responses and appreciation for varying styles as a result. One key element both Karen and Gerald emphasized in making changes and keeping unity is the humility and relationship-building efforts of those in leadership.

Additional findings were made as I observed five churches in the Kansas City area. The first two--Hope Lutheran and The Vineyard of Kansas City--were contrasting styles from the very traditional to the very contemporary. The third church--Heartland Evangelical Presbyterian Church--was visited twice. Once was at a Saturday evening service for believers and the other was a Sunday morning service that was seeker-driven. This church stood in contrast with

another Evangelical Presbyterian Church--Covenant Chapel--which was clearly a worship service, though seeker sensitive. The final church visited was Colonial Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) where I visited both the traditional and contemporary services on the same morning.

The following field notes were taken during the visits to these various churches:

HOPE LUTHERAN - LUTHERAN CHURCH, MISSOURI SYNOD: KANSAS CITY

1. Date visited: 1/18/98
2. Communion table center stage, Christ on cross with outstretched hands
3. Kneeling and bowing before the communion table
4. Quickly spoken liturgy without much expression
5. Stood for reading of the Gospel
6. Eleven minute sermon
7. Signing of cross in preparation of communion table
8. People gathered at kneeling rails
9. Children and infants blessed as parents received communion elements
10. Great sense of transcendence ... God distant and less personal
11. People very dressed up
12. Traditional music with organ only

VINEYARD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF KANSAS CITY

1. Date visited: 1/18/98

2. I was only one with tie in entire place
3. Structure generally was worship, preaching, prayer
4. Praise songs only with Praise Band
5. No printed order of worship
6. Strong sense of the immanence of God ... very personal and intimate style of music & worship
7. Planned testimony in the midst of the sermon
8. Prayer teams at the end

HEARTLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH (EPC)

1. Date visited: 1/24/98 - Sat. night for believers service
2. Singing with acoustic guitars
3. Quite informal - one man who led music wore baseball cap
4. Sermon was teaching oriented

HEARTLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH (EPC)

1. Date visited: 3/7/99
2. Theater like seating and stage--900 chairs in only 15 rows deep
3. Drum set enclosed in Plexiglas, keyboard with miked lead singer, acoustic guitar miked, bass guitar, three people who were singers only
4. Three upbeat songs at beginning of service were entirety of music sung
5. Welcome to Heartland Community Church followed by announcements and introduction of Pastor Craig
6. Exactly thirty minute sermon with film clip in the middle

from "The Great Escape"

7. Only prayer in service at end of sermon--evangelistic-oriented
8. Closing comments and done
9. Total service lasted only fifty minutes
10. Does this meet minimum standards for worship or should it be called a seeker gathering?

COVENANT CHAPEL (EPC)

1. Date visited: 3/7/99
2. Grand piano player with mike for singing, drum set, keyboard, acoustic guitar, keyboard player with mike for singing, two women who were singers only
3. Prelude chorus
4. Four worship choruses: three upbeat and one softer
5. Prayer invocation by worship leader with music underneath
6. Another praise song softer
7. Baptism of covenant children (sprinkled 3x)
8. Associate pastor welcomed and gave announcements
9. Sermon of thirty minutes
10. Intercessory prayer
11. Lord's Supper with soft music underneath and solo during elements as people came forward to receive elements
12. Closing chorus
13. Benediction
14. Worship service with great sensitivity to seekers through explanations and style

COLONIAL PCUSA PRAISE SERVICE KANSAS CITY MO

1. Date visited: 1/25/98
2. Choruses with overhead
3. Scripture reading
4. Hymn medley
5. Worship team special
6. Prayer led by husband and wife team
7. Sermon included video clip from "Ordinary People" and related to forgiveness
8. Closing song
9. People available to pray at end of service

COLONIAL PCUSA TRADITIONAL SERVICE

1. Date visited: 1/25/98
1. Announcements
2. Organ Prelude
3. Invocation
4. Introit led into hymn
5. Responsive prayer
6. Greeting one another
7. Anthem
8. Pastoral and Lord's Prayer with choral response
9. Offering with well balanced piano/organ duet leading into the doxology
10. Hymn before sermon
11. Scripture and Sermon lasting thirty minutes
12. Closing hymn and benediction

13. Less congregational involvement overall ... more done on our behalf

On January 30, 31, and February 1, 1998 I had the opportunity to attend a "Worship of God" workshop for pastors and worship leaders at Christ Community Church (PCA) in Franklin, Tennessee and to attend Sunday morning worship at Christ Community. This was a very valuable experience and gave a wonderful opportunity for interaction and discussion with other pastors and worship leaders, while observing and participating in several extended times of worship led by the host church worship team. One of the key questions asked was; "Are you desiring to lead your congregation into worship with more contemporary music, while maintaining the integrity of the traditional hymns and the liturgy of the church?" That question alone in the brochure convinced me I should attend.

The example and music leadership of David Hampton, Coordinator of Music and Worship Ministries at Christ Community Church, and the presentations by Scotty Smith, Senior Pastor of Christ Community Church, and Reggie Kidd, Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando and Worship Leader at Northland Community Church, were substantial. Utilizing traditional, content-filled hymns and tunes set to arrangements for contemporary praise band instruments brought the hymns to life. The new songs composed by people right there in that church were full of

life and rich biblical content. The new tunes for some of the traditional hymns were also very meaningful and exalting to God. The presentation by Dr. Kidd of "Singing with the Singing Savior" gave rich insight into the diversity of worship styles Christ is willing to receive and perfect as He offers them to the Father on our behalf. All of this came together in the Sunday morning worship service at which the following field notes were taken:

CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH (PCA): NASHVILLE, TN

1. Date Visited: 2/1/98
2. God welcomes us into prayer invocation
3. Chorus
4. Prayer from Worship Team
5. Three choruses
6. Pastoral prayer led by Ruling Elder
7. Greetings of one another
8. Elders available for prayer throughout service
9. Tithes and offerings with offertory solo
10. Prayer of Illumination and twenty minute sermon
11. Worship team singing while Lord's Supper served (Breathe on Me Breath of God and O Lord You're Beautiful)
12. Spirit of the Living God sung while offering for work of the deacons received
13. Invitation for prayer
14. Singing of Christ the Solid Rock and Benediction

