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UNLEASHING CREATIVITY IN LITURGY: ENCOURAGING, EQUIPPING, AND EMPOWERING ARTISTIC CHRISTIANS IN CORPORATE WORSHIP

By

DAVID A. CONLEY

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

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

2016

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Graduation Date MAY 13, 2016

Rev. Jerram Barrs, Faculty Advisor _____

Rev. Mark Ryan, Second Faculty Reader _____

Dr. Phil Douglass, Director of D.Min. Program _____

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how church members use their creative talents in public worship. Many evangelical churches still struggle to integrate fuller expressions of creativity and art into their worship spaces and services. Many artists in these congregations remain on the sidelines, where they await healing in their relationships and encouragement to use their creative gifts in worship. Moreover, churches that persist in communicating in only one language will become less intelligible to the world around them as the postmodern world values visual forms of communication and speaks in narrative, symbol, and song.

To explore this problem and purpose, the study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with seven artists who have at least ten years of experience crafting and presenting art in the context of public worship. The following research questions guided the process: (1) How do church members use their creative talents in public worship? (2) What challenges do church members who use their creative talents in public worship face? (3) What motivates church members who use their creative talents in public worship? (4) In what ways not currently exercised do church members desire to use their creative talents in public worship?

Four areas of literature were explored. First, the searcher examined biblical foundations of creativity, art, and worship, with a particular emphasis on Bible passages that relate these themes to each other. Second, material on the history of art in Christian worship was examined, tracing significant historical trends that influence the present conversation on liturgical creativity. The third area of literature examined sources that deal specifically with current theological expositions of liturgical aesthetics or art in

public worship. Fourth, literature was surveyed that expounds upon a Christian perspective and practice on creativity and imagination.

The study found a key theme from scripture is that God's people, from the beginning of time, have crafted works of beauty and truth. Corporate worship throughout the Bible is immersed in song, art, architecture, and other creative works. However, one critical theme that repeatedly arose from the literature about the history of art in worship was the Protestant Reformation's mixed legacy on liturgical creativity and beauty. The Protestant tradition, especially the Reformed line, seems to struggle the most with art in worship.

Worship without art is one-dimensional at best and harmful at worst. Art has the power of multi-dimensional communication—beauty and truth, symbol and proposition come together and become meaningful in the deepest sense of the word. Much of the literature on creativity confirmed scripture's emphasis upon art and speaks about how art needs healthy excellence, authenticity, and a redemptive undercurrent.

The study made recommendations for practice. All areas of this project reinforced the importance of families encouraging children to live liturgically and think creatively. Promoting a healthy worldview, that all of life is an act of worship, helps give meaning and vibrancy to the formal services of worship children attend. Another critical recommendation is for worship artists to lead worship frequently. One of the best ways to learn is to practice. In healthy situations, using one's gifts in worship should also be an opportunity for God to bring renewal, healing, and personal growth in grace. This also involves regularly recruiting, equipping, and releasing other gifted members to serve. Another recommendation is to pursue excellence: using people's gifts and talents well

and in context. Finally, creative artists should strive to understand the way most pastors usually speak and vice versa. Ideally, both groups can meet in the middle and comprehend each other well.

Dedication

This research celebrates the life and work of my pastor and friend, Jeff Bost.
He entered glory a few months before my project came to fruition,
after a brief battle with cancer.

He was a true shepherd of the sheep.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following people who helped me along the journey:

All my Inklings travelers to England and Ireland over the years: each of you added greatly to my work! I want to especially thank my team partners: Ross Collins, Matthew and Caroline Hall, Cheryl Martin and Tamara Phillips.

John Fallon and Dan Rash, for showing me the true beauty of music.

Bob Glick, whose seminary class on C. S. Lewis inspired me to seek beyond the Shadowlands.

Jimmy and Tricia Agan, Luke Brodine, Ian and Sue Camp, Chris Cartledge, Jerdone Davis, David and BeCa Fisk, Ron and Leslie Hughes, Michael Neal, Joel Simoneau and David Wilcox, for unconditional and unwavering friendship.

Nailsea Baptist Church in England—particularly Drew and Sheryl Ellis, and Andy and Angela Graham, where the project really got moving: we saw rich worship, sacrificial hospitality, and sweet fellowship among the body of Christ.

Clemson Presbyterian Church, for the chance to pursue this degree while working.

Young Memorial Presbyterian Church, for unwavering support and lavish generosity towards getting this project over the finish line.

The faculty and staff of Covenant Seminary, and especially my teachers: Mark Dalbey, Reggie Kidd, Scotty Smith, and Mike Osborne; my editor, Beth Hart; and my advisors, Mark Ryan and Jerram Barrs.

My mom, Glenda Conley, and my parents-in-law, Jeannette and Ray Flanders, for always being there with help and guidance.

My family—Elyse, Wilson, and especially my wife, Michelle: words cannot express how grateful I am for your never-flagging encouragement, support and patience throughout this long and winding journey!

Lastly and most importantly, all praise be to our God of grace who lavishes us with all good gifts!

Chapter One

Introduction

The evangelical church in America has a difficult relationship with artists and the art they create. Leland Ryken, an early voice in evangelical conversations about art, asked these pointed questions,

> How can artistic integrity be preserved when art is used for worship and witness? Why does art used for religious purposes so overwhelmingly favor…mediocre or overly transparent works of art? Why do religious artists so often produce propaganda instead of art? Why do most Christian churches feel uncomfortable about the presence of art, music and literature in the church?[1]

With these observations, Ryken paints a bleak but accurate picture of how churches often abuse and misuse art. Artists often must justify their creative work by forcing an evangelistic purpose or a shallow meaning for worship. The resulting quality of works produced in this manner is mediocre. Further, artists trapped in this cycle often become cynical mercenaries, cranking out propaganda or frustrated idealists without purpose. The cycle ends with the church becoming more and more uncomfortable with creativity and less and less likely to encourage creative Christian brothers and sisters.

Often, relationships among Christian believers in church are strained or even damaged over how art should be used—or not used—in public worship. On one end of the spectrum, many Christians tend to almost idolize exceptionally gifted vocational artists, particularly the great masters of the past. On the other end, however, these same people often marginalize the artists that happen to be in their own congregations. Gene

[1] Leland Ryken, *The Liberated Imagination* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989), 21.

Veith, a seminary professor and author of many books on the relationship between Christianity and culture, speaks of a desperate environment of suffocation for these artists, saying, "The indifference of the contemporary church to the arts has traumatized many of its Christian artists."[2] Indeed, many artists come to church seeking support from their brothers and sisters but tragically find the opposite, "encountering rejection from both the art establishment and the church. Christians have become content with institutional ugliness…"[3] The church often takes for granted or misunderstands these creative people to such a degree that they do not feel the freedom to use their talents in the church's worship. Franky Schaeffer, whose father, Francis, pioneered evangelical engagement in the arts, was wounded so deeply that he wrote a book calling the church to repentance, saying,

> Loneliness is a constant reality for Christians who seriously pursue an artistic career. The Christian who is serious about being an artist occupies, in this reactionary ghetto (of the church), a place as comfortable as that of a live fish placed in boiling water.[4]

Speaking as a Christian vocational artist, Schaffer expresses his pain with a blunt honesty that is often difficult for readers to absorb, but he accurately captures the suppressed frustration and continual marginalization that many other creative believers feel when attempting to live and work within the church. In some cases, Christian artists give up trying to use their gifts, or, worse yet, leave a particular congregation because of their wounds. Manuel Luz, a creative arts pastor and professional musician in California comments on this paradox,

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[2] Gene Veith, *State of the Arts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 23.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Franky Schaeffer, *Sham Pearls for Real Swine* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990), 12, 17.

> There is still a great relational path that must be forged between the artist and the local church. Certainly even today, the artist is looked upon with some disdain (at worst) and misunderstanding (at best) by the modern Protestant church. Or to those few on the A-list, an unhealthy hero worship can result, that helps neither the artist nor the church.[5]

Luz believes that Christians tend to idolize exceptionally talented or popular artists in almost the same way that teens worship rock stars. This misguided "hero worship" encourages idolatry and deflects the appreciation and encouragement that artists in local faith communities deserve.

Furthermore, many evangelical churches are hindered by their own past—a restrictive legacy of the Protestant Reformation's turbulent days that continue to this day. Fiona Bond, a co-founder of *Theology through the Arts* at Cambridge University and a fellow of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, believes that the reformers' feared worshipers engaging with anything other than scripture "as a distraction to salvation." Martin Luther and John Calvin backed away from a wholehearted acceptance of liturgical art because they were responding to the abuse of the arts in the medieval church. Indeed, she comments that, although Luther and Calvin had a "healthy aesthetic appreciation"—they loved music and even promoted the crafting of new worship songs—they were very afraid of what the abuse of liturgical art would look like. She adds, "It is never quite expressed in this way but there appears to be an underlying fear that the arts inherently encourage indulgence, lack of self-control and ultimately corruption."[6] Quentin Schultze, an author and professor of communication arts, adds that even in media-saturated, American culture, many churches do not use visual images and architecture well,

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[5] Manuel Luz, *Imagine That* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 99.

[6] Fiona Bond, *The Arts in Your Church* (Carlisle, UK: Piquant, 2001), 9.

> Some of today's sanctuaries and worship services are visually impoverished. They are stark places and events with…little visual expression of the grandeur of God. Surely we do not require cathedrals to worship God well, but we do need something more than unadorned warehouses or lecture halls devoid of any signs of beauty and lacking any visual expressions of praise.[7]

Schultze observes, with great irony, that having infinite access to information and media does not automatically equip Christians to design and build beautiful worship spaces. American congregations almost fear building more than a lecture hall or warehouse. Churches influenced by this tradition tend to have plain church architecture and bare worship spaces. Luz laments this loss of beauty,

> These were powerful moments…when I understood God in a visceral, unspeakable way. Somehow that seems lacking in the stripped-down modern Christian tradition often experienced today. There is a lack of mystery, a lack of beauty, a lack of something, as if I were watching TV with the sound off, or eating a steak with a stuffy nose. The language of visual art and beauty are missing, or at least somewhat askew.[8]

Luz concludes that beauty is often missing or greatly reduced from most modern worship spaces. This plainness carries over into how churches worship as well. Their liturgy is often simplistic, aimed at people who mainly read and listen. Finally, the worship services themselves tend to be creatively one-dimensional. The primary form of communication is oratorical teaching and the most valued expression of truth and beauty is the sermon or lecture.

Liturgical art, however, can be a healthy corrective to this tendency, says William Dyrness, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary who has written numerous books on theology, culture, and the arts. He writes, "The experience of

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[7] Quentin Schultze, *High-Tech Worship?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 21.

[8] Luz, *Imagine That,* 27.

art, precisely because it ultimately refers to God, can be…an enlargement of spiritual vision…We are able to get beyond ourselves and see with different eyes."[9] Furthermore, this one-dimensional worship does not fully engage many believers who perceive truth and beauty in other forms of communication, such as narrative, poetry, myth, or story. Jim Ware, a performing folk musician and staff writer for *Focus on the Family,* calls the church to rekindle a love of fiction and other forms of language by embracing the legacy of two exceptionally gifted Christian writers, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien:

> (These authors) suggested that "in the story of Christ…all the other stories have somehow come true." Something induced these two molders and shapers of the modern Christian mind to see life-changing verbal inventions about Truth in the legends and tales they had loved as children, to discover within those stories "other names" for the Tree of Life itself. What was it?[10]

Ware asserts that Lewis and Tolkien, who were both intellectually brilliant and artistically creative, believed that truth could be (and was) communicated in ways other than simply a list of logical propositions. Lewis and Tolkien communicated truth through myths, legends, and stories. Further, they believed that truth should go hand in hand with beauty, rather than being merely processed into the content of an academic lecture. In churches where this love of beauty has withered away or been suppressed by centuries of Reformation battles, the worship services tend to be plain and often resemble academic lectures rather than full-orbed worship of the living God. For many who see and hear truth in different ways, the lecture-style services are dull and one-dimensional; artistic Christians often stop participating other than just going through the motions. Those who

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[9] William Dyrness, *Visual Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 144.

[10] Jim Ware, *God of the Fairy Tale* (Colorado Springs, CO: Shaw Books, 2003), 3.

are not fully engaged in the service often become apathetic and joyless in both their worship and the missional calling to bring Jesus' good news in word and deed to their communities.

There have been some who have called the church to a richer understanding and appreciation of creativity. Francis Schaffer, a pastor and theologian, challenged Christians to understand their culture and world with deep biblical knowledge and with great compassion from the gospel. Schaffer encouraged Christians to pursue their artistic calling boldly, and likewise, he admonished the church to celebrate the gifts of their creative brothers and sisters, saying,

> Christian artists do not need to be threatened by fantasy and imagination, for they have a basis for knowing the difference between them and the real world "out there." The Christian is the really free person—he is free to have imagination. This too is our heritage. The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars. [11]

Schaeffer asserts that Christian believers, in light of their own understanding of redemption and restoration, should embrace their creative imagination. God, the source of all beauty and truth, gives his people the gift of creativity. Of all people, those within the church should fully appreciate and embrace liturgical art that glorifies God.

Problem Statement

Many evangelical churches still struggle to integrate fuller expressions of creativity and art into their worship spaces and services. Many artists in these congregations remain on the sidelines, where they await healing in their relationships and encouragement to use their creative gifts in worship. These brothers and sisters will continue to wither away unless the church pursues artistic expression in worship.

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[11] Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 91.

Moreover, churches who persist in communicating in only one language will become less intelligible to the world around them as the postmodern world values visual forms of communication and speaks in narrative, symbol, and song.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how church members use their creative talents in public worship. In order to accomplish this purpose, the following questions will guide the research process:

1. How do church members use their creative talents in public worship?
2. What challenges do church members who use their creative talents in public worship face?
3. What motivates church members who use their creative talents in public worship?
4. In what ways not currently exercised do church members desire to use their creative talents in public worship?