During this study and project I was invited to speak at a chapel service at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, where I had previously served as Chaplain and Bible Instructor from 1977-1984. Geneva is controlled by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) which sings only the psalms in worship without musical instrumentation. I was asked to speak on a section of the Lord's Prayer. It occurred to me to ask if my son Steven, who attends there, could sing the Lord's Prayer a cappella at the end of my chapel talk. This was not allowed because it is not a psalm. I find this somewhat ironic since the Lord's Prayer is scripture and it was sung in Calvin's Geneva and Knox's Scotland. An interesting observation I made at the chapel service where I spoke was regarding the selection of psalms that were sung. They were very difficult to sing musically and very unfamiliar, even to the students from an RPCNA background. Even granting the exclusive singing of psalms without instrumental accompaniment, it seems like the psalms could be sung to tunes that would wonderfully connect with the college students in a way that would cause great delight in the singing of the psalms.

An opportunity to interact cross-culturally with my study took place in October of 1998 when I spent a week with Alejandro Martinez. Alejandro is the worship leader for four churches in Guadalajara, Mexico. These include an English-speaking congregation in Bugambillas and a Spanish-speaking congregation in Bugambillas. Bugambillas is an upper middle

class area of Guadalajara. He also serves as worship leader at a working class congregation in an area of Guadalajara called La Calma. Alejandro works with children and anticipates starting worship services in a very poor section of Guadalajara called Santana. We spent a week together studying worship and seeking to apply principles of worship I am learning from my study to the worship settings of Guadalajara that Alejandro leads. Each of the four worship settings in Guadalajara have distinctive needs regarding language and style in order to worship God meaningfully and intelligibly while connecting with the people around them. There were very distinctive needs in Santana--the poor community--even in relationship to which Spanish accent is spoken. Alejandro is college educated and from Mexico City. The way he speaks Spanish is very different from the people of Santana regarding style and obvious education. He is having to learn to speak more commonly. The music loved in Santana is not at all what Alejandro prefers, yet to communicate the truths of the gospel in song necessitates using some of that style to connect with the people there. It was encouraging to see many of the principles from my study understood and applied cross-culturally.

One other cross-cultural insight came when a missionary named David Vos from Lyon, France related, at our missions conference, an account of worship with Algerians in France. These third generation French-speaking Algerians were drawn in to the worshipping Christian fellowship when Christian

songs were being sung in Arabic. The remembrance of a heritage became a bridge to the content of the gospel. David and his family sang "As the Deer" in Arabic, French, and English at our missions conference. The content of the psalm remains the same but the bridge of communication differs according to those gathered in worship with outsiders present.

Robert Webber describes a personal experience in an Orthodox worship service:

I visited an Orthodox worship service for the first time about twenty years ago when the praise chorus was first being introduced by the Jesus people. This orthodox worship, which was in both English and Slavic, was the ancient John Chrysostom service written in A.D. 380. According to the ancient custom, we sang through that whole service in three parts: the priest, the choir, and the congregation each had its own part. I was drawn up into this ancient way of singing without musical instruments and according to various sprightly tones. The tones evoked awe, majesty, and mystery. The sounds themselves lifted me up into the heavens. But when it came time to receive the bread and wine mixed together in a single cup--the tradition of the East--I was startled to hear, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God--and all these things shall be added unto you." I have experienced the same blending of worship traditions in other Orthodox churches and in many Episcopal and Lutheran churches as well."²⁷²

I also came across a very interesting statement in the written notes that came with a tape of Handel's *Young Messiah* that I was listening to while working on this project:

(Thanks) "to Handel for his inspired composition and giving permission in writing to adapt his work according to the times ... much of the popularity of *Messiah* lay in its style. Drawing inspiration from the Sacred Word, Handel's masterpiece moved and inspired the audience of his day. Likewise, *Handel's Young Messiah* draws upon contemporary talent, and arrangements, to appeal to a contemporary audience."²⁷³

²⁷² Webber, *Blended Worship*, 108-109.

²⁷³ *Handel's Young Messiah* (Irving, Texas: Word Inc., 1990) audiotape musical recording.

One final case study centers on a great hymn by Charles Wesley written in 1742. The profound biblical content of this hymn regarding the substitutionary atonement, justification, and adoption, moves the soul of the believer deeply. I was first introduced to this hymn by the late Dr. Jack Miller at a "Sonship" conference at Ridge Haven in 1995. After we sang the song together, Jack commented on how much more impacting this song would be with a new tune since the hymn had come into great disuse because of a fairly unsingable tune. That night one of the attendees of the conference named Kevin Twitt wrote a very upbeat, singable tune with a repeating chorus. He shared it with the rest of those attending the conference and it was received with great enthusiasm. My wife (who plays the guitar) and I returned to Richmond and taught it to the congregation. It has since been recorded on the Compact Disk *Re:Awakening*. Our teen choir purchased the sheet music and sang in it worship recently. It is a great tool with youth for explaining the meaning of such words as "surety" and having the gospel sung with such enthusiasm. Here is a grand example of drawing on the richness of the past (Wesley's words of 1742) and fresh expressions of biblical truth (Twitt's tune of 1995).

Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation had been to discover how local churches maintain their commitment to the RPW while drawing on the richness of past expressions of biblical

worship as well as the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship.

It is my desire to discover the common factors relating to worship expression in PCA churches that have a clear commitment to the RPW and whose worship reflects significant utilization of both past and present expressions of biblical worship. Key areas of discovery have sought to answer the following questions:

#1. How did these churches come to this commitment?

I have found that churches that put the focus of worship on biblical elements with latitude in application and expression of those elements are open to making use of blended worship in some fashion. Either the worship is a blending of past and present on a regular weekly basis or there are opportunities to express this kind of worship when gathered in joint services. What drives such churches is the desire to be faithful to the Bible as understood in principle by historic Presbyterian and Reformed churches yet applied to today's worshipping congregations.

The heart of what makes the different surveyed ministries above unique yet overlapping is the commitment to the RPW with flexibility of application based on the needs and giftedness of the local congregation.

#2. How do these churches implement their commitment?

I have found that churches implement their commitment with the greatest amount of unity when the changes are introduced gradually with a great deal of teaching and instruction. It is particularly helpful when input from the congregation is gathered in the process of discussion and decision making. I have also found that the changes are implemented most successfully when the elders are unified and provide the necessary support to the worship leaders throughout the change.

#3. How do these churches maintain their commitment?

The danger of tension and disunity is always present in a congregation of people who struggle with wanting their own personal preferences in worship styles.

I have found that there may initially be a measure of tension when churches implement more expressions in worship that are different than what has been the normal practice. Sometimes tensions surface that were otherwise below the surface. However, as congregations learn to stretch to one another there develops greater appreciation for hearts of one another and forbearance and latitude for styles that are not personal preferences.

Overcoming the subjective factors and focusing on unity in Christ is important to maintain commitment to faithful worship with various expressions from the past and present. One such example was the memorial service for Pastor Bob

West at South Dayton Presbyterian Church where the combination of singing the contemporary "Shout to the Lord" and the traditional "It is Well with my Soul" added great joy and reverence to all present in a setting where the focus of the congregation was not on themselves but the Lord's comforting presence.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Whole Study

The problem this dissertation has addressed is the tension and conflict within PCA churches and/or between PCA churches over how we are to worship God in corporate gatherings of worship. Specifically, this problem has three aspects: (1) tension and conflict over the proper understanding and application of the RPW, (2) tension and conflict over worship styles, and (3) tension and conflict over several related worship issues such as the balance between the engaging of the heart and will as well as the mind in worship. One of the challenges in addressing this problem is the highly charged emotions that often accompany views of proper worship.

A related aspect of the problem of tension and disagreement over worship issues is where we focus the debate. One focus of the debate is often on a particular application of the RPW in a certain period of church history. How these fathers in the faith rooted their worship practices in Scripture is then made normative for all ages and cultures. If this is the correct approach, then worship issues are determined by a correct historical understanding

of how the RPW was actually applied in that period. Another focus of the debate is often centered on what the Bible teaches about the RPW and how that should be properly applied today. If this is the correct approach, then historical applications of the RPW become instructive rather than normative.

The purpose of this dissertation had been to discover how local churches maintain their commitment to the RPW while drawing on the richness of past expressions of biblical worship as well as the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship.

The biblical-theological framework that under girds this work is covenantal and reformed. God presents Himself in the Bible as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe Who reveals His will regarding how He desires to be worshipped. He does this through the inspired writers of scripture from Genesis through Revelation. Through a process known as organic inspiration these writers are directed by God the Holy Spirit to write exactly what He wants, while at the same time consciously addressing the immediate context in which they are writing.

In order to discover God's revealed will regarding worship, careful attention must be given to the progressive unfolding of God's revealed will moving through various stages in the redemptive-historical account. Throughout the Old Testament there is an expectation that a "new song" is coming which finds its initial fulfillment in the first

coming of Christ and its final fulfillment in the heavenly worship of the Lamb who was slain.

This biblical framework of worship sets the context and stage for understanding biblical worship in church history and in the contemporary church. The arguments for or against specific aspects of worship must first be rooted in the Bible and a proper biblical-theological grasp of the breadth of biblical revelation. To have the right biblical principles does not guarantee the right application. However, to start without the proper biblical principles is fundamentally wrong and will result in worship that is not honoring to God.

Worship according to God's commands was a primary focus of the Reformation--particularly through Calvin, Bucer, and Knox. This focus later became known as the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW). The English Puritans at the time of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1648) were the ones who gave it a more strict application. The Westminster Divines presented the RPW in its clear form in the standards. Yet they did not include in the Westminster standards all of their ideas on worship. Even in the Directory of Worship there is greater latitude given than the prevailing practice of many of the English Puritans themselves. Even the English Puritans recognized varying applications of God's commands for worship that may vary from place to place.

While the biblical survey lays a foundation and the historical survey reveals various applications of biblical worship principles in time past, significant to our study is

attention to contemporary issues of worship and their proper application in our day and culture. The proper restoration of the worship of God to its central and essential place is a critical contemporary issue before the church today.

Biblical worship is reverent, joyful worship of the holy, living God through Jesus Christ according to His Word. This kind of worship directs, focuses, and motivates all the church's life and ministry. There is no higher calling in life than to worship the true and living God. God Himself has a deep passion and priority for His own glory that gives substance and meaning to everything else.

There are two approaches to the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) within Presbyterian and Reformed circles. One approach applies the RPW in a strict sense that closely follows past historical forms of expression. The other approach allows far more freedom of application of the RPW with a desire to be faithful to Scripture, but more flexible in the forms the biblical elements take in particular cultures and generations up to the present day.

Even those holding to a strict application of the RPW allow room for some matters being left to the discretion of the worship leaders. The discussion then logically extends into the realm of how much discretion and how much flexibility of application of the RPW is within biblical parameters. Those holding to a stricter view of the RPW most often state the RPW in negative terms of what is not permitted. There is a great danger in freezing a particular

historical expression of the RPW in time and making it the norm and standard for all future generations and cultures of Christian worshipers. This stricter view of the RPW appears to be rooted in the historical being a normative expression of biblical worship. Scripture does not command the church in all ages and cultures to do things as the seventeenth century Puritans did. There should always be a concern for doing what God commands in worship. Yet at the same time there is to be a concern for how to best carry out those commands in our place and time.

The other major approach to the RPW allows for much greater freedom of application and use of a variety of forms or components in corporate worship. This position roots the RPW more directly in Scripture and only secondarily in historical expression of the RPW. There is freedom within the biblical parameters of worship. It is possible to be firmly committed to the RPW yet hold to greater freedom of application of biblical elements than the seventeenth century Puritans. To reject some applications of the RPW in particular historical settings is not the same as rejecting the RPW. A flexible understanding of the RPW is not in itself a denial of the RPW. Individual application of the RPW to particular congregations is envisioned even in the Westminster Directory of Worship itself as noted above. Each church has its own unique setting in which to develop meaningful applications.