Significance of the Study

This study will offer encouragement to Christian artists by showing positive examples of how other creative Christians used their talents and gifts successfully in the liturgy and worship of the churches. Furthermore, pastors and church leaders will gain insight on how other churches are using symbol, story, and song to add beauty and artistry to their worship spaces and services, thus enabling them to communicate to their communities in many more languages and levels. Finally, it is hoped that all Christians within the church will recover their common hope for life together in the grace of Jesus and their common purpose in bringing the beautiful and true story of the good news of Jesus to a broken world.

Definition of Terms

Art — As defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, art is "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects; and works so produced."[12] In many cases, the term may also refer to any form of applied creativity, including the following definitions.

Song — Music that has lyrics, including both choral and vocal works.

Instrumental — Music without words that are sung or pieces of music that are primarily instrumental in nature. The pieces may have epigraphs or explanatory texts as part of the presentation, but the music itself is performed without any lyrics.

Myth — According to C.S. Lewis, myth is "a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling upon human imagination."[13] The dissertation uses "myth" in this more positive sense, as opposed to its typical meaning in popular culture as a story that is inherently false. This usage is also common in the work of J.R.R Tolkien, who says, "Something really 'higher' is occasionally glimpsed in mythology."[14] Elsewhere, Tolkien comments that "History often resembles 'Myth,' because they are both ultimately of the same stuff."[15] Myth, therefore, refers to the stories humans have made throughout their existence that tap into God's general revelation that permeates creation.

Sub-creator — J.R.R. Tolkien first used this term in his essay, *On Fairy Stories.* The following dissertation will use it to define the creative role of humans in God's creation.

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[12] "Art - Definition and More," merriam-webster.com, accessed September 27, 2013, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art?show=0&t=1380246298.

[13] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Collier Books, 1947), 134.

[14] J. R. R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 339.

[15] Ibid., 344.

Humans are sub, beneath, creators for three main reasons: humans cannot create out of nothing, as God can; whether intentional or not, everything people make ultimately points to God's glory; humans can make nothing apart from God. People are only creative because of the creative impulses God, the primary and essential creator, gives to them.

Secondary World — J.R.R. Tolkien wrote, "Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose."[16] A secondary world is the artistic work of a sub-creator, wrought by the skill and craft of the artist and the gifts of God. Tolkien believed that these secondary worlds, at their best, tapped into the reality of the "Primary World"[17] and thus had the ring of authenticity for the art's observer. In other words, while one is reading the story, the secondary world functions well for them. Almost effortlessly the reader can remain in the flow of the story and enjoy being in the environment the author has crafted. The reader is rarely, if ever, forced to consciously suspend their disbelief. Likewise, while a viewer is contemplating the painting, it works for the viewer. These principles therefore apply to any type of created art and how people interact with them in the primary world.

Recovery — In the same work, Tolkien also discussed three characteristics of effective fairy-stories: Recovery, Escape and Consolation. Although Tolkien used these terms in the context of telling stories, they are useful when speaking of any form of creative expression and will be defined as such. Tolkien remarks that "Recovery (which includes

[16] Ibid., 368.

[17] Ibid., 362–363.

return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view."[18] Art should give people new perspective and enable them to see things as they are. It should thus refresh people's entire being—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Escape—Tolkien goes on to say that healthy Escape is one of the main functions of fairy-stories: "Escape is evidently…very practical, and may even be heroic. In real life, it is difficult to blame it unless it fails…why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home?"[19] Art should give people a momentary respite from their present self-made misery and the ugliness of this broken world. Ultimately, this means art should portray the escape from the final evil of death. Good art enables people to persevere though the brokenness along the path of suffering into glory.

Consolation—The final characteristic Tolkien mentions is Consolation of the Happy Ending. Tolkien explains, "The consolation of the fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn'…It is a sudden and miraculous grace…and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world."[20] Art needs a happy ending, which Tolkien calls a "eucatastrophe," which appears in the face of great evil and brings overwhelming good.

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[18] Ibid., 373.

[19] Ibid., 375-76

[20] Ibid., 384.

Chapter Two

A Literature Review of Creativity, Liturgical Aesthetics, and Liturgical Art

The purpose of this study is to explore how church members use their creative talents in public worship. Much of the literature on liturgical aesthetics addresses the theological framework for art as an abstract concept. Some writers have gone beyond this theological starting point and called the church to grow in the area of understanding and using art in worship. However, how the theological theory intersects with day to day ministry and informs the church's practical body life needs to be explored. In order to provide understanding and a solid base of knowledge, four areas of literature will be reviewed for this study. The literature review will begin by examining the biblical foundations of creativity, art, and worship, with a particular emphasis on Bible passages that relate these themes to each other. Next, material on the history of art in Christian worship will be examined, tracing significant historical trends that influence the present conversation on liturgical creativity. Then, sources that deal specifically with current theological expositions of liturgical aesthetics or art in public worship will be analyzed. Finally, literature will be surveyed that expounds upon a Christian perspective and practice on creativity and imagination.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

Creativity

A theological framework for creativity begins at the very beginning, examining God as the ultimate creator and his supreme work of art in creation. Genesis opens by

declaring the creative work of God, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."[21] The story of God's self-revelation first shows him as a creative being, the maker of everything. Also, God said that this work of creation was "very good" in every way, from the great cosmic strokes to the smallest details.[22] Most significantly, God also created humanity to be the pinnacle of his creation, made in God's own image and likeness, the Imago Dei.[23]

Because God created people in his image, he intends humans to be creative beings, just as he is creative. God has made people to be sub-creators: children who copy the creative work of their heavenly Father because they are driven to be like him in the essence of their being. Indeed, when humans create, they reflect God's image in a powerful way. To deny creativity is to deny an aspect of God's personality.

God commands humanity to fill, subdue, and rule the earth as stewards under his final authority.[24] Scholars call this key command the creation mandate. As with the imago Dei*,* this creation mandate is deep and complex, speaking clearly about human creative activity, elevating creativity to one of the main purposes of life. When humans fill, subdue, and rule the earth well, they take the earth's raw materials and make new things with it. God invites people to take part as a co-authors in the story he is writing; to be a co-artisan in the world he is crafting. In the Garden of Eden, humanity dwelt in perfect fellowship with God the Father in this original state of paradise and goodness. In

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[21] Gen. 1:1.

[22] Gen. 1:31.

[23] Gen. 1:26–27.

[24] Gen. 1:26–31.

the Garden of Eden, readers see natural humanity, how God created humans and what he intended for them in the deepest and most perfect sense. Everything is well.

The problem arises, however, in Genesis 3 when sin enters time and space due to Adam and Eve's disobedience.[25] This disobedience damages the relationship between God, Adam, and Eve. Sin also mars their role as stewards of creation. Caring for the earth and acting as co-creators will now be a struggle and never be complete. Note that Adam and Eve still create, but there will always be something wrong, incomplete, or perverted about their ability to sub-create. God still wants people to fill, subdue, and rule, but now sin has irrevocably twisted their job, apart from God's mercy.

Ecclesiastes references the longing that all humans experience due to their separation from God and from the perfection of the garden, "(God) has also set eternity in the human heart."[26] Humans are thus restless creatures and are never ultimately satisfied by the shadows of this present age. Yet, this longing for eternity and perfection provides more fuel for human creativity. In their works of art, humans can often find glimpses of another world beyond the walls of this present age, a place of healing, rest, and beauty. Even so, the best works humans create do not genuinely take people to another world: art only gives a fleeting glance. However, that glance is enough to inspire and encourage, if understood properly.

The prophet Isaiah wrote about a perfect age and place that was yet to come. In the final portion of the book, Isaiah sees a vision of the new heaven and new earth that

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[25] Gen. 3:14–24.

[26] Eccl. 3:11.

God is making.[27] Remarkably, humans contribute their handiwork and craft to the new age to come: camels, flocks, treasure, gold, silver, and even ships of Tarshish[28] join in the royal procession into God's presence in the new temple. Ironically, the ships of Tarshish were well-crafted machines of war and death that brought oppression. How can they be in this perfect and sinless New Jerusalem? God is at work, redeeming all of creation—our world, people, and the materials they crafted. In the New Jerusalem, God refines away the brokenness and evil; he leaves the beautiful art for glorified humanity to rightfully enjoy in the new heavens and the new earth.

In the New Testament, several passages speak to a theology of creativity. First, in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul speaks highly of the pagan Greek literature in his speech at the Areopagus in Athens, "'For in him we love and move and have our being.' As certain of your own poets have said, 'For we also are his offspring.'"[29] Paul is not saying that non-Christian myth is infallible revelation; rather, he is pointing to poetry as an apologetic for Christianity. At its best, myth points—symbolically and artistically—to the deep truths of God which are revealed plainly in creation, but which lead to salvation only in Christ and the Bible. The works of human creativity have innate worth and value even to Christians. Even works of art that are completely pagan and distort reality still have bits of truth and beauty in them because humans, who are created in God's image, made them. Creativity has value because God is the ultimate creator.

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[27] Is. 66:22.

[28] Is. 60:9.

[29] Acts 17:28.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul explains more of the theological background to his use of pagan works of art in evangelism. Throughout scripture, the theme of common grace shows the remaining image of God in people, even after their fall into sin. All truth is ultimately God's truth; and divine authorship still marks even the most perverse human sub-creator. Romans 1 succinctly explains common grace. Paul is attempting to clarify the dialectical tension between creation and the fall, in which human beings currently exist. If the fall had completely eradicated creation, then there would be no continuity between God's good, original creation and today's fallen world. This, however, is not the case. Despite the fall's effects, wherein the image of God is brutally bent, distorted, and corrupted to the extent that people are totally depraved and unable to do anything on their own to restore their relationship with God, the divine stamp is still there.

People, Paul says, suppress the truth and turn away from their creator, yet they still clearly see God's attributes—his eternal power and divine nature. Buried deep within human hearts lies a longing for the infinite and personal God who is their creator. They fail to consciously or properly acknowledge God, due to their sinfulness and pride. People suppress this truth to their subconscious; they ignore God and worship the idols of creation. However, human hearts can never eradicate truth from the deepest reaches of their psyche. Redemptive knowledge thus does not and cannot surface plainly and directly in the heart of man apart from God's initiative by his self-revelation through Jesus Christ and the scriptures. There is, however, as most orthodox Christians have asserted throughout the ages, a natural or general revelation that appears to all through creation. Paul explains general revelation in the opening chapter of Romans, saying,

> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what

> may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.[30]

In works of creativity, therefore, this knowledge surfaces by way of symbolic patterns which are woven into every story, myth, song, and work of art that humans have made throughout history.

Throughout the New Testament, Paul provides insight on how to discern the good and evil in created works. Throughout Romans, Paul gives many examples of how Christians must use discernment, grounded in God's revelation, to embrace that which is true and lovely, and they must reject the false and perverted. Moreover, Paul connects this discernment with a believer's maturity in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul argues that mature believers have the right to eat food prepared and crafted by humans that had been sacrificed to idols—used in a sinful manner—because the mature believers acknowledge God's role as the ultimate creator, "from whom all things come."[31] Paul qualifies that mature believers must not use their freedom as a weapon against less mature brothers and sisters,[32] but rather, love must guide mature believers in how they use their freedom. Paul also argues that the believer's relationship with God should guide them to discernment and freedom, declaring, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."[33]

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[30] Rom. 1:18–21.

[31] 1 Cor. 8:6.

[32] 1 Cor. 8:1–13.

[33] 1 Cor. 10:31.

James, while addressing perseverance through trials, adds another layer of meaning to a biblical theology of creativity. He says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."[34] All truth and beauty ultimately come from God. Consistent with other scriptures, James explains that God's ultimate authorship and authority transcend human originality. Remarkably, people glimpse God's truth and beauty through arts and artifacts they craft.

Revelation speaks of human creativity continuing even in the new heavens and new earth at the consummation. Revelation 14 illustrates, saying, "And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth."[35] The redeemed and glorified saints sing a song, clearly described as new. Similarly, in Revelation 15, these saints continue to sing what appears to be original songs. The saints model the song on passages from Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and Jeremiah, but they craft the song in a new way.[36] Furthermore, in Revelation 21-22, God restores the tree of life into human existence. This imagery, paralleling the Garden of Eden, reinforces the concept that God's people, in his very presence, will need to cultivate the new heavens and new earth.[37]

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[34] Jas. 1:17.

[35] Rev. 14:3.

[36] Rev. 15:2–4.

[37] Rev. 21; Rev. 22.

Art

Although biblical material on creativity and art overlap, distinctive statements about art warrant their own examination. The Old Testament notes how Cain's descendants practiced art and craft. Genesis specifically names two half-brothers, Jubal, "he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes (and)…Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron."[38] Throughout the Pentateuch, music and art accompany the normal life of God's people. For example, Moses, Miriam, and the people celebrate God's victory over the Egyptian army with vocal song, instrumental music, and dancing, "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord…Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing."[39] The books of history portray King David as a poet,[40] musician,[41] and dancer,[42] illustrating how people of the highest social and religious classes created art. God's people wrote music for the book of Psalms and sang them. Indeed, the biblical authors use artistic language, such as stories, narratives, poetry, and song. The Bible's form embodies more than a collection of facts or propositions. Additionally, the books of the prophets contain creative output. Ezekiel presented performing arts—dramatic sketches and illustrations—to the people.[43]

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[38] Gen. 4:19–22.

[39] Ex. 15:1, 20.

[40] 2 Sam 2:17ff.

[41] 1 Sam. 16.

[42] 2 Sam. 6:14ff.

[43] Ez. 4, for example.

The New Testament, likewise, contains many examples of art. In his public ministry on earth, Jesus utilized different forms of artistic expression in bringing the good news to the people. Jesus often spoke to the people in stories and parables, brief fictitious tales that have a deeper meaning than what appears on the surface.[44] Jesus also used poetry on occasion, such as the beatitudes in the sermon on the mount.[45] He and his disciples also sang together, such as on the night of the last supper.[46] Jesus used object lessons and dramatic illustrations, such as when the Pharisees asked him about paying taxes to Caesar, he used the coin as a teaching moment.[47] Furthermore, with the extra visual actions, Jesus healed the man born blind.[48] In perhaps his most significant, dramatic lesson, Jesus washed the disciples' feet before the last supper.[49] Indeed, Jesus even used pageantry and large-scale drama on occasion, such the crafted grandeur of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem just before his death.[50] Although not mentioned explicitly, dancing would normally have been part of wedding celebrations in those days. Jesus was certainly present for at least one in Cana,[51] and he likely fully participated in the wedding's festivities. This also may explain the reference in both Matthew and Luke about how the crowds misunderstood both John the Baptist and Jesus:

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[44] Matt. 13:13.