Choosing music styles and instrumental accompaniment that most connect with the worshipping congregation and best convey biblical truth is important. However, the major consideration in selecting music for worship remains content-centered. Singing about and to the Triune God of creation and redemption is to be truth based. Our music is to be saturated with the Word of God. Music is to serve the text of truth in the words sung.

One of the major struggles in church worship today is maintaining the unity of the body of Christ while a variety of styles from past and present are utilized in biblically sound worship. Personal preferences are often considered the biblical standard and all who fail to hold similar preferences are condemned as unbiblical. The call for unity over use of elements, while allowing some latitude in exact forms utilized in worship, must be made.

One final much debated question in worship discussions today relates to the relevance of worship to contemporary culture. What is meaningful to worshippers living in this current culture is not the same issue as what is meaningful to unbelievers. Worship is a gathering of redeemed sinners in Christ. While unbelievers are welcome and encouraged to be part of worship services, worship as such must not be seeker-driven but rather seeker-sensitive. I Corinthians 14:24-25 envisions unbelievers present observing worshippers in the presence of God. The goal is not to make unbelievers comfortable with where they are before God but to make

worship intelligible to them as Christ is shown forth. The marvelous works of God are communicated in the vernacular. Styles of worship should fit the culture and community.

This is best accomplished by drawing upon the vast richness and breadth of worship forms that faithfully express biblical worship. Making use of forms from the past as well as new and fresh forms in the present is consistent with the biblical understanding of the RPW.

Discuss Findings

I have found that churches that put the focus of worship on biblical elements with latitude in application and expression of the RPW in shaping those elements will make use of some type of blended worship.

While there may initially be a measure of tension when churches implement more variety of expressions in worship, I have found that proper instruction, much patience, gradual implementation of change, and unity among the leadership overcome those struggles. As congregations learn to stretch toward one another with love and forbearance and without insisting on their personal preferences, a deeper unity emerges with worship that focuses on Christ rather than styles of worship.

God's people develop an enthusiasm and freedom in worship when they are encouraged to consider the diversity of worship expressions through the history of the church. This is further enhanced by instruction regarding the rich

diversity of worship reflected in heavenly worship as well. There are some from every tribe and tongue and nation and people who are gathered around in worship of the Lamb Who was slain.

I have found that there is greater balance of both deep joy and deep reverence when the congregation is led in worship that draws on great worship of the past, in forms that connect to the present. One such example is the use of Charles Wesley's great hymn words in "Arise My Soul Arise," coupled with a lively and celebrative tune of today that matches the tone of the words.

The heart of what makes the different surveyed ministries in this study unique yet overlapping is the commitment to the RPW, with flexibility of application based on the needs and giftedness of the local congregation.

Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

Based on the limited success of the worship seminar growing out of this project, I would recommend its usage by other local churches within the PCA. My hope would also be to see something like this presented at the presbytery and General Assembly levels where there can be healthy dialogue and interaction among the eldership of the PCA.

I also believe this type of study--particularly with the extended focus on music in worship--would be helpful for worship leaders and musicians in the PCA. Perhaps seminaries such as Covenant Theological Seminary could hold concentrated

one week courses for pastors and worship and music directors to enhance unity and depth of understanding of both the theology and practice of worship.

Broader surveying and interviewing follow-up would also be recommended to fine tune and expand the usefulness of this study.

APPENDICES

*Appendix A: General Assembly Survey*Covenant Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Project

TE Mark L. Dalbey, Christ Presbyterian Church,
Richmond, Indiana

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.
Its purpose is to identify PCA churches that fit a particular
worship profile which will be followed up with a
questionnaire and/or interview as part of the research for my
D.Min. project.

Section One: Church Information

Your Name _____ Position at Church _____
Name of Church _____ Location _____

1. Approximate Size of Congregation?

A (under 100) B (100-249) C (250-499) D (500 or above)

2. How would you describe your worship style?

A (traditional) B (contemporary) C (blending of A & B)

D (one of each A & B)

Section Two: Frequency of Worship Items:

1. Please circle the frequency with which the following musical aspects of worship are utilized by the following code (N= never, W= weekly, M= monthly, Y= yearly or special occasions):

piano	N	W	M	Y
organ	N	W	M	Y
electronic keyboard	N	W	M	Y
acoustic guitar	N	W	M	Y
electric guitar	N	W	M	Y
other strings	N	W	M	Y
drums	N	W	M	Y
other percussion	N	W	M	Y
flute	N	W	M	Y
trumpet or saxophone	N	W	M	Y
other winds	N	W	M	Y
choir	N	W	M	Y
praise band ensemble	N	W	M	Y
string ensemble	N	W	M	Y
wind ensemble	N	W	M	Y

2. What is your practice on allowing the following to lead the congregation verbally in worship in one or more of the following: prayer, reading of scripture (other than right before the sermon), sharing of testimony or personal insight:

Ruling Elders	N	W	M	Y
Deacons	N	W	M	Y
Lay person male	N	W	M	Y
Lay person female	N	W	M	Y
Youth male	N	W	M	Y
Youth female	N	W	M	Y

3. With what frequency do you make use of the following in your worship service:

Creeds	N	W	M	Y
Responsive Readings	N	W	M	Y
Directed Prayers	N	W	M	Y
Lord's Supper	N	W	M	Y
Drama	N	W	M	Y
Dancing	N	W	M	Y

Section Three: Worship Continuums:

Please indicate where you think your congregation's present practice of worship would fall along these worship continuums:

Theological	N	W	M	Y	Doxological
Sermon Focused	N	W	M	Y	Worship Focused
Cerebral	N	W	M	Y	Emotive
Individual Worship	N	W	M	Y	Corporate Worship
Reverence	N	W	M	Y	Joy
Solemn Lord's Supper	N	W	M	Y	Joyful Lord's Supper