[45] Matt. 5:3–10.

[46] Matt. 26:30.

[47] Mark 12:13–17.

[48] John 9:6–7.

[49] John 13:1–17.

[50] Luke 19:28ff; cf. Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; John 12:16.

[51] John 2:1–11.

> "We played the pipe for you/and you did not dance/We sang a dirge/and you did not mourn." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners."[52]

The clear implication is that the crowds rejected John because he was too ascetic but then also rejected Jesus because he was too wild by comparison: eating, drinking, singing, and dancing.

Liturgical Creativity and Art

Scripture also discusses creativity and art in a specific, liturgical setting—the context of public worship. Exodus 20 lays a foundation for public worship when God gives Moses the ten commandments, saying, "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God."[53] This complex passage may be understood rightly by looking at clearer sections of scripture that give fuller meaning. Francis Schaeffer believed that Leviticus 26:1 informs Exodus 20:4-5, "Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God.[54] Schaeffer explained the relationships between these two passages, saying,

> This passage makes clear that Scripture does not forbid the making of representational art but rather the worship of it. Only God is to be worshipped. Thus the commandment is not against making art but against worshiping anything other than God and specifically against worshiping art. To worship art is wrong, but to make art is not.[55]

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[52] Matt. 11:17–19; cf. Luke 7:32–34.

[53] Ex. 20:4–5a.

[54] Lev. 26:1.

[55] Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 20.

In Exodus 31, God tells Moses to choose and equip artists whose work will display God's glory.[56] In Exodus 35-36, Moses tells the people of Israel about Bezalel and Oholiab, the craftsmen who will build the tabernacle.[57] Gene Veith asserts that three principles about liturgical art emerge from these two passages. First, liturgical art is "within God's will."[58] Veith highlights how much of the Old Testament is devoted to God's instructions on how to make a beautiful and artistic space for worship. The copious and specific directions are often simply for the sake of beauty—they do not have to serve a functional or theological purpose. Second, Veith says, "artistic ability is God's gift."[59] The craftsmen were not creative geniuses in their own human strength. Rather, God graciously equipped them to craft the liturgical space. Third, Veith believes, "art is a vocation from God."[60] God decreed his standards for beautiful worship, and then he called Bezalel and Oholiab to design and craft the liturgical art.

Three other significant Old Testament texts contribute to a full understanding of biblical liturgical art. First, God's for Moses and the people to build the tabernacle as a space for public worship in Exodus 24 and following reinforces the principles outlined previously. However, Exodus 28:33 makes a significant contribution to the biblical canon on liturgical arts. Francis Schaeffer comments, "Thus, when the priest went into the Holy of Holies, he was to take with him on his garments a representation of nature, carrying

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[56] Ex. 31:1–11.

[57] Ex. 35:30–36:2.

[58] Gene Veith, *The Gift of Art* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 18.

[59] Ibid., 19.

[60] Ibid., 21.

that representation into the presence of God. Surely this is the very antithesis of a command against works of art."[61] Schaffer strongly argues in favor of having works of created art in a liturgical space set aside for the purpose of worship.

Another verse in Exodus 33 is also worthy of comment. The pomegranates that were to adorn the priests' robes of are directed to be "blue, purple, and scarlet,"[62] of which two of these—purple and scarlet—are colors that can be found in nature as pomegranates grow. Blue, however, is not found in the normal created order. Schaeffer says, "The implication is that there is freedom to make something which…can be different from (nature) and it too can be brought into the presence of God."[63]

The second Old Testament texts which delve deeply into liturgical art describe the temple's craftsmanship and the art used in the temple worship. The books of Kings and Chronicles provide most of the information, supported by occasional passages in Ezra, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. In 2 Chronicles 3-4, for example, the author describes grandiose art in the temple that overwhelms the senses. The text reads that Solomon "adorned the temple,"[64] which gives the sense, Schaeffer believes, that "the temple was covered with precious stones *for beauty*."[65] This adorning added artistic beauty alone, not serving any architectural or structural purpose. God wanted his place of worship to be breathtakingly beautiful. Schaeffer also notes that many different types of art are present in the sacred space, "Representational art of non-religious subjects was

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[61] Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 23.

[62] Ex. 28:33.

[63] Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 24.

[64] 2 Chron. 3:6.

[65] Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 26.

thus brought into the central place of worship."[66] 1 Kings 6 details the cherubim carvings, and Schaeffer comments, "we have representational art of both the seen and the unseen world."[67] God commanded that liturgical art depicting part of the invisible world to adorn his temple. The temple thus abounded with glorious artwork throughout the space used for worship.

The third Old Testament texts that relate creativity in worship are found in the book of Psalms. The Psalms are poetry and song, and the people of Israel used them as their primary book of worship. Art saturated worship at every level, containing songs of all types and themes. The Psalms describe verbal and physical expressions of worship and even command the people join these expressions. For example, Psalm 33, in addition to calling God's people to sing with joy and praise him with various instruments, commands them to "Sing a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy."[68] These verses would indicate a high degree of human creativity on two levels. First, in order to sing a song that is new, composers, arrangers, and songwriters must use their creative gifts to make music and art that is new and meant for that moment of time and space when a faith community comes together in corporate worship. Second, the call to play skillfully also implies singers and instrumentalists and other performing artists should bring their skills and practice into the setting and activity of public worship. The people are blessed and encouraged by the creative skill of the art and the artist. Psalm 102 calls God's people to express creatively emotions other than joy and praise. According to the heading and

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[66] Ibid., 28.

[67] Ibid., 29.

[68] Ps. 33:1–3.

opening verses, Psalm 102 is a lament and cry of the heart for those who are suffering pain and loss.[69] Furthermore, two psalms command God's people to praise him in worship by singing with their voices, dancing with their bodies, playing multiple instruments with their hands and breath.[70] The multitude of different expressions of praise and a wide range of performing arts contribute to rich liturgical activity.

Through glimpses of future and present heavenly worship, the New Testament allows readers to see art and creativity's eschatological role in worship. Although not fully realized, heavenly worship fuels, empowers, and encourages God's people who worship him this side of heaven. Revelation speaks of worship's aesthetic dimension. Revelation 21-22 resound with echoes from the Garden of Eden. There is a "new heaven and a new earth"[71] and thus a new act of cosmic re-creation, as God redeems, refines, and purifies the broken creation. The tree of life is present, and its leaves are "for the healing of the nations."[72] God still calls humanity to the original creation mandate to fill, subdue, and rule, although in heaven, the mandate will look very different than it does now. Creativity and worship will still accompany the saints' praise and service to God and the Lamb who reigns forever.

The History of Liturgical Art

Dyrness wrote a significant book in this area, *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue*, which connects history and theology in a manner that informs present worship practices. Although Dyrness does not limit the scope of his book solely

[69] Ps. 102:1–2.

[70] Ps. 149–150.

[71] Rev. 21:1.

[72] Rev. 22:1–3.

to history, he thoroughly explores the Protestant tradition's "complex and sometimes difficult relationship with the visual arts."[73] Dyrness believes that Protestant churches have lost connection with their past concerning visual art in worship, especially compared with the Roman Catholic tradition. He surveys the early church, which tended to have subtle and symbolic art due to the threat of persecution. Once the church gained more cultural status, its art became more complex and grandiose, borrowing "images and practices from the surrounding culture."[74]

This use of images in worship caused tension, eventually exploded into the iconoclastic controversy—some of the most difficult battles the church has fought within itself. Dyrness summarizes how the western church moved to embrace relics and the image of Jesus suffering on the cross, while the "central image of Eastern Christianity became the human figure, represented in its timeless quality in the icon."[75] The eastern and western churches officially severed ties in AD 1054 over these artistic and theological differences. Dyrness asserts that the split correlated with "a low point in the life of the Western Church and its impact on the surrounding culture."[76]

A new era of liturgical art arose in the eleventh to sixteenth centuries. Dyrness links the soaring architecture and awesome splendor of the Gothic churches with theological renewal that began at this time. Two mendicant orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, sprung up during this era "that will have great influence on the

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[73] William Dyrness, *Visual Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 12.

[74] Ibid., 32.

[75] Ibid., 36.

[76] Ibid., 38.

development of the arts" later in history.[77] Indeed, in the Renaissance, artists influenced by the two orders' theology and worldview came to dominate liturgical art.

The turbulent Protestant Reformation, according to Dyrness, sowed the seeds for today's church that struggles with liturgical arts. The reformers held divergent views on liturgical art, especially Martin Luther and John Calvin. According to Dyrness, Luther "was more open to the use of images," while Calvin believed that they were useless or even sinful.[78] Calvin's negative view of liturgical visual art, coupled with the rise of the printing press and the translation of the Bible into everyday languages, shape Christians' devotional and corporate worship experience into something new. Dyrness argues that Calvin encouraged a personal and inward adoration of Christ, which "did not require visual meditation." The liturgical actions that accompanied this adoration involved "sitting in pews, closing one's eyes during prayers, and so on."[79] In this environment, any works of visual art were perceived as distractions or worse.[80] Calvin, however, did allow for creative expression in music. He translated the Psalms into a European form of poetry and commissioned Louis Bourgeois, a foremost composer of the day, to set them to music. These melodies, "Geneva Jigs," were most of the music sung by the congregation in worship services.

A similar view of worship and liturgical art made its way to England via the Puritans and Scotland via John Knox. The liturgical views then crossed the ocean to America and became the dominant worldview for worship in the new world. Dyrness

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[77] Ibid., 40.

[78] Ibid., 52–53.

[79] Ibid., 54.

[80] Ibid.

starkly comments that in this environment, art had "no relationship to the worshipping life of the church."[81] This view is pervasive even to this day, but Dyrness believes that there is hope for renewal. He closes his historical survey with a short discussion of trends in the twentieth century. He credits Paul Tillich, Francis Schaeffer, Hans Rookmaker, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Calvin Seerveld as timely prophetic voices who have called the church to a better understanding of creativity, art, and worship. The other component of this move to a healthier view of art is due to the Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox believers renewing conversation with each other and recapturing some of their strengths.[82] While Dyrness is cautiously optimistic, he still bluntly states that some of the historical baggage still remains, "While there is much for which we can be thankful, there is still much that remains to be done."[83]

Hans Rookmaker was an early pioneer in the middle twentieth century who helped move the evangelical church into a better understanding and practice of liturgical art. His challenging and indeed prophetic work, *Art Needs No Justification*, is primarily aimed at calling Christian artists to engage with the culture and with the church. Rookmaker, however, briefly addresses the history of liturgical art. In his introductory words, Rookmaker explains, "I speak in the first place to the painter and the sculptor, the creators of the visual arts…because my knowledge lies primarily in that field. But I think that the situation and problems are more or less similar with the other arts; for the musician, composer, actor, writer, dancer, comedian, or whatever you may think of."[84]

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[81] Ibid., 59.

[82] Ibid., 62–65.

[83] Ibid., 67.

[84] Han Rookmaker, *Art Needs No Justification* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 10.

Rookmaker asserts that before the eighteenth century, artists and their art were not placed on a cultural pedestal as individual creative geniuses who transcend ordinary life as they are in the modern era. He writes, "This art was the expression of a common quality of life, much deeper than affluence and status, and was embedded in a common understanding of life."[85] Liturgical art was thus a more natural expression of beauty within a community and was more connected to the community. During the Enlightenment, Rookmaker sees western culture breaking into two different tracks of science and art that do not intersect with one another. He writes, "Art became disconnected from the normal functions of life,"[86] and this discontinuity affected liturgical art as well. Rookmaker argues that this dysfunction has now reached a crisis point in western culture and in the church as well. Because the church does not interact with art well, its separated from the culture. He writes, "From the Middle Ages through the time of the Reformation…spiritualistic pietism began to drive beauty out of the church."[87] As a result, Christians understand their culture and lose aesthetic beauty and creative art in their worship.

Another book that addresses liturgical art is *Art and Worship* by Christopher Irvine and Anne Dawtry, who are ministers and worship educators in the Anglican Church. Dawtry and Irvine capture the nuanced views of Reformation theologians such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Thomas Cranmer. Luther used art in worship for

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[85] Ibid., 12.

[86] Ibid., 14.

[87] Ibid., 23.

teaching purposes. He was skeptical of having art in "churches…that were visited by pilgrims" because he feared it would reinforce the error of salvation by works.[88]

Dawtry and Irvine also present a balanced perspective of Calvin, who viewed the visual arts "as God's gifts for which we must find a pure and legitimate use."[89] Calvin, however, never supported the visual arts for liturgical or didactical purposes. They find it ironic that Calvin "never elaborates on what he sees as a pure and legitimate use of these gifts (of art)."[90]

Dawtry and Irvine trace parallels in the ambivalence towards art in continental reformers with those who were in England, such as Thomas Cranmer. Irvine and Dawtry summarize Cranmer's views as "aesthetically blinkered, perhaps, and fearful of the danger of idolatry."[91] Cranmer's theological hostility to ecclesiastical art, they say, opened the door for mercenaries and vandals to destroy much Christian art under the brutal iconoclasm of Cromwell and those like him. The climate of fear and misunderstanding has persisted in parts of the Anglican tradition.

Richard Hooker and George Herbert, who were Anglican theologians and authors in the late sixteenth century, however, introduced a middle way to the worship and life of the Church of England. They attempted to find balance "between the visual austerity of the Calvinist conventicle and the garishly decorated Roman churches."[92] Hooker and

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[88] Christopher Irvine, and Anne Dawtry, *Art and Worship* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 7.

[89] Dyrness, *Visual Faith*, 89.

[90] Ibid., 8.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 10.