Clergy Focused	N	W	M	Y	Laity Focused
Body Expressive	N	W	M	Y	Mind and Didactic
Word	N	W	M	Y	Sacrament
Celebrative	N	W	M	Y	Quiet and Reflective
Formal	N	W	M	Y	Informal
Sunday Worship	N	W	M	Y	All of Life Worship
Comfortable	N	W	M	Y	Stretching
Transcendent	N	W	M	Y	Immanent
Vertical	N	W	M	Y	Horizontal
Enthusiastic	N	W	M	Y	Changed Lives
Law	N	W	M	Y	Gospel
Uniformity	N	W	M	Y	Diversity
Already	N	W	M	Y	Not Yet
Saved	N	W	M	Y	Seeker

[Please return to one of boxes marked "worship survey" at registration or message area]

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Covenant Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Project

TE Mark L. Dalbey, Christ Presbyterian Church,
Richmond, Indiana

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

CHURCH: _____

POSITION: _____

1. How would you describe your worship style currently?

2. Do you have a blended service(s) or do you have different styles in separate services?
3. How long ago did you move from a traditional only or contemporary only style to a more blended style of worship (or separate contemporary and traditional services)?
4. (a) Why did you decide to incorporate more than traditional only or contemporary only elements into your worship service(s)?
4. (b) How was that decision made?
5. What are some of the changes you have made in worship?
6. How were these changes communicated to the congregation?
7. What teaching or instruction did you do as you made changes?
8. What has been the response of the congregation?
9. How have you dealt with opposing views?
10. How have you sought to maintain the unity of the body during these changes?
11. Do you make a conscious effort to draw on biblical expressions of worship from the past as well as biblical expressions of worship that are more recent?
12. How do you decide on the right balance of past and present expressions of worship as you plan a worship service?
13. How do you go about choosing songs for congregational singing as well as special songs by choirs or soloists or ensembles? (If you have separate traditional and contemporary services - do you ever have joint services and how do you select songs for that?)

14. Have you seen unity or disunity among the musicians (vocal and instrumental) during the changes?
 15. Has there been tension between the pastoral staff and the musical leaders during this time?
 16. How did you overcome tension and disunity along the way?
 17. Do people in your congregation approach worship with openness to styles of worship that are different from their own background and experience?
 18. How do you introduce new forms or songs in a worship service?
 19. From your experience - what are some potential pitfalls to avoid?
 20. From your experience - what did you find helpful in keeping unity while making changes?
- Open Question: Any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix C: South Dayton Before and After

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

South Dayton Presbyterian church

March 1999 [BEFORE]

1. What worship style do you personally prefer?

Traditional									Contemporary
	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4

2. How have you describe the unity of the body at SDPC?

Very Unified									Very Divided
	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4

3. The focus in worship should be on:

Joy	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	Reverence
-----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

4. Worship should be:

Meditative

Celebrative

4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4

5. The Lord's Supper should be:

Solemn

Joyful

4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4

6. Worship leadership should be more:

Clergy focused

Laity focused

4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4

7. Worship should be more:

Sermon focused

Worship focused

4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4

8. Worship should focus more on the:

Mind 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 Heart

9. In every worship service there should be:

- a No expressions of worship from church history
- b Some expressions of worship from church history
- c Many expressions of worship from church history

10. In every worship service there should be

- a No expressions of worship from the past twenty years
- b Some expressions of worship from the past twenty years
- c Many expressions of worship from the past twenty years

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

South Dayton Presbyterian church

March 1999 [AFTER]

1. What worship style do you personally prefer?

- Traditional Contemporary
- 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4
2. How have you describe the unity of the body at SDPC?
- Very Unified Very Divided
- 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4
3. The focus in worship should be on:
- Joy 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 Reverence
4. Worship should be:
- Meditative Celebrative
- 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4
5. The Lord's Supper should be:
- Solemn Joyful
- 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4
6. Worship leadership should be more:
- Clergy focused Laity focused
- 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4
7. Worship should be more:
- Sermon focused Worship focused
- 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4
8. Worship should focus more on the:
- Mind 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 Heart
9. In every worship service there should be:
- a No expressions of worship from church history
- b Some expressions of worship from church history
- c Many expressions of worship from church history
10. In every worship service there should be
- a No expressions of worship from the past twenty years

- b Some expressions of worship from the past twenty years
- c Many expressions of worship from the past twenty years

Appendix D: Outline of Sermon on John 4

"THE KIND OF WORSHIPERS THE FATHER SEEKS"

John 4:19-26, 7/12/98

Introduction

A. Doctor of Ministry Dissertation on Worship

- 1. While at G.A. survey form to find churches fit worship profile for follow-up
- 2. First 100 received: 50 described themselves as traditional; 3 contemporary; 47 blended (CPC)
- 3. Amazing unity & amazing diversity in history worship and present day worship incl. PCA

B. Worship is one of most controversial topics in church today across all lines

- 1. Types songs, instruments, participants, leaders, role women, length sermons, seeker/saved ...
- 2. Growing love for Worship Living God yet churches dividing over manner worship

C. Where find answers, focus, perspective, unity?

- 1. John 4 encounter Jesus and sinful Samaritan woman
- 2. Jews no association Samaritans and Jewish Rabbi no talk public women (incl. wife)
- 3. To woman Samaritan women rejected Jesus revealed Messiah & foundational teaching worship

I. "The Father is Seeking Worshipers" [vs. 23]

A. Central to life in God's world and His purposes in creation is WORSHIP!

1. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever" (WSC #1)
2. Creatures in His image praising and worshipping God
3. Triune God is alone worthy of worship (worth - ship)
4. God desires strong marriages, faithful workers, exercise gifts in church, tithe & more, etc.
5. Yet only time word "seek" used about God is seeking worshipers (1-133 seek or seeks)

B. We were created as worshipping beings and Father seeking our exclusive worship!

1. Central to life in garden and life after fall
2. Ten commandments (#1& #2), issues around temple, exile, Christ, heaven...

II. "The Kind of Worshipers the Father Seeks" [vs. 23]

A. Woman confronted with sin and asks question about where of worship

1. "Prophet" ... admitting guilt
2. Diverting attention or really interested in worship?
3. Eager to drop painful subject proposes question of great interest as Holy Spirit works heart
4. Where do I go for worship?

5. Jesus' answer indicates "where" is wrong question
- not the main issue but attitude heart/mind is

B. Worship in Spirit

1. Spirit here refers to affections (Jonathan Edwards) - at core being orients mind, will, emotions toward object
2. What matters most worship is not surroundings (Gerizim/Jerusalem) but condition heart inwardly
3. May have emotions that counterfeit affections - sentimental feelings or excitable feelings
4. Entire being entering into worship in humble spiritual attitude - fully engaged with God

C. Worship in Truth

1. Full harmony of truth revealed with doctrinal soundness - not spectacle but spoken Word
2. RPW - worship according to God's revealed will in Bible - His definition, not mine!
3. May have true doctrinal content but not worship ... intellectual education only
4. Understanding God's worth and giving Him what He is worth is true doctrine!
5. Grasping truth of God's revealed Word and then letting it strike center of my being

D. Biblical worship is from the heart according to Word to glorious Triune God

III. "The One True Worshiper of the Father" [vss. 10 & 14]

A. Who worships God this way?

1. Samaritan woman didn't but neither does anybody born of Adam's sin
2. We in sin worship everything but God as set our affections on fame, fortune, creation vs. Creator
3. Keep coming back to drink water does not satisfy - issue of living water (vss. 10 & 14)
4. We build own wells - Jeremiah 2:13
5. Nobody worships God in spirit and truth - NO! Not One!!

B. But wait ... there is One Who worships God in Spirit and Truth -- Jesus Christ!!

1. Good news of Gospel is that One like us in every way but for sin perfectly worships Father
2. Most important issue is whether or not we are in Christ by grace through faith!!
3. "I am the Messiah!" is answer to worship question for Samaritan woman

C. God seeks and finds true worshipers

1. Because He brings life to dead sinners and joins us to Christ
2. We enter into worship of God the Son in human flesh to God the Father
3. Worship is not about us but about God ... not what we get but what we give God through Christ

D. Sinclair Ferguson Quote: (worship) "is a congregational event, in which Christ mediates our prayers, conducts and leads our praise, and preaches His

word to us. He alone is the God-ordained worship leader... the minister in the sanctuary."

IV. "The Kind of Worship the Son Presents to the Father"

[Heb. 2:11-12 & Ps. 22:22-31]

A. "Singing with the Singing Saviour" [Reggie Kidd - RTS Orlando]

1. Incarnate Christ is Lead Worshiper and Choirmaster
2. He is Conquering Champion in church - calls us brothers & sisters & leads us singing praises!
3. Theology w/o Song is Empty and Song w/o Theology is an Idol! [Spirit and Truth]
4. Jesus sings the gospel - song of lament over sin and song of joyful victory
5. Whose praise is Jesus willing to harmonize with His song and present to Father?
 - a. Jewish song (23) and diverse ethnic songs (27-28) -- gospel to nations with singing!!
 - b. (working) poor (26) and (culturally) rich (29a)
 - c. (traditions) dead (29b) and (contemporary) yet to be born future generations (30-31)
6. "We will despise no voice He is pleased to employ, expanding our own music palette when we can, & exercising heroic forbearance when we must." [Kidd]

B. D.Min Purpose: "richness past & freshness present expressions biblical worship"

1. Calvin's Geneva

- 2. Tim Keller's New York City
- 3. Scotty Smith's Nashville
- C. Expand musical palette to what Christ accepts and forbear where must
 - 1. Expect worship be way meets my needs vs. coming prepared worship variety meaningful forms
 - 2. Personal Preference vs. delight in diversity worship spirit & truth
 - a. "Jesus Loves Me"
 - b. Black Gospel, Israeli Folk, Contemporary Worship Music
 - c. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America at Geneva College
 - 3. Rev. 5 & 7 = 24 harps (5:8); Loud Worship (5:12, 7:10); Ethnic diversity (7:8)
- D. Giftedness of Current Congregation - Instruments (strings, percussion, winds)
- E. When led in worship by Christ and heart focus on Him - celebration as wide as creation!

Conclusion

- A. Lord teach us to worship zeal and reverence and joy according Word of God
- B. Lord teach us to put you and others above ourselves within central focus Christ
- C. "Concert Pianist and little boy chopsticks" [our best is chopsticks glory God!]

Appendix E: Workshop Outline

WORSHIP WITH REVERENCE AND JOY

A Working Model for Biblical and Relevant Worship in the PCA

Mark L. Dalbey at SDPC on 3/20/99

Introduction & Question Sheet Distributed

- A. Privilege to work with Matt Creamer & elders of SDPC
- B. 4 yr. struggle to find topic for dissertation
 - 1. Settled on worship about 18 months ago in midst of issues at CPC
 - 2. Sustained interest and deep experience with God in process
 - 3. Franklin TN Worship of God Conference
- C. Closer knowledge of SDPC over past 15 months
 - 1. Glad for opportunity to be here
 - 2. See if this stuff flies?!?
 - 3. Not trying to change two different styles worship
 - 4. But am trying to deepen appreciation and love one another in body
- D. Weekend schedule
 - 1. Tonight normally part three and Sunday School part two and sermon part one
 - 2. Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary aspects of worship

I. What is Biblical Worship? [I Peter 2:4-5, 9]

A. Definition of Worship:

1. William Temple: "Worship is the submission of all our nature to God, quickening the conscience by holiness, nourishing the mind with truth, purifying the imagination with beauty, opening the heart to love, surrendering the will to His purpose and all this gathered up in adoration of the most selfless emotion our nature is capable. Therefore it is the chief remedy of self-centeredness."

2. Mark Dalbey: "Biblical, joyful worship of the holy, living God through Jesus Christ according to His Word in power of the Holy Spirit is to direct, focus, & motivate all the church's life & ministry."

B. Representation of the Gospel: Bryan Chapell

1. Adoration God, Recognition Need, Instruction
Path of Grace, Call Response
2. Corp. Worship re-presentation of Gospel in
presence of God's people

C. Regulative Principle of Worship: "Do in worship only what God commands"

1. Elements - prayer, praise, reading/preaching
Scripture, sacraments, offerings
2. Circumstances - time and place and pews or
chairs, etc.
3. Forms - means of carrying out elements

- a. preaching - how many sermons, how long, how many preachers, etc.
- b. prayer, praise, teach in song - how many, what style, instruments, etc.