Herbert went back to the beginnings of Christian art and highlighted key movements or summarized the prevailing views of a past age. They viewed ecclesiastical art in a sacramental way, believing that the early church appropriated images in a "quasi-sacramental way…making visible the invisible presence of Christ, and in mediating the truths of God's saving work."[93] As the church acquiesced to Hooker and Herbert's view, the liturgical arts were more highly valued and utilized in worship.

Jaroslav Pelikan, in his work, *Jesus Through the Centuries,* examines how the church used Jesus' image from the first to the twentieth century and comments on cultural insights the images reveal. Many of these images of Jesus connect to Christian liturgy. For example, Pelikan first examines the image of Jesus as rabbi. For this image, Pelikan references the painting *White Crucifixion* by Marc Chagall. Although this work of art was not displayed in a church, Pelikan believes that if Christians used this image, or other works like it, in worship, then the virulent tide of anti-Semitism may not have washed over Europe in the twentieth century. He asks the hard question, "Would there have been an Auschwitz if every Christian church and every Christian home had focused its devotion on icons of Mary…as the Jewish maiden…and on icons of Christ not only as Pantocrator but as *Rabbi Jeshua bar-Joseph,* Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, in the context of the history of a suffering Israel and a suffering humanity?"[94] Pelikan argues that the works of art people use and live with in worship have power in human spiritual formation.

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[93] Ibid., 19.

[94] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 20.

Pelikan refers to John of Damascus in the context of the debate over icons and images in the Middle Ages. Images were not an innovation of humans, or even an invention of the church. He says, "God was the first and the original image-maker of the universe."[95] He continues to explore biblical passages that elaborate on this concept such as "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God."[96] God himself, who prohibits the idolatrous worship of human-crafted images, has now made an image of himself in Jesus; and moreover, God commands all humanity to bend the knee in worship, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."[97] This passage portrays the paradox of Jesus the image of God becoming exalted as the Son of God and king of all creation.

Veith, in his book, *State of the Arts*, equips and challenges Christians who are not necessarily gifted in the creative arts. He briefly sketches a history of general and liturgical art. Veith asserts that in the middle ages, most of the art was connected with Christianity and thus often used in worship to some extent, "The church was the major patron of the arts, which were employed to express the mysteries of the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection in a tangible way."[98] Veith is generally favorable to Medieval liturgical art and its use of symbol, commenting that it "achieves the

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[95] Ibid., 89.

[96] Col. 1:15.

[97] Phil. 2:9–11.

[98] Veith, *State of the Arts*, 54.

theological balance that characterizes Christian orthodoxy."[99] However, Veith traces a trend away from balance into idolatry, where people actually worshipped the images rather than Jesus, thus setting the stage for the Reformation.

Veith also addresses literature and music, calling music the great non-representational art form of the Reformation, citing the legacies of Luther, Zwingli, and especially Johann Sebastien Bach. Moving into Baroque art of the seventeenth century, Veith believes that, "At its best, Baroque art approximates a fully Christian balance of the spiritual and the physical, the emotional and the rational."[100] Liturgical art flourished in this era, as did architecture, filling the worship space with ornamentation and busy beauty. Veith speaks less on liturgical art for the later eras, noting that the Protestant church in particular became more and more hostile towards art and artists.

Michael Levey's *Early Renaissance Art* explores the history and style of European art. Levey notes that in the early Renaissance, art and religion overtly moved apart, "the artist working no longer in the service of God but in that of an imperious individual or a patron with…plans."[101] He emphasizes the growing belief that artists were individuals who worked ultimately for themselves, saying, "It was the autonomy of the work of art that really mattered."[102] Levey also comments on musical developments that paralleled the trends in visual art. Music for worship services began to sound more "natural," incorporating "secular melodies for Masses" and complex but pleasing

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[99] Ibid., 55.

[100] Ibid., 62–67.

[101] Michael Levey, *Early Renaissance Art* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 79.

[102] Ibid., 80.

sonorities.[103] Levey speaks of how religious art became richer during this period, "Pictures are using actuality for particular religious significance rather than for its own sake. The truths of the Christian religion gain a new dimension of truth" when set within the spatial world and liturgical space of Renaissance artists.[104]

Carl Christensen's *Art and the Reformation in Germany* relates to this discussion on art history. Christensen thoroughly explores the origins of the Reformation's iconoclasm and its legacy for the church in later eras. He calls this movement one of the "most notorious consequences of the Protestant Reformation" which transcended previous seasons of resistance to images and was "derived from men associated with the origins of the Protestant tradition."[105] Christensen asserts that Andreas von Karlstadt, a colleague of Martin Luther, initially pioneered the movement to ban and destroy all images. Karlstadt was so personally consumed with a fear of worshipping images, that he could not in good conscience endorse Luther's more moderate views. He further comments that Karlstadt held to an extremely literalist interpretation of the Bible. Even if he admitted that images had some positive value in worship (which Karlstadt did not), Christensen notes, "their use would still be impermissible due to their prohibition by God."[106] He then deals with other leaders who were part of this movement to some degree, including Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. Karlstadt's teachings wrought damage to German culture, but other nations in Europe, such as Scotland, nearly lost their national

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[103] Ibid., 100.

[104] Ibid., 136.

[105] Carl Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1979), 13, 23.

[106] Ibid., 25.

heritage of ecclesiastical art.[107] Christiansen discusses Luther's views on images in worship and comments that Luther's views developed over time and were not expressly written down in a single document. Garnering information from many sources, Christiansen presents Luther's mature view as relatively supportive of liturgical images. He writes that Luther grew into "an ultimately rather positive one—finally producing an endorsement that laid the theological foundation for the creation of an important tradition of Protestant religious art."[108] Luther seems to espouse a higher view of art and creativity than von Karlstadt and others coming from the iconoclastic camp: indeed, Luther's influence likely tempered the cultural harm to German art. Luther knew and valued the work of Albrecht Durer, the German Renaissance painter, and also approved of aesthetic and musical excellence in worship. Discovering the official Lutheran Reformation view on liturgical art, therefore, is a complex process.

Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality by Belden Lane traces the themes of beauty, creation, desire, and spirituality throughout the Reformed tradition from John Calvin to later expressions. Lane represents some of the nuances in Calvin's thought that many have neglected. One striking example is Lane's firm belief that Calvin deeply loved beauty and lived with an "uninhibited celebration of creation. Calvin was as smitten by God's beauty as he was overwhelmed by God's power."[109] Lane explores Calvin's metaphor of a "theater of God's glory" to speak about the beauty of the natural world around him and how God was at work in the world. Lane

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[107] Ibid., 109.

[108] Ibid., 42.

[109] Belden Lane, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57.

points out that Calvin's recurring use of theatrical images in his writing coupled with his practice of allowing secular theater in Geneva serve as a reminder that Calvin had a deep appreciation for creative drama. Lane goes on to say that this had implications for worship as well. Calvin believed that the praise of the faithful in worship become part of this drama, "Liturgical acts are intrinsically creative…this is precisely what Calvin envisioned in his image of the theater of God's glory. In the act of worship, celebrants and celebrated are both enriched and enhanced."[110] Calvin held a high view of music, believing it to be one of the great remnants of glory in creation, "Music, for Calvin, was central in helping to accomplish the subjective realization of prayer."[111] Calvin also held a high view of creative and beautiful words, "He recognized the importance of pushing the edges of language in the task of theological expression."[112] Along these lines, Calvin wrote more about the beauty and mystery of the Lord's Supper than any other theologian. Finally, Lane discusses the sermon in worship, saying, "Calvin possessed an almost magical sense of the power of speech in performative event of preaching."[113]

Liturgical Aesthetics and Art

Works that explore the field of liturgical aesthetics and liturgical art generally focus on the practice and theology of art in worship, including liturgical architecture. Leo Steinberg explores the important link between setting and work in his essay, "The Seven Functions of the Hands of Christ: Aspects of Leonardo's *Last Supper.*" Steinberg asserts

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[110] Ibid., 65.

[111] Ibid., 77.

[112] Ibid., 73.

[113] Ibid., 78.

that the liturgical space where Leonardo crafted and hung the mural gives the painting richer depth and meaning. Steinberg says,

> The space addressed becomes the recipient of an influence that proceeds, visibly, from an embodiment of the innermost Christian mystery, the union in Christ of two natures…the painting *in situ* offers a parallel incarnation, wherein meekness and power, submissiveness and the potency of the prime mover, are beheld as coincident.[114]

Furthermore, Steinberg claims that these glorious paradoxes and visual effects present in a liturgical space do not translate to other spaces. The space and the painting unite to give full meaning to the artistic expression: creativity and architecture thus go hand in hand.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, in his essay, "The Origin and Use of Images in India," examines the relationship between images and worship. Although he is not a Christian, his perspective echoes the Orthodox theologians' views regarding icons. Coomaraswamy draws parallels between Hindu and Christian liturgy, noting how Hindus expect to meet God in worship, where miraculous things can happen. He explains, "Similar miracles have been reported of Christian images; even the Christian church, like an Indian temple is a house dwelt in by God in a special sense, yet it is not regarded as his prison, nor do its walls confine his omnipresence."[115] He also argues that when worship and art converge in a sacred space, all the knowledge about the history of the art is irrelevant for the moment of adoration. Coomaraswamy writes, "From the standpoint of edification, the value of an image does not depend on its aesthetic qualities."[116]

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[114] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, ed., *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, rev. ed. (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), 39.

[115] Ibid., 128.

[116] Ibid., 131–132.

Richard Pilgrim, in "Religio-Aesthetic Tradition in Japan," highlights the link between the performing arts and religious worship in indigenous folk cultures, saying, "Visual, literary and performing arts are the stock in trade of the shaman."[117] Pilgrim further argues, "much of the Japanese aesthetic sensitivity and artistic tradition is at least grounded in…religious ritual."[118] Many cultures use the performing arts in a religious context, connecting them with ritual and space used for worship.

Lois Ibsen Al Faruqi, in her essay "An Islamic Perspective on Symbolism in the Arts: New Thoughts on Figural Representation," specifically examines Islamic art, but her discussion raises several important points for this study. Ibsen Al Faruqi briefly outlines three main strands of how people approach the meaning of art. She calls the first strand the humanistic view, and it includes all approaches which "deem art to be a statement about humanity or some aspect of human life."[119] The second is the naturalistic strand, which views "artistic meaning as an intuition of truth about the natural world."[120] Ibsen Al Faruqi calls the third strand, the transcendent view, which describes art as a "means of conveying an intuition about divinity."[121]

This transcendent understanding of art has significant implications for a discussion on liturgical aesthetics. Works of creativity, according to Ibsen Al Faruqi, give glimpses of a reality that transcend this present life and world. Art in worship, therefore, points toward the highest meaning and deepest understanding about reality. Furthermore,

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[117] Ibid., 148.

[118] Ibid., 149.

[119] Ibid., 165.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

Ibsen Al Faruqi delineates levels of meaning. She asserts that there are "three levels of symbolic statement" in a created work, "(1) the explicit, (2) the literally symbolic, and (3) the implicit."[122] Unpacking these layers of meaning is critical to understanding and critiquing liturgical art.

The first of these layers, the explicit, refers to specific concrete objects in the art which are immediately recognizable to the worshipper. Al Faruqi spells them out as "characters, objects, actions, scenes and motifs" which may be presented in any mode of visual art, from painting to sculpture and so on.[123] These subjects vary widely depending on their context, but serve the same purpose to communicate tangible information to the community of faith. The second layer, the literally symbolic, is subtler but still grounded in the clear intent of the artist. It makes use of figures, objects and scenes which "arouse in the mind of the initiated spectator a remembrance or an intuition of another object, figure or an idea that is conventionally associated by that culture with the sensory image."[124] These images becomes visual cues and clues to assist the worshiper to appropriate a deeper intellectual concept. The final layer, the implicit, is difficult to quantify, but refers to a deeper level of meaning that a worshipper reaches in the midst of contemplating the art in worship. Al Faruqi defines it this way: "Implicit symbolism includes those elements that are generally subsumed under the designation 'style,' as well as those that constitute artistic 'form.'"[125] Style refers to how the art is expressed and the

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[122] Ibid., 169.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 170.

manner in which it is presented. Form has to do with the general structure of the art. These two components combine to produce the implied meaning found in religious art.

Langdon Gilkey's essay, "Can Art Fill the Vacuum?" explores the role sacred art can play in people's ability to apprehend reality. He writes, "Human life is lived in and through symbols that shape and guide us in all we are and do…symbols of the sacred that permeates all. Works of art set these symbols into images; through them we can *see* ourselves and our world, possibly for the first time."[126]

This power of art to help humans recover their lost sight is a powerful justification for using it wisely and well in worship. A way liturgical art achieves this is to meet the worshiper in an event of infinite worth. Gilkey believes our knowledge-driven culture is too busy to appreciate beauty except as a means to an end. He says that art "creates immediate and experienced meaning."[127] Art can therefore turn an ordinary moment into an enhanced one, rich with beauty and truth. Gilkey also believes that art forces us to see the world in a different way. He calls this the "prophetic role" of art, where art speaks powerfully to the dehumanization of humanity and the brokenness of our world.[128] Finally, art has the power to show the best of humanity: what we can and should become. This transformative power makes art essential to the experience of worship.

John Dillenberger traces the history of how commissioned artists and the church interacted, in his essay, "Artists and Church Commissions: Rubin's *The Church at Assy* Revisited." Dillenberger describes the dearth of artistic creativity in most Protestant

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[126] Ibid., 191.

[127] Ibid., 188.

[128] Ibid., 190.

churches, saying, "Protestantism has lived so long without the visual that the loss of that human and spiritual resource is not even recognized as an issue."[129] He explains the limited legacy of liturgical creativity in Protestant circles, saying, "Protestant history has left the churches, either with no art at all, or with art as the illustration or confirmation of what was considered safely known."[130] Dillenberger concludes, "Pious artists produced banal works."[131]

Paul Tillich's essay, "Art and Ultimate Reality," brings a warning about the power of art as sacrament, "The religious danger of all sacramental religion is idolatry, the attempt to make a sacramentally consecrated reality into the divine itself…The artistic danger appears when things are used as mere symbols, losing their independent power of expression."[132] Tillich concludes, "religious art expresses religious symbols in artistic images"[133] and is thus vulnerable to two opposing dangers. The first is when the artistic form becomes more important than the religious substance. This abuse has likely led to seasons where churches resisted the use of art in worship. The other danger is when the religious substance uses works of poor quality to elicit devotion. Many churches that value craft and artistry likewise pull away from using art in this context. Tillich concludes, "The avoidance of both shortcomings is a most demanding task for religious artists."[134]

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[129] Ibid., 195.

[130] Ibid., 197

[131] Ibid., 199.

[132] Ibid., 224.

[133] Ibid., 233.

[134] Ibid., 234.

In *Earth Restored*, author John Barber calls for Christians to be more engaged with culture. Barber asserts that "the Church no longer encourages great art" and thus settles for a mediocre "clip-art…that fails to provide a vision of real beauty and therefore of transcendence."[135] He explores his view of what Christian art and artists should look like. Barber believes that the artist should inspire and arouse faith "with a vision of beauty that would otherwise remain inaccessible to us were it not for the presence of his work."[136] He believes that liturgical space should reflect this principle as well. Finally, Barber urges artists to "challenge people with the immeasurable truth of God," suggesting that this goal alone leads to great liturgical art.[137]

In their book, *Art and Worship,* Anne Dawtry and Christopher Irvine summarized their history of art by exploring liturgical aesthetics and liturgical art. They note liturgical trends in Protestant churches, such as placing greater emphasis on the written word and making the pulpit the focal point. The Catholic tradition, though open to art, was mired in centuries of conservatism. Over time, Dawtry and Irvine assert, artists began to lose connection to the church and drifted away from its life and worship, even until today.[138] Tellingly, one of their solutions to this divide is to bring more art into both the space and order for worship in creative and meaningful ways. They advocate such practices as making liturgical art and liturgical space complement each other and also using art to encourage prayer and meditation.[139] They explore all of the liturgy as a work of art—

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[135] John Barber, *Earth Restored* (Tain, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 166–167.

[136] Ibid., 172.

[137] Ibid., 180–181.

[138] Irvine, and Dawtry, *Art and Worship*, 33.

[139] Ibid., 50, 54, 67.

drama, song, story, symbol, and et cetera, concluding, "A liturgical celebration is itself a complex art form, of both divine and human making, and as such it is not surprising to see that a range of different artistic forms have been…utilized…in worship…It would be too restrictive and limiting to see them as mere decoration."[140]

William Dyrness' *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue* deals with both the history and liturgical use of art. He moves from a theological discussion of beauty into an explanation of images in the Bible towards a biblical aesthetic. Dyrness believes that Christians are a visual people since they live in a visual world replete with symbols. Dyrness argues that artists, even unbelieving ones, capture glimpses of "God's values" and even "echoes of his presence" that remain in creation.[141] Dyrness builds a theology of the arts starting with the concept of incarnation and glorification, Religious painting and icons can have meaning because of the incarnation of Jesus Christ in human flesh: "the material world is capable of expressing the infinite."[142] Glorification then becomes central as one contemplates the art, the worshiper is caught up in a glimpse of the new heaven and new earth will be like. Dyrness calls this, "a longing for glory."[143] Next he outlines the need to ground human creativity in the work of God as the Trinity. He summarizes, "Human creativity must be located, then, not in some general call to care for creation but within the call of the Spirit to glorify the Father through Jesus Christ."[144] Dyrness lastly speaks of a proper understanding of the new creation. Art should help

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[140] Ibid., 76.

[141] Dyrness, *Visual Faith*, 84–85.

[142] Ibid., 89.

[143] Ibid., 91.

[144] Ibid., 93.

people see the world in a new way, especially as it looks forward to the renewal of all creation. He writes, "good art is part of the process of uncovering the possibilities God has put in creation."[145] He then affirms liturgical art, saying, "In some mysterious sense, all art aspires to be worship."[146] Dyrness calls the church to renew liturgical art and creativity by engaging Christian artists to work directly in the worship space and activity of the local church. He asks in summary, "Why can't artists, musicians, and technicians participate in creating experiences of worship?" and then invites visual artists, dancers, singers, actors, pastors, and all talented people to join in the collaboration to God's ultimate glory.[147]

Hans Rookmaker, in his work, *Art Needs No Justification*, wrestles with art and worship. He affirms a place for art in worship and warns against idolatry. Rookmaker addresses how certain art forms look like decoration on a church building, but he argues that liturgical art and architecture can often work on multiple levels of apprehension, saying, "All levels of iconicity and of representational value are present. It is at the same time decorative and loaded with meaning."[148]

In his book, *Art and the Bible*, Francis Schaeffer applies his teaching from the Bible to aesthetics, and there are some implications for the liturgical realm. He calls for Christian art to be intelligible to the culture around it.[149] Further, although Schaeffer says

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[145] Ibid., 97.

[146] Ibid., 101.

[147] Ibid., 137–138.

[148] Rookmaker, *Art Needs No Justification*, 54.

[149] Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 75–76.

that some Christian artists may work in a liturgical setting, he challenges artists to apply their craft beyond the church.[150]

Gene Veith speaks of both history and liturgical aesthetics in his work, *State of the Arts*. He briefly examines the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant views on art in worship, noting that the Orthodox and Catholic traditions have liturgy filled with art and the Protestant tradition is typically much emptier. Veith notes the irony of extreme Calvinist churches in which he worshipped, "Its extreme lack of ornamentation spoke as eloquently as the profusion of art in a cathedral."[151] Veith offers ideas for bringing more art into Protestant worship. He points out that liturgies are all artistic to a degree, even if the congregation is unaware of its artistic position. Veith encourages churches to use art that does not solely exist for aesthetic contemplation but that enables worshippers to contemplate God more effectively.[152] Art in worship can enrich and challenge worshippers; indeed, Veith argues that art has the capability to present the gospel of Jesus.

Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Art in Action* pioneered the modern discussion on Christian aesthetics. Wolterstorff was one of first Christian theologians to craft a well-rounded and healthy Christian aesthetic. Wolterstorff points out how many Christians take for granted the flawed artistic worldview of Western culture, which he calls the "institution of high art," and which states that art exists only "for contemplation."[153] He

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[150] Ibid., 91–92.

[151] Veith, *State of the Arts*, 198.

[152] Ibid., 202.

[153] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Towards a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 67.

weaves the calling of creativity and art into the creation mandate to subdue and garden. Wolterstorff speaks directly of liturgical art's purpose beyond mere contemplation, arguing, "A hymn is a good hymn if it serves its purpose effectively and then in addition proves good and satisfying to use for this purpose."[154] Many Protestants truncate art to serving their purpose, but Wolterstorff believes that liturgical art is still art and must be good and satisfying. He emphasizes that liturgical art is always the "art of a community," since much of it involves the participation of many others rather than private contemplation.[155]

Bruce Benson, in his book, *Liturgy as a Way of Life,* also explores the connection between art and liturgy. He grounds his view of art in God's creativity and command, "Our God is a God of art. He commands it to be made."[156] Benson explores the artistic and improvisational nature of worship, saying, "churches…are always improvising, for liturgy is an event that happens anew each time it is incarnated."[157] He also explores how various parts of the liturgy are artistic in their essence, "Liturgical actions are not just add-ons. Instead, we perform the Gospel story each time we enact it…our worship is infused with the arts."[158] Therefore, Benson argues that the church must bridge artificial divide between art and real life. He reminds the church that the original meaning of the word 'liturgy' demanded people's ordinary lives as its context. Worship has become too

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[154] Ibid., 169–170.

[155] Ibid., 188.

[156] Bruce Ellis Benson, *Liturgy As a Way of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), preface, Kindle.

[157] Ibid., preface.

[158] Ibid., 102,.

distant from the ordinary lives of people. He comments, "It is not that 'art' needs to be utilized to make the service more vivid. Rather, the very things around which the service revolves are themselves artistic."[159]

Jeremy Begbie and Steven Guthrie edited a collection that addresses worship and art, *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology*. They examine the ubiquitous presence and key role music plays in the life and worship of Christians. They comment, "To this day, the vast majority of Christians sing or play instruments as part of their corporate encounter with God."[160] In the essay, "Faithful Feelings: Music and Emotion in Worship," Begbie attributes much of the church's failure to handle emotion well to fear, "The fear is that we will lose touch with reality…songs should be concerned with intellectually graspable truth, only secondarily (if at all), moving us."[161] Drawing on the principle that worship is in and through Christ, Begbie argues, "worship is an invitation to be re-humanized," including a faithful expression of emotion and body gestures.[162]

In "The Wisdom of Song," Guthrie argues that emotion should go hand in hand with wisdom when it comes to liturgical music. He writes, "Music (I am arguing) strengthens not only the 'heart' of the church, but its 'mind' as well."[163] Guthrie then

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[159] Ibid., 120.

[160] Jeremy Begbie, and Steven Guthrie, *Resonant Witness: Conversations Between Music and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), introduction, Kindle.

[161] Ibid., chap. 13.

[162] Ibid., chap. 13.

[163] Ibid., chap. 15.

works through several New Testament passages, especially from Ephesians and Colossians, to build his argument.

Congregational singing is an act of spiritual formation for the worshippers as God grows them in grace and wisdom through worship. He calls it an "enactment and exposition of the church's unity"[164] Guthrie notes how many writers fail to recognize the apostle Paul's intent when he speaks of singing in a seemingly random location in his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches. Guthrie believes that the theme of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the purpose behind these calls to sing. He boldly concludes that, "Singing and filling of the Holy Spirit are bound together grammatically."[165] There is a strong connection between song and the work of the Spirit in this passage. Guthrie further comments that this singing and worship is not just directed towards God, but towards each other. He says, "Singing and worship of the early church was two dimensional—addressed both to God and to one another; meant for both the worship of Christ and for the continuing instruction of God's people."[166] Another theme present is the unity of the church. Guthrie states, "The multi-ethnic church of Jesus Christ in all its diverse unity is the 'wisdom of God' revealed by the Spirit."[167] The church thus reflects the new humanity given by Jesus well when it worships as a unified community.

In *A Primer on Christian Worship*, Dyrness tackles a wide range of issues related to worship and liturgy's aesthetics. He believes that spiritual formation is the foundation for aesthetic worship; what people sense and feel forms them as much as what they think.

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[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

In worship, sensing, feeling, and thinking come together in balance. Dyrness explains, "in worship we enter into a deeper awareness and celebration of God's presence as much aesthetically as cognitively."[168] Christians should thus participate in worship first before trying to explain it. Dyrness continues, "We have no access to God apart from the particular forms or styles of worship in which we practice the presence of God." He argues that worship is visual and has elements of a performance; thus, it should be of the highest biblical character and of the highest aesthetic quality. Dyrness expounds, "The better question is not whether we should use visual elements, but whether our worship has a splendor that attracts or diverts our feelings toward the Gospel."[169]

Philip Ryken, in his short work, *Art for God's Sake*, outlines some of the barriers to creating a healthy aesthetic for worship. He helpfully describes some of the objections from both artists and from Christians in churches who often misunderstand or reject liturgical art. them. Ryken believes all churches use art, even if they are unaware of it. Ryken explains that often churches "settle for something that is functional, but not beautiful…tacky artwork of poor quality that appeals to low tastes."[170] Broadening his argument to include other forms of performing or fine arts, Ryken calls the church to use the arts broadly and well, saying, "We are not limited to crosses and flannel graphs, or praise choruses and evangelistic skits. These simple forms may have their place in the life of the church, but God wants all of the arts to flourish."[171]

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[168] William Dyrness, *A Primer on Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), chap. 7, sect. 1, Kindle.

[169] Ibid., chap. 7, sect. 1.

[170] Philip Ryken, *Art for God's Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), chap. 1.

[171] Ibid., chap. 3.

James K. A. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies): Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* argues that humans are creatures of desire and imagination. He says, "We are what we love, and our love is shaped, primed, and aimed by liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and aim our heart at certain ends."[172] He comments that people are what they worship, "What are these Christians doing? What vision of the kingdom is embedded in their practices…of worship? What do these people love?"[173] Creativity and artistry that points worshippers toward the kingdom of God must saturate Christian worship.

Creativity and Imagination

Literature that fleshes out a Christian perspective and practice on creativity and imagination will be surveyed because Christians, who believe in an infinitely creative God, have much to contribute to artistic discussions. Jerram Barrs in *Echoes of Eden* traces the roots of human creativity back to God's ultimate creative work. He challenges the church to recover a full-orbed delight in creation,

> Christians have been tempted to devalue the richness of creation—and therefore the arts—as if it would be somehow more "spiritual" to live a life devoid of beauty, of good things, of music, of literature, of painting, of color, and so forth. It is as if bare simplicity, barrenness and even ugliness were somehow more pleasing to God.[174]

It is no less than heresy, Barrs argues, to suppress creativity in humanity and the world. Barrs expounds upon the theological overtones of the Garden of Eden, "1) Eden in its original glory; 2) Eden that is lost to us; and (3) the promise that Eden will be

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[172] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies): Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 39, Kindle.

[173] Ibid., 155.

[174] Jerram Barrs, *Echoes of Eden* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2013), chap. 1, Kindle.

restored."[175] Barrs also affirms that creativity and glimpses of Eden are to be found universally in all cultures and types of creative expression, regardless of the sub-creator's faith perspective.

Barrs examines the relationship between C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as a model for understanding more about these glimpses of Eden in creativity and art. He pays particular attention to the circumstances surrounding Lewis' conversion to Christianity and Tolkien's significant role in that drama. This encounter is very relevant to this study for several reasons. First, Lewis himself became a believer in Christ partially through his reading and deep passion for Norse mythology, so is thus an excellent case study for examining the impact of symbolic truth on the faith of an individual. Next, the friendship between the two men was essential, as it was Tolkien's gentle but firm insistence that myths and stories are not completely false, but contain glimpses of truth about God and God's world. Tolkien patiently wrestled with Lewis over this as he longed to see his best friend share his faith. Finally, the result of this encounter was Lewis converting completely to Christianity. His newfound faith and zeal spurred him to write many stories and fairy tales, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which contained clear echoes of the Garden of Eden and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Barrs comments, "Lewis has filled this story with echoes of Eden...His desire was to tell the Christian story for those who are not familiar with it, or for those who can no longer hear it because they have heard it so often that it no longer touches them."[176]

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[175] Ibid., chap. 2.