4. Strict or flexible application RPW

- a. form and freedom
- b. share zeal worship God commands & reverence/awe before God
- c. yet also desire joyful celebration & intimacy gracious Father and utilize music/instruments relevant to worship
- d. this does not mean I am de-facto irrelevant & unbiblical
- e. "it is impossible consistently to carry out this position. It ultimately leads to legalism, absurdity, and dead orthodoxy."

[Morey's Worship is All of Life]

D. Worship from the heart with reverence and joy according to the Word unto our Glorious God in way edifying to brethren and intelligible to unbelievers & unlearned

II. What is Relevant Worship?

A. I Corinthians 14:13-25

- 1. Intelligible and bridged to make-up of congregation
- 2. New believer, unbeliever, children

3. Worship primarily for believers but accessible to unlearned
4. NT Koine Greek - vernacular today without compromise content gospel
5. Te Deum - "protect" vs. "vouchsafe"
6. Communication is vital to God's nature and so must be for us (including music)

B. Generation Breakdown:

- 1908-1926: GI gen. (55 mil.)
- 1927-1945: Depression gen. (49 mil.)
- 1946-1964: Baby Boomers (77 mil.)
- 1965-1981: Gen X (66 mil.)
- 1982-1999: Busters (70 mil.)

C. Church in heaven ethnic diversity and worship in unity

1. Form and freedom of application
2. Freedom to draw from multiple styles music in worship
 - "Jewish, black, white, Latin, traditional Protestant" in CWM [Frame]

D. Music and Instruments in the Bible

1. David structured worship music - 4000 of 38,000 Levites professional musicians
2. I Chrn. 15:16, 22; 25:1,7,26; 2 Chr. 5:13; 26:16-21
3. Psalm 98:4-6 music and instruments convey joy in worship

4. Liesch: "Choruses communicate freshness & powerfully relate contemporary culture"
5. Convey praise, prayer, teaching with content and emotion

III. Reverent Joy and Joyful Reverence

A. Deep sense of God's holiness and transcendence

1. Somber is result of imbalanced emphasis on holiness without grace
2. Focus on God we are worshipping - "not a tame lion"
3. "A somber, serious, dignified service" [Hart]

B. Not at odds with celebrative joy in Father's holy presence because of gospel grace

1. Casual and irreverent is result of imbalanced emphasis on joy without holiness
2. Solemn Joyful Assembly in presence of Holy God Who saved us & adopted us!
3. God also immanent & celebrate resurrection - joyful [Frame]

IV. Balancing Past and Present Expressions of Worship

Statement on Worship: The Biblical model of worship includes both form and freedom in a way that embraces significant continuity with the communion of saints of the past as well as fresh expressions of biblical form that bridge the gospel to contemporary society. A congregation that implements this

model will produce some type of balanced and blended worship that brings unity within diversity and peace and vitality freeing people to worship the true and living God with reverent yet enthusiastic joy!

A. Draw on past and present expressions under application RPW - form & freedom

B. Examples:

1. Handel's Young Messiah
2. J. Ward's "Rock of Ages"
3. Christ Community "RE: Awakening"
4. "Precious Lord" in midst contemporary choruses

C. Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship

D. Crown Him with Many Crowns/Lead on O King Eternal

E. "Jesus I Am Resting, Resting"

F. Potter's Hand/Shout to the Lord

G. Colossians 3:16

1. Full range or three forms
2. Old: psalms
3. New: hymns
4. Spontaneous with spiritual: spiritual songs

V. Unity in the Church

A. Music styles root or fruit of worship wars and struggles in church

1. Forbearance on worship styles facilitate unity of body in other areas?
2. Weekly gathering mutual submission Christ

B. Separate services result in judgment and superiority?

1. Blend does not mean 50/50 but could be 25/75
2. Find places to express oneness (Bob's memorial service, one Sun. pm)

C. Reasons for Divisiveness [Liesch]

1. Preferences
2. Musical languages
3. Moral value attached to style
4. Good or bad associations ["O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus"]
5. Preserves tradition
6. Volume with older "menopausal ears"

D. Indigenous Music - tied to nuances language

1. Pulpit accent & music accent
2. Nashville vs. New York City

E. Accepting one another as God in Christ has accepted us [more in sermon Sunday morning]

F. "Out of times of great struggle come times of greater worship" [Mindy Deckard, accompanist Christ Presbyterian]

Conclusion: Worship Into All of Life ...

A. Becky Arnold of Christ Presbyterian from Ukraine with Co-Mission: "I'm discovering that worship should be a condition of the heart before God and a lifestyle that we live out daily, not just a thing we do on Sunday

morning with music, prayer, and a sermon. Those things are definitely part of worshipping God but here is so much more depth to it that I'm only beginning to discover."

- B. No biblical separation secular/sacred
- C. Cream and Dross ...
- D. Glorify God in day to day living

A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, & CONTEMPORARY LOOK AT WORSHIP

by Mark L. Dalbey

3/21/99 at South Dayton PCA

Statement on Worship: The Biblical model of worship includes both form and freedom in a way that embraces significant continuity with the communion of saints of the past as well as fresh expressions of biblical form that bridge the gospel to contemporary society. A congregation that implements this model will produce some type of balanced and blended worship that brings unity within diversity and peace and vitality freeing people to worship the true and living God with reverent yet enthusiastic joy!