[176] Ibid., chap. 6.

Furthermore, Barrs then examines Tolkien's epic story, *The Lord of the Rings*, through Eden's lens. These strengths are models of best practices for writers and other creative people. One is Tolkien's excellence of craftsmanship. Tolkien labored over every word of his story and the care shows. Many are drawn to read the epic numerous times because of its high quality. Another strength is Tolkien's ability to write compellingly about brokenness. All of the characters in the story suffer and pay a significant cost because of evil and sin. Finally, Barrs notes that Tolkien is able to weave in beautiful redemption even in the midst of suffering. He comments,

> It is the…longing for redemption that touch people deep within the hidden recesses of their hearts. Paradise once owned, paradise lost, and paradise that might be regained—these are the memories and longings present in every moment of the story. They are the truths hidden in every heart…and they speak to every reader of the books and every viewer of the films [177]

J. K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* novels, the playwright William Shakespeare, and storyteller Jane Austen round out the excellent literary journey and provide warm and nuanced reflections on glimpses of grace in works of these writers who have brought hope and joy to many. Many Christians have read Rowling, Shakespeare and Austen: but their works are not as easily unpacked with obvious Christian themes. Barrs helps make these connections and gives believers more confidence both to see truth in created stories and craft new stories which have the same echoes of Eden.

The collection of essays, *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts* views the beauty and truth of the gospel through the eyes of Christians who practice or study different forms of performing and creative art. Jeremy Begbie, the collection's editor, asserts that art can never displace the supreme mystery of Jesus' incarnation, rather that

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[177] Ibid., chap. 7.

"the mystery, through the arts, can disclose itself more fully in all its wonder and uniqueness."[178] The opening essay by Trevor Hart, "Through the Arts: Hearing, Seeing and Touching the Truth," articulates the paradox that, people universally enjoy and utilize works of art, "imagination in general and 'creative' or artistic imagination in particular has often been treated with great suspicion."[179] Hart corrects this mistaken view by examining the creative activity of God, particularly in the incarnation of Jesus. He asserts that Christians may now pursue "responsible creativity" because the incarnation is "an active sharing in (albeit in a distinct and entirely subordinate creaturely mode) God's own creative activity within the cosmos."[180]

The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue by Bruce Benson explores creativity from a musician's perspective. Benson views musical creativity as a three-part conversation involving those who create, play, and listen to the music. He writes, "I want to suggest an improvisational model of music, one that depicts composers, performers, and listeners as partners in dialogue…no one partner has excessive control."[181] Benson describes in great detail the creative and aesthetic distinctions among many levels of improvisation, concluding his opening chapter with this summation, "Both improvisation and improvement work with the given in order to 'create' something new."[182] Benson also

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[178] Jeremy Begbie, ed., *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), intro., Kindle.

[179] Ibid., chap. 1.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Bruce Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pref., Kindle.

[182] Ibid., chap. 1.

explores a nuanced distinction between "creation" and "discovery"[183] of a previously unknown work. Benson's perspective has similarities to how J.R.R. Tolkien viewed his own sub-creation as inherently discovering something that was already, somehow, in existence. Using the writings of philosophers and musicians as a springboard for dialogue and correction, Benson unpacks his thesis of improvisation at many practical levels.

One aspect of this is to build community among those who create and those who appreciate. He writes that his model fosters "a more balanced view of the relationship between artist and community—one in which it is actually possible to see the artist as an integral part of the community."[184] Next, he outlines the significant role performers have in bringing music to life. In essence, "the performer must choose" how to present a particular work: this choice has creative worth.[185] He later concisely summarizes his view of improvisation:

> First, the work becomes a means to the end of making music, not an end in itself. Second, the work…cannot be seen as autonomous or detached…It is ever in motion and constantly in need of care and infusions of new life to keep it alive. Third, if performers are essentially improvisers, then authorship becomes more complex. What comes into being in (music) is something that composer, performer, and listener all have a hand in creating.[186]

His concluding remarks point back to the fundamental truth that God's grace fuels any human creative or sub-creative activity. Each of the musical participants—the listener, the performer, and the composer—are all invited guests in the "game"[187] that has rules to

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[183] Ibid., chap. 2.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid., chap. 3.

[186] Ibid., chap. 4.

[187] Ibid., chap. 5.

which none of them can lay claim. He writes, "For the game—the very performance tradition of music making itself—is a gift that none of them own and no one player can control. It belongs to all of them and none of them. Nothing more, nothing less."[188]

Wolterstorff believes that the creative work produced should be rich, deep, and full. Referencing J.R.R. Tolkien's principles of sub-creation, Wolterstorff says that artists should create a world where their art is real.[189] Real art leads to a verisimilitude in the created work that draws the audience into the art in a powerful way.

Philip Ryken lays the foundational question for human creativity: to whom is the work is directed? As with all of human life, art should be "true of everything we create: it should all be for God's glory."[190] Ryken adds a redemptive thrust that acknowledges the brokenness and sin that permeates human lives and their art this side of heaven. He says, "By his grace, one day the best of artists will take everything that has been disfigured by our depravity and transform us into people of beauty who will be a joy forever."[191]

Performing artist Steve Turner has written on the subject of Christian creativity. Turner's book, *Imagine*, takes his experiences as a Christian artist and weaves them into a treatise on creativity and the arts that would be useful and compelling to many different types of artists. Turner explains one of the key creative difficulties that Christian artists face in the current evangelical church climate. Many Christian art consumers want art that seems overtly Christian. However, Turner challenges this mentality and argues that what makes a work Christian is not necessarily blunt, surface criteria. He expounds, "The

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[188] Ibid.

[189] Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Towards a Christian Aesthetic*, 122.

[190] Ryken, *Art for God's Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts*, 283.

[191] Ibid., 328.

truly Christian worldview is far more pervasive and often less obviously religious than people imagine."[192] In his book on contemporary America, *Popcultured: Thinking Christianly About Style, Media and Entertainment*, Turner identifies how the church has subtly embraced the popular culture that surrounds it. He calls for creative Christians to participate, exhorting, "We need popular culture that is transformed by an alternative view."[193]

Brian Godawa, author and film writer, has some useful thoughts on creativity, particularly as applied to storytelling, in his work, *Myth Became Fact: Storytelling, Imagination & Apologetics in the Bible*. Godawa explores writers who have creatively captured myths from their culture and re-crafted, laden with Christian themes. Two examples he mentions are J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. Godawa holds them up as prime examples of this subversive storytelling and comments that the present day "requires enterprising believers to retell the narratives of our culture with bold, fresh perspectives."[194] Godawa also looks at Acts 17 in great detail to analyze Paul's subversive approach—using Greek stories when presenting the gospel.[195]

In another book, *Word Pictures,* Godawa thoroughly explores Christian creativity as related to storytelling. Godawa asserts that he and many other Christians in the late

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[192] Steve Turner, *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 49.

[193] Steve Turner, *Popcultured: Thinking Christianly About Style, Media and Entertainment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 229.

[194] Brian Godawa, *Myth Became Fact: Storytelling, Imagination & Apologetics in the Bible* (Los Angeles: Embedded Pictures Publishing, 2012), 33, Kindle.

[195] Ibid., 117.

twentieth century were very "word-oriented" or "logocentric"[196] at the expense of emotion and aesthetic expression. He says, "This dichotomy between rationality and imagination has been reflected in the broader Christian culture."[197] Godawa then seeks to balance the equation, encouraging Christians to take hold of the creative and artistic, "God considers beauty to be an integral part of our relationship with him."[198] He also explores examples where the Bible uses drama, theatre, parable, visual art, humor, and sarcasm.

One helpful illustration from Godawa's exploration relates to theater. He is convinced that understanding theology is more than simply checking off a list of doctrines one has correct. Since God's revelation to the world is mostly in an artistic and symbolic mode, one must enter that dramatic realm to fully apprehend God. He says,

> Theology is not an intellectual exercise…It is a theatrical performance, where Christians participate in God's story of redemption. In this sense, our understanding of God is not so much theology (the study of God's Word), but theo-drama (the performance of God's Word).[199]

Since God speaks both through rational proposition and creative symbols, the church should promote all forms of truth and beauty as well.

He finishes with a useful summary of several objections commonly raised to creativity and artistic expression in the church and provides biblical answers to each one. One such error is the propensity to interpret the Bible as if every world was a literal scientific proposition. Godawa balances this by pointing out the rich literary material that

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[196] Brian Godawa, *Word Pictures: Knowing God Through Story & Imagination* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), chap. 1, Kindle.

[197] Ibid., chap. 1.

[198] Ibid., chap. 3.

[199] Ibid.

is present in Scripture. He writes, "There is simply no wooden or absolute hermeneutic of 'literalness' or 'figurativeness' that can do justice to the text. Context helps determine usage, but even context can be difficult to decipher. Literary interpretation of the Bible is not so much a science as an art."[200] Another common struggle in churches is limiting what is considered to be actual preaching to a 45-minute academic style lecture with one speaker talking to the audience sitting around him in seats. This is an overemphasis on the word at the expense of image. Godawa explains, "Drama in such contexts is sometimes considered to be sacrilegious. Many would not even begin to fathom the notion that art outside this church context could be a legitimate form of preaching…Too bad for them, because God does."[201] Yet another issue in many Protestant churches is the lingering bias against art and symbol that is part of the negative legacy of the Protestant Reformation. Godawa points out that Protestant Christians often default to these negative views on art based on fear of idolatry. He writes, "The Reformation suspicion of images soon bled into the prevailing secular culture to include many forms of imagination and creativity."[202] Another mistake is a failure to fully embrace the model of radical incarnation that Christ displayed to the world. Jesus is now fully incarnate in the narrative of humanity. Entering into a story, song or painting is a type of incarnation. Godawa therefore argues, "Incarnation is one of the most powerful means of communication."[203] Godawa believes that a healthy use of art and symbol will help Christians apprehend God more deeply and also equip the church to speak more effectively to a postmodern world.

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[200] Ibid., chap. 2.

[201] Ibid., chap. 3.

[202] Ibid., chap. 4.

[203] Ibid., chap. 5.

In their book, *Performing the Sacred,* theologian Todd Johnson and theatre artist Dale Savidge mold their informal conversations about acting and belief into a full-orbed discussion of theology and theatre. They propose that, foundationally, theatre has theological content, and that it "uniquely reflects the Imago Dei, the image of God imbued in humanity."[204] They then present three main themes. First, theatre captures the incarnate nature of God in Christ. Second, theatre is communal, with live actors and live audience members. Finally, theatre "speaks of the presence of God transforming the world through nature and grace."[205] They also note the liturgical side of theatrical creativity, saying, "Playwrights will begin to recognize…how tightly woven their calling and craft is to the very essence to the Creator and to their own, sometimes mysterious, creative impulses. Some may find their work an offering of worship."[206]

Leland Ryken, professor at Wheaton College, has written several books on the arts from a Christian perspective. One from early in his career, *The Liberated Imagination*, calls Christians to value and practice the arts in their lives. Ryken contends that Jesus and the biblical authors were not afraid to use literary forms to express religious truth. Ryken asserts, "They operated on the literary premise that the imagination serves as a powerful vehicle for expressing truth."[207] For example, Jesus relied on parables, which are inherently metaphorical. Even the most theological portions of scripture still tend to use a mixture of symbol and abstraction. Because God is a creative

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[204] Todd Johnson and Dale Savidge, *Performing the Sacred: Theology & Theatre in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 11, Kindle.

[205] Ibid., 109.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Leland Ryken, *The Liberated Imagination* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989), 42.

God and humans are made in his image, "the arts belong to the human imagination, and that imagination is essentially creative."[208] Ryken also believed that the imagination was part of God's created reality. Imagination has as much validity as the physical world. He elaborates, paying tribute to J. R. R. Tolkien, asserting that the stories humans write, though perhaps fantastic on the surface, actually deal with the stuff of real life.[209]

Ryken also wrote *The Christian Imagination*, a companion to his earlier book, where other contributors build on the foundation he laid. Ryken references work by George MacDonald, who had a powerful influence on C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, that calls Christians to cultivate their desire for transforming beauty. MacDonald writes, "the way to develop the aesthetic faculty is to have constantly before our eyes…some work of the best attainable art. This will teach us to refuse the evil and choose the good."[210] Ryken also speaks of the creative views of hymn writer Timothy Dudley-Smith who is convinced that liturgical art should be of benefit to the worshippers. Dudley-Smith writes, "A hymn also needs to be a work of art. But it must also be a vehicle for the congregational worship of God, expressing for the worshipers' sentiments which they can honestly acknowledge and share…and fitter words for their devotion and aspiration than they might find themselves."[211] Ryken uses material from apologist and author G. K. Chesterton to hold up Christianity as the place where myth and philosophy exist in harmony. Chesterton said, "The rivers of mythology and philosophy run parallel and do

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[208] Ibid., 65.

[209] Ibid., 119.

[210] Leland Ryken, *The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature & Writing* (Colorado Springs, CO: Shaw Books, 2002), Location 1845. Kindle.

[211] Ibid., Location 6758.

not mingle till they meet in the sea of Christendom. Mythology, then, sought God through the imagination; or sought truth by means of beauty."[212] Finally, Ryken also mentions work by Clyde Kilby, a professor and founder of the Marion Wade Research Center, which houses research material on Owen Barfield, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, George MacDonald, Dorothy L. Sayers, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. Kilby criticized the evangelical church of his day and its hostile attitude toward imagination. Kilby asserts, "The Bible is an imaginative book. There is no literature without imagination—strong, honest, often daring imagination…God did not, as so many of us, think that the esthetic was an incidental for leisure time." Kilby believes that God intentionally makes his world and words beautiful, thus challenging people to make aesthetics part of their creative process. Kilby further observed,

> The people who spend the most time with the Bible are in large numbers the foes of art and the sworn foes of imagination. And I grow in the feeling that these people have quite an astonishing indifference to the created world. Evangelicals hear the great "I am" of God, but they are far less aware of the "I am" of his handiwork. Furthermore, when evangelicals dare attempt any art form it is generally done badly.[213]

He felt it was the height of irony that those who claim to know Jesus personally had such a low view of creative beauty—especially since Jesus constantly modeled beauty in his life and ministry.

Playwright and author, Dorothy Sayers, pioneered the conversation about creativity from a theological perspective. In her rich and influential work, *Mind of the Maker*, Sayers sets forth a uniquely Trinitarian theology of humans making and using the

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[212] Ibid., Location 6252.

[213] Ibid., Location 4778.

words idea, energy, and power. Quoting the speech of St. Michael from in her own play "The Zeal of Thy House," she comments,

> For every work (or act) of creation is threefold, an earthly trinity to match the heavenly. First, there is the Creative Idea…beholding the whole work complete at once…this is the image of the Father. Second, there is the Creative Energy (or Activity) begotten of that idea, working…with sweat and passion…and this is the image of the Word. Third, there is the Creative Power, the meaning if the work and its response in the lively soul: and this is the image of the indwelling Spirit. And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without the other: and this is the image of the Trinity.[214]

Examining the opening chapter of Genesis, Sayers notes that readers primarily learn that God created the cosmos. Indeed, she believes that creation is the primary way in which humans image their creator, "The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make things."[215] As Sayers examines the creative idea, she flirts with the possibility that humans are almost on the same level with God regarding a work of art's original inspiration. Humans do not simply rearrange existing matter to create, "The components of the material world are fixed; those of the world of imagination increase by a continuous and irreversible process…this represents the nearest approach we experience to creation out of nothing."[216]

Sayers believes that knowing the writer on a personal level will not necessarily help a reader understand the work. Indeed, she felt that the works themselves should stand on their own, arguing, "The chosen way of revelation is through his works…The writer himself is not aware of (the Idea) except through the Energy and all he can

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[214] Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (New York: HarperOne, n.d.), 37–38.

[215] Ibid., 22.

[216] Ibid., 29.

communicate to us is the Energy made manifest in Power."[217] Sayers deeply respects the creative media. She believes that artists should be in harmony with materials and medium for their work rather than attempting to overpower it or break free of its perceived weaknesses. She writes, "The business of the creator is not to escape from his material medium or to bully it, but to serve it; but to serve it he must love it. If he does so, he will realize that its service is perfect freedom."[218]

Sayers explores the question of good and evil in human creativity, making the bold statement that "no creative Idea can be wholly destructive: some creation will be produced together with the destruction; and it is the work of the creative mind to see that the destruction is redeemed."[219] She strongly endorses the remaining image of God in fallen humanity, allowing no people or their works are completely and irrevocably devoid of the creator's divine stamp. The glimpse may be distorted, suppressed, broken, and bent. Yet, the image of God remains, and the gospel of grace can reach any artist or art form.

Sayers speaks to how non-artists should relate to creativity. She asserts that being creative is a fundamental part of being human. Denying creativity does irreparable harm, "If we confine the average man and woman to uncreative activities and an uncreative outlook, we (do) violence to the very structure of our being."[220]

In her article, "Playwrights Are Not Evangelists," Sayers specifically applies her theological framework to the theatre world. She boldly asserts that the Christian believer

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[217] Ibid., 57.

[218] Ibid., 66.

[219] Ibid., 112.

[220] Ibid., 185.

must strive to be an excellent playwright and craft excellent plays instead of thinking about converting the masses to faith. She writes, "It is his business not to save souls but to write good plays. Should he forget this fact, he will lose his professional integrity, and with it all his power—including his power to preach the Gospel."[221] Ironically, she believed that once a writer forgot their true purpose, they would no longer be able to share the gospel with authenticity.

C. S. Lewis's works are central to a Christian understanding of creativity. His book, *Miracles*, helpfully explores myth and stories from the Bible. Lewis defends God's concrete and individual nature as the source of all human activity, creative and otherwise. Lewis illustrates, noting how the abstract concept of meter needs the concrete words of the poet in order to form a poem. Lewis argues, "if anything is to exist at all, then the Original Thing must be, not a principle nor a generality…but an utterly concrete fact." [222]

In his collection *On Stories*, Lewis gives insight into writing and creativity, particularly the essay, "On Criticism." Lewis links liturgy and literature as he makes a strong case for using story as a means of connection with God. He writes, "Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality…Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do."[223]

Lewis explores divine creativity as the ultimate source of human creativity in *The Magician's Nephew*, a book in the Narnia series. Digory, Polly, and the other characters

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[221] Dorothy Sayers, "Playwrights Are Not Evangelists," *World Theatre* 5 (1956): 61.

[222] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Collier Books, 1947), 133ff.

[223] C. S. Lewis, *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1982), 127ff.

witness Aslan, a divine lion who allegorizes Christ, singing Narnia into being. Showing his divine power, Aslan creates this new cosmos solely from his rich and infinite imagination. Tellingly, this primary creation transforms all the characters in the story. Those who are enslaved to sin and evil hate the voice or wither away; those whose hearts are humble and open resonate in wonder at the beauty around them, becoming nobler and better people.[224] Later in the book, Aslan calls the Narnian creatures to think, speak, and know as they take up their stewardship and mastery of the new creation. Aslan calls them to become new creatures who can make new things under his authority. Aslan encourages them to make new works of art, saying, "Laugh and fear not, creatures. Now that you are no longer dumb and witless, you need not always be grave. For jokes as well as justice come in with speech."[225]

In the final book of the Narnia series, *The Last Battle*, Lewis nevertheless weaves several principles into the story's fabric that have relevance to creativity. First, in an aside, Lewis points out that, in Narnia, one's best clothes are also the most comfortable. Artisanship and artistry are unified perfectly, "They knew how to make things that felt beautiful as well as looking beautiful." As Peter and the other characters examine the new Narnia, representing the new heavens and the new earth, they initially hesitate because the splendor and plenty overwhelmed their senses. Peter correctly realizes that, in the new order, human desires and imagination can no longer go astray into evil. He comments, "I've a feeling we've got to the country where everything is allowed."[226] All

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[224] C. S. Lewis, *The Magicians Nephew*, The Chronicles of Narnia (London: HarperCollins, 1955), 116ff, Kindle.

[225] Ibid., 140.

[226] C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, The Chronicles of Narnia (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 167, 171.

human creativity is now permissible in a way that was impossible in the previous, mortal life. In the book's final scenes, the characters come face to face with Aslan and realize that they are entering into truly real life for the first time. Lewis implies that human craft and creativity will have a place in this new world. He points out that Cair Paravel, the palace where the kings and queens lived, was present in its true form. Likewise, Lewis mentions that the inner garden had solid walls, majestic thrones, dazzling attire, and other works of craftsmanship, echoing the idea that human creative work shall still continue. Indeed, Jewel the Unicorn, one of the Narnian nobles, perfectly summarizes, "I have come home at last! This is my real country! This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now."[227]

One of Lewis' most provocative works of fiction is *The Great Divorce*. Lewis treats many theological ideas in the book, including a compelling dialogue about creativity. The narrator, an inhabitant of hell, observes an interaction between one of the "Solid People," an artist who now resides in heaven, and another ghost from hell, a famous painter in his earthly life. The ghostly painter looks around and expresses a desire to paint the amazing heavenly country which surrounds them. Strangely, the solid spirit quickly discourages the other from even thinking about that and invites him simply to look around the landscape. The solid spirit elaborates that human creativity exists to point others to a greater and more beautiful reality that transcends the physical world. He says,

> When you painted on earth—at least in your earlier days—it was because you caught glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape. The success of your painting was that it enabled others to see the glimpses too…But there is no good *telling* us about this country, for we see it…better than you do.[228]

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[227] Ibid., 212.

[228] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (London: HarperCollins, 1946), 95, Kindle.

Though this statement at first sounds shocking, the heavenly artist goes on to say that people will definitively paint and sub-create in heaven. The ghost must give up his pride and arrogance and come into heaven on God's terms of mercy. Indeed, once artists are right with God, they can then use their creative talents and gifts to their fullest purpose. The solid spirit explains that once the ghost grows into a real person and leaves the flimsy existence of hell behind, the artist will see certain things more clearly than anyone else in heaven and desire to tell the others about them.

The solid spirit then admits that creative people must battle the temptation to love the works of their hands more than the giver of the gifts. Lewis describes the dark side of the gift of creativity, "Every poet and musician and artist, but for Grace, is drawn away from love of the thing he tells, to love of the telling till, down in Deep Hell, they cannot be interested in God at all but only in what they say about Him."[229] This perverted side of creativity leads ultimately to self-worship and contemplation of one's own reputation. Indeed, people must completely abandon themselves in order to enter heaven. The solid spirit explains that each person must be bathed in a river of forgetfulness and renounce any proprietary rights over their works. Only then, can they enjoy their works and the works of others as they should, "without pride and without modesty." Finally, the heavenly artist bursts one last bubble of earthly pride by closing the conversation with the self-deprecating comment that everyone still alive on earth has already forgotten both of them and their paintings.[230] Apart from God's grace, Lewis says, all works of human

[229] Ibid., 98.

[230] Ibid., 99–100.

creativity will crumble into dust. Only in heaven, in real life, does art and the artist find true fulfillment and purpose.

Theologian Richard Mouw gives crucial insight into developing a Christian view of creativity and worship. In his book, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*, he aims to inspire wonder and anticipation at "the vision of an Eternal City in which the patterns and products of our present cultural lives are transformed, and in which a multitude that no human being can number is gathered from the tribes and nations of the earth to sing the Lamb's praises."[231] Mouw gives more depth and clarity to Revelation's glimpses into the heavenly city by expositing and applying Isaiah 66. He defines the heavenly city as "a place where God's redemptive purposes for his creation will be realized."[232] Mouw also believes that refined and redeemed human creativity will be a part of the heavenly city and thus in the current age as well. Since the days of Adam and Eve, God has commanded his people to fill the earth, "by the broader patterns of their interactions with nature and with each other. They would bring order to the Garden."[233] Human beings thus add to what God originally created. Even though this creative work is tainted with sin and distorted with brokenness, God has not abandoned his creation, "the earth's 'filling' still belongs to him."[234] Another key point Mouw raises has to do with understanding the balance between two seemingly opposite poles of God's judgment: annihilation and cleansing. He asserts that the presence of created things

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[231] Richard Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), x.

[232] Ibid., 19.

[233] Ibid., 34.

[234] Ibid., 36.

currently used for evil, such as the ships of Tarshish mentioned in Isaiah, calls for a complex but clear understanding of divine judgment. The evil and sin will be purged, but in a process of transformation for proper use, rather than for destruction. He says, "It is not the camels or the ships or the gold or the lumber that will be destroyed…Rather, it is the rebellious uses…which seem under present conditions to be inextricably intertwined with these entities…There must be a healing of the wealth of the nations."[235] Moreover, Mouw points out that a Christian's theology of the afterlife should be translated into life on this earth, saying, "our belief in heaven can give us no good excuse for inaction here and now. We must work diligently for justice and peace and righteousness."[236] One of the most powerful ways in which God brings about these characteristics is by pouring out his healing mercy on the nations and making a place for them in the world to come, says Mouw, "Isaiah pictures the Holy City as a meeting-place for the nations of the earth."[237] This gathering of the nations in the new eternal city is not without purpose. Mouw asserts that this new people comprised of individuals from every nation will function as political and religious leaders, thus becoming a gloriously transformed worshipping community, "The citizens of this city will be given golden crowns and purified robes so that all may participate in the everlasting rule of the saints as kings and priests."[238] The fact that the future heavenly people will be multinational also has great significance for present worship. God's work of "gathering-in, which continues to occur today, is an important preparation for the appearance of the Eternal City, where the full splendor of the nations

[235] Ibid., 301.

[236] Ibid., 44.

[237] Ibid., 73.

[238] Ibid., 80.

will be received into God's commonwealth."[239] Indeed, Mouw elaborates that "the Christian community ought to function as a model of, a pointer to, what life will be like in the Eternal City of God. The church must be, here and now, a place into which the peoples of the earth are being gathered for new life."[240] Ultimately, Mouw calls believers to a new and profound sense of awe, "our response to these visions of the Heavenly City will be woefully inadequate if that do not bring us to our knees in worship and honor of the Lamb of God, before whose light all other sources of illumination grow dim."[241] The themes of community, creativity, and charity are thus set forth as essential parts of worship now because they are essential parts of worship in the future. Mouw's ground his argument in Hebrews 13, "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."[242] Mouw pictures worship that inseparably contains love, beauty, and mercy to those who share within it.

One of the most significant authors who wrote on Christian creativity is J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien wrote a lecture, "On Fairy-Stories," and companion short story, "Leaf by Niggle" that capture the heart of his views as a creative believer. "On Fairy-Stories" was first composed for the Andrew Lang Lecture at University of St. Andrews in 1938 and originally revised for publication in 1947 in a collection entitled *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*. Tolkien composed this essay in

[239] Ibid., 87.

[240] Ibid., 92.

[241] Ibid., 117.

[242] Heb. 13:14–16.

the midst of his struggle to complete *The Lord of the Rings*, a process that would occupy him from 1937 until its publication in 1954. As Tolkien set out on this monumental undertaking that would cost him great time, talent, and labor, he wrestled with whether or not he was justified in pursuing this work.

As a devout Christian, he had to ask whether or not God would approve of him telling this story. Would he be better off writing evangelistic books and popular expositions of Christian theology like his friend C. S. Lewis? England's slide into a "new Paganism" alarmed Tolkien. Could a mere children's story be of any use in turning the tide? Work on his novel slowed as he agonized over the answers. Eventually, his soul-searching led him to write "On Fairy Stories" and "Leaf by Niggle," in which he set forth a rationale and defense for storytelling as a legitimate use of the creator's gifts. Tolkien further thought storytelling could accomplish something greater, as literary scholar Tom Shippey remarks, "Maybe his story could be an *evangelica praeparatio*: a clearing of the ground for the good seed of the Gospel. He knew his own country was falling back to heathenism again, and while mere professorial preaching would make no difference a story might."[243] In other words, Tolkien came to believe that the story could present the great truths of Christianity through art and stir the hearers' hearts and imaginations, moving them toward redemption. Readers could thus hear echoes of the gospel's great story in human stories told this side of heaven.

In "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien comments that there are hints of a world that is beyond the present age, a glimpse of "Faerie: the Perilous Realm itself."[244] Tolkien

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[243] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2003), 209.

[244] Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*, 322–323.

describes how these stories also seek to satisfy certain "primordial human desires," which he lists as surveying the depths of space and time and having communion with other living things.[245] Furthermore, he describes how humans become makers of things outside themselves and that are new, at least to others. Tolkien introduces the concept of sub-creation, where humans, in the image of God the ultimate creator, use their gifts, talents, imagination, and labor to craft art.[246] He continues to explore these concepts and also touches on the related realms of Myth and Fantasy. Tolkien believes that when these types of art are created and crafted well (which takes immense labor and cost) they produce what he calls "narrative art: story-making in its primary and most potent mode."[247]

Tolkien closes the essay by exploring the results of a good story for the reader or hearer. He classifies good stories with the following categories. Recovery stories include renewal of sight and of health. Escape stories encompass breaking free of the evil of the fallen world. Consolation stories provide the supreme "happy ending," which all fairy tales must have. In Tolkien's eyes, this consolation should also hint at the great escape from death, and he coins the word Eucatastrophe, a disaster of amazing good, to describe this theme.[248] Tying in the gospel, Tolkien asserts that every creator wants to be a real maker, drawing on ultimate reality. This can happen when the story gives a "gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world."[249] God redeems the world and people's works by

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[245] Ibid., 326.

[246] Ibid., 336.

[247] Ibid., 364.

[248] Ibid., 384.

[249] Ibid., 387.

the power of Christ's gospel, Tolkien concludes, "But this story has entered History…The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the Incarnation. The story begins and ends in joy."[250]

In the companion short story, "Leaf by Niggle," Tolkien expresses some of his deepest struggles and hopes as a Christian sub-creator. In this tale, which is likely both autobiographical and allegorical, Tolkien sets forth the astounding theme that works of human creativity will somehow be purified, redeemed, and incorporated into the new heavens and the new earth.[251] Through the main character, a frustrated painter named Niggle and his unfriendly neighbor, Parish, Tolkien explores what happens when, by grace, human art is taken up into glory. For example, Niggle and Parish are talking after death, and they remember how, on earth, they did not clearly see what Niggle's creative imagination. Parish comments that Niggle's paintings look far grander and more beautiful in heaven. A man tells them that they only saw a glimpse back in the old world, "but you might have caught the glimpse if you had ever thought it worthwhile to try."[252] Niggle's painting and Parish's craft welcome those who arrive to the new heavens and the new earth for the first time.[253]

The Silmarillion, a tale of the mythology behind *Lord of the Rings*, traces the history of Tolkien's sub-created world, Middle-Earth, to its creation and the beginning of time. Within the narrative, Tolkien sets forth several key components of his view of creativity. First, he explores the seeming paradox of how a good and perfect God enters

[250] Ibid., 388.

[251] Ibid., 302.

[252] Ibid., 308.

[253] Ibid., 311–312.

into partnership with sinful and fallible beings, whom he created, for the purpose of crafting the universe together. In the story, some of the created beings, who resemble angels and humans, twist God's purpose for their own selfish designs and thus distort or destroy the divine creative music which builds the universe. They add and take away from God's song so that when the music comes to life in creation, nothing is exactly as God intended. The world is distorted and needs restoration. Tolkien speaks of a day, far into the future, when God will make all things new and perform his music perfectly, "Then the themes of Ilúvatar (God) shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of their utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part…and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased."[254] Tolkien expresses his belief that God's creatures will, one day, know perfectly their gifts and call in creation; and further, each will be free from sin. The new creation will be eternally beautiful and completely good.

Second, Tolkien comments on the presence of evil in the first creation and what will happen to it in this conversation between God and the angel who resembles the devil, Melkor, "And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined."[255] Tolkien hopes that the evil of the fallen world will one day be purified and renewed into something that is beyond current human imagining.

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[254] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 15–16.

[255] Ibid., 17.

Third, Tolkien views humanity as self-centered, wherein sin corrupts everything people sub-create in this world. God reflects on the brokenness of humanity, "Men…would not use their gifts in harmony; and he said, 'These too in their time shall find that all that they do redounds at the end only to the glory of my work.'"[256] Indeed, Tolkien recounts that humans resemble Melkor more than all the other beings and angels, both in the gifts of creativity and in the inclination to use them for personal gain. Tolkien believes this exaltation of self, even while crafting new works, causes great grief and pain to God.

J. R. R. Tolkien's epic romance, *The Lord of the Rings*, has been hailed by many as one of the greatest works of fiction in the English language. Without destroying the narrative, Tolkien melds his views on imagination and artistic calling into the story. Many characters express bits and pieces of his views, and many scenes exemplify his worldview; however, only a sample of each will be noted here. For example, Sam captures, in a simple yet profound way, the wonder he and his companions feel in the presence of Galadriel's creative power. Galadriel, the greatest elf, rules the land of Lorien. As Sam and his companions enter Lorien, perilous beauty they perceive all around them rekindles their hearts. Sam remarks, "I thought that Elves were all for moon and stars: but this is more Elvish than anything I ever heard tell of. I feel as if I was *inside* a song, if you take my meaning."[257]

As a linguist, Tolkien holds a deep respect for the power of language and music. Several scenes from *The Lord of the Rings* illustrate his views on the inherent power of

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[256] Ibid., 42.

[257] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 351.

language. As Galadriel bids farewell to the company, Frodo Baggins hears her singing beautifully, but in an unknown tongue, which happened to be the high language of the elves. Frodo observes, almost in an aside, "yet as is the way of Elvish words, they remained graven in his memory, and long afterwards he interpreted them, as well as he could."[258] Further, the elves have to power to create new art by speaking or singing it into being. Likewise, when the hobbits are in the house of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, who are two beings from another age with great power, they witness the creative power of words and song. Tom Bombadil and Goldberry sing and dance as much or more than they talk. Caught up in their company, the hobbits start to make song as well, becoming "suddenly aware that they were singing merrily, as if it were easier and more natural than talking."[259] Tom shows the hobbits the power that is latent in his voice. As master of his wood, Tom demonstrates his might over the wicked trees and evil spirits that attack the hobbits by singing "stronger songs" than the music they possess.[260]

In one of the most powerful examples of this power, Frodo and Sam struggle on their own, weighed down with the burden of the ring as evil surrounds them; yet, power of song encourages them to persevere in their seemingly futile quest. Sam and Frodo first reflect on the tales and songs they knew at their home, and they realize that they are participating in such a tale. Sam observes, "Folk seem to have been just landed in them…I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, they'd have been forgotten...We're in the same tale still!

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[258] Ibid., 377.

[259] Ibid., 124.

[260] Ibid., 141.

It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?"[261] Frodo responds that the great tales are everlasting, but that the characters in the songs come and go when their part is over. Sam then begins to wonder if they will ever be put in tales. It is one of his deepest longings that they will,

> Put (it) into words, you know, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards. And people will say: "Let's hear about Frodo and the Ring!" And they'll say: "Yes, that's one of my favorite stories. Frodo was very brave, wasn't he, dad?" "Yes, my boy, the famousest of the hobbits, and that's saying a lot."[262]

Frodo laughs in delight. He and Sam go on to suffer grievously before the end of their task, but the vision of the song encourages them and renews their hope to continue along their despairing road.

In this section, literature relevant to this study has been reviewed and analyzed. The first area explored the biblical foundations of creativity, art, and worship, with a particular emphasis on Bible passages that related these themes to each other. A key text on creativity was the opening chapters of Genesis, which provided understanding of God's creation mandate to humanity. Three significant books which related to the eternal aspect of creativity were Ecclesiastes, Isaiah and Revelation. Other writings from the New Testament included Acts, which recounted the apostle Paul's evangelism in Athens and other cultures; Romans, which articulated general revelation and remaining sin; I Corinthians, which spoke of discernment and the believer's maturity in Christ; and James, which spoke of recognizing the good, the true and the beautiful as coming ultimately from God. Biblical material specifically on art included Genesis, Exodus, I and

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[261] Ibid., 712.

[262] Ibid.

II Samuel, Ezekiel, Psalms, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These passages all illustrated that art and creativity were part of the normal life of God's people throughout history. Finally, passages on liturgical art and creativity which were examined included Exodus, Leviticus, Chronicles, Psalms and Revelation. This section discussed God's commandment regarding images, the worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the creativity-saturated liturgy of Psalms, and the joyous eschatological worship of the new heavens and new earth.

Next, material on the history of art in Christian worship was examined, which traced significant historical trends that influence the present conversation on liturgical creativity. Since an exhaustive history of art was beyond the scope of this project, only particular seasons relevant to the project were researched in detail. The first era surveyed was the early church, roughly through the days of Constantine in the third century. The impact of John of Damascus in the early middle ages was also probed in detail. Another item analyzed was the iconoclast controversy which culminated in the split between the Eastern and Western Christianity in AD 1054. The Renaissance and the turbulent Protestant Reformation were thoroughly examined, since much of the theological struggle over liturgical art is a legacy of this epoch. An additional period with significant discussion was the American colonial and revivalist tradition. Finally, recent historical trends of the past hundred years were explored, since the issues raised then have immediate relevance to the current condition of art in worship.

Next, sources dealing specifically with current theological expositions of liturgical aesthetics or art in public worship were analyzed. This literature was broad in scope, drawing upon religious traditions from pagan Japan to Hinduism to Christianity in

order to discern common threads of how humans use creativity in worship. One significant thread was the ubiquitous presence of art in worship and how this art imparts symbolic meaning to worshippers. Another important strand was the renewing and re-humanizing function art played in worship. Many authors also noted that Protestant Christians have become hostile to the use and appreciation of art in life and liturgy. Worship spaces and services reflect this loss of beauty. Helpful theological and practical correctives were surveyed as a way to help discover, or recover, best practices for liturgical aesthetics. Lastly, many of authors reviewed spoke of how a healthy use of creative art in worship promoted spiritual formation and growth in grace for worshippers.

Finally, literature was researched which expounded the Christian perspective and practice on creativity and imagination. Most of the literature sought to promote a positive view of creativity which encouraged Christians to use their imaginative gifts to the glory of God and good of their neighbor. One view explored in detail was an understanding of God as the ultimate creator and the implications of this view for individuals. Another view analyzed in depth was the benefit of pursuing creativity in community, where humans share in the creative process together. Some further concepts discovered were the importance of creativity to healthy worship, in vibrant evangelism, and towards a rich and joyous longing for heaven. Lastly, literature which explored the call and challenge for Christians to be creative was analyzed in detail.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology of this research project. Several components of the project will be explained, including a summary of the principles of qualitative research, along with the techniques of data collection and data analysis. The criteria for the participants in the study will be discussed along with the process used for

interviewing them. Also forthcoming are the limitations of this study and the statement of the researcher's position and bias. These items will explain fully the methods used in this project.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how church members use their creative talents in public worship. Four areas have been identified as critical to understanding this topic: how church members use their creative talents in worship; the challenges which members face when using their gifts in worship; the motives that drive them to perform in worship; and the future dreams which they desire to pursue. These areas led to the four research questions that guided this study:

1. How do church members use their creative talents in public worship?
2. What challenges do church members who use their creative talents in public worship face?
3. What motivates church members who use their creative talents in public worship?
4. In what ways, not currently exercised, do church members desire to use their creative talents in public worship?

Hearing the perspectives of artistically gifted Christians who create and present art in the context of their church's public worship gives an invaluable perspective. Therefore, it was decided that a qualitative study would be pursued. *In Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Sharan B. Merriam says, "basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have

in the world."[263] She identifies four foundational characteristics of qualitative research. First, qualitative research focuses on the process of making meaning and on understanding how people interpret their lives. The topic of the study must be understood "from the participant's perspective, not the researcher's."[264] Second, the "researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis."[265] The human researcher can adapt and respond in the midst of data collection so that the goal of understanding is more readily attainable. Third, the process of qualitative research is inherently inductive, "Researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses as is positivist research."[266] Fourth, Merriam says, "The product of qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned" about the subject.[267] By pursuing a qualitative inquiry, researchers can gain an understanding of an experience from the perspective of those who lived it.

To allow the researcher flexibility to build upon the subject's responses and to explore all facets of the topic organically, a semi-structured interview protocol was used. Merriam notes the strength of the semi-structured interview, "The format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the

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[263] Sharan Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 13.

[264] Ibid., 14.

[265] Ibid., 15.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid., 16.

respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[268] The semi-structured protocol allows both a solid opportunity to uncover the specific information required by the research questions and a freedom to follow rewarding lines of thought created in the dialogue that were not part of the researcher's original intent.

Participant Sample Selection

The participants were selected because they have at least ten years of experience crafting and presenting art in the context of public worship. The researcher believed that Christian artists with this background would have a deeper understanding of the questions guiding the project and thus can offer a richer dialogue. The researcher's colleagues or church members recommended participants whom they knew and respected the participants' work. The artists all have a track record of craftsmanship and excellence, which gives hope for discovering insight into the best practices in liturgical creativity. Lastly, since humans produce their creative imagination in a wide variety of forms and media, this study explores seven forms of artistic expression that are used liturgically: dance, drama, instrumental music, song, storytelling, prose, and visual art.

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted in as conversational a manner as possible from May to August 2015. Due to the prohibitive cost of travel, all seven interviews were done using computer and phone technology. The subjects who had access to a streaming video application such as Skype or FaceTime were interviewed with a live video call. The others who did not have this technology were interviewed over the phone as an audio call

[268] Ibid., 90.

only. All of the interviews were recorded digitally using Audacity software and then exported to Rev.com for hired online transcription.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Merriam notes, "This method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. The overall object of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data. These patterns are arranged in relationship to each other. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category."[269] The interview transcriptions were analyzed according to keywords and themes from the research questions and their sub-questions. For example, all places where the subject commented on the ways in which they used their art were highlighted