A Biblical Look At Worship

I. God is the Sovereign Ruler Who Determines How He wants to be Worshipped!

A. The Regulative Principle of Worship - RPW

- 1. What God commands in worship is alone permitted

2. Dt. 4:1-2;12:32; Mt. 15:9; Col. 2:22-23
3. A Biblical example: Nadab & Abihu - Leviticus 10:1-2
4. Yet flexible application or some exceptions made - 2 Chr. 30

B. Old Covenant Worship Foundation

1. Cain & Abel - Genesis 4
2. Ten Commandments concerned how God to be Worshipped
3. Sacrifices and Tabernacle/Temple
4. Synagogue developed during exile and no temple

C. New Covenant Worship: John 4:21-26

- II. Biblical postures in worship and what it communicates:
- Bowing the head (4); Standing (6); Lifting the eyes (9); Kneeling (12); Hands lifted (14); Prostration (28)

III. Biblical instruments and music

A. Old Testament

1. Professional singers among Levites
2. Vast variety of strings, winds, and percussion instruments
3. I Chronicles 25:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29:25-30

B. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16 - psalms, hymns, spiritual songs

1. Text primary and melody secondary
2. Edifying and Word/Christ centered

C. Hebrews 2:12 and Psalm 22:22-31

D. Revelation worship of heaven 5:9-10; 14:3; 15:2-3

IV. Biblical Elements of Worship

A. Prayer (2 Tim. 2:1f)

B. Reading Scripture (Acts 15:21)

C. Preaching (2 Tim. 4:2)

D. Singing Praise (Col. 3:16)

E. Administration Sacraments (Acts 21:42)

F. Offerings by Apostolic Example (2 Corinth. 16:1-4)

An Historical Look At Worship

I. Legacy of Temple & Synagogue Worship in Early Church

II. Increasingly Fixed Forms in Post-Apostolic Times

A. More ordered worship in cathedrals as Christianity officially promoted

B. Early Roman rite is simple, practical, dignified - problem came in sacrifice of mass

C. Western emphasis on great sacrifice of Christ for releasing from sin

D. Eastern emphasis on resurrection & eternal life releasing from this world

III. Reformation attempt to purify Medieval R.C. by return to early church

A. Various problems

1. Forbade singing by congregation 1415 (Council Constance)

2. Sacrifice of Mass removed Lord's Supper from

congregation

B. Lutheran and Anglican via correct fixed forms

C. Presbyterian & Reformed via correct elements with freedom (Westminster Directory of Worship)

1. Calvin stated for reform of churches must address worship & justification
2. Goal to restore practice of apostolic church
3. Biblically rooted rather than simply historic expressions
4. Key role of Bucer and Strasbourg & influence on Calvin
5. Calvin restored singing to congregation
6. Scottish reformation reforming Prayer Book
 - a. Scots Confession 1560 - room for changes ages & places
 - b. context English Puritans - absolutized minimum out of fears and suspicions
7. RPW of West. Assembly some departure from earlier reformers

pp. 19-21: "There are two dangers that may arise in any attempt to evaluate the work of the past and point the direction for the future. The temptation toward either a radical discarding of the wisdom of the past, or a reactionary embracing of tradition is an ever-present reality. However, either extreme would be an incorrect response... cautions against trendiness and subordination of eternal truth to the seductive claims of a particular

cultural context. On the other hand ... warns also against the uncritical acceptance of all that has preceded...(need) greater coherence in presbyterian worship, as well as greater freedom from strictures that now may be viewed more accurately as culturally-conditioned, and not as eternally revealed." - Ralph Gore in *Pursuit of Plainness* (19)

D. Radical Reformation with no forms but Spirit-led
 IV. Regulative Principle of Worship: Presby. & Reformed.
 Heritage

A related aspect of the problem of tension and disagreement over worship issues is where we focus the debate. If the debate is centered in a particular application of the RPW in a certain period of church history as being normative for all ages and cultures and how those fathers in the faith rooted their worship in scripture--then worship issues are determined by a correct historical understanding of how the RPW was actually applied in that period. If the debate is centered on what the Bible teaches about the RPW and how that should be applied today--then historical applications of the RPW become instructive rather normative. The Reformers did in their day what is being advocated above for our day--they drew on the richness of past expressions of biblical worship as well as the freshness of what was available to them as present expressions of biblical worship.

One significant example of this was Calvin's employment of Louis Bourgeois, Clement Marot, and Theodore Beza to versify the entire Psalter and put it to appropriate (many quite moving) musical tunes. Calvin believed "... (T)he psalms could incite us to raise our hearts to God and to move us with such ardor that we exalt through praises the glory of his name... (And) truly, we know through experience that song has great force and vigor to move and enflame hearts to invoke and to praise God with a more lively and ardent zeal." Calvin drew from the past (Psalm singing) and made it relevant to the present (lively, worshipful tunes). And he also utilized the children to teach the congregation the new psalm meter and tunes!

A Contemporary Look At Worship

I. The Issue of Personal Preferences of Style and Meaningfulness

II. Key Aspects of Worship Today

A. Relevant Worship - I Co. 14:13-25

1. Equally intense desire for worship to be biblical & meaningful
2. Zeal for doing only what God commands utilizing all God provides

B. Reverent Joy - Solemn, Joyful Assembly in presence holy God saved/adopted us

C. Utilizing Giftedness of Congregation in Worship

- D. Worship, Word, and Sacrament
- E. Unity of the Church - love and forbearance and mutual submission Christ
- F. Proper place of mind/emotions - Mk. 12:30 & affections (whole person) set on God

III. The Blending of Past Expressions and Present Expressions

"freshness of present expressions of biblical worship" - This phrase was carefully chosen to avoid the more nebulous term "contemporary." Contemporary often carries with it a particular style narrowly defined, such as use of drums and electronic instruments in worship. To draw on the freshness of present expressions of biblical worship gives much more freedom to seek or even create fresh expressions that are relevant to the worshipping congregation in view. That may take the form of setting hymns written in past centuries to arrangements that include accompaniment by wind, string, and percussion instruments of the present day "praise band" phenomenon interspersed with scripture songs and choruses, as implemented by Scotty Smith at Christ Community in Franklin, Tennessee. Or it may take some of the same hymns and set them to a classical arrangement with a string quartet and interspersed with American folk hymns as described by Tim Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. The key factor is both biblical substance and relevance to today's worshipping congregation.

A. Two emerging trends: interest in historic & present
day forms worship

B. Best of past to stabilize fresh & creative present

--- stability without energy gets cold while energy
without stability pointless

IV. Question and Answer Time

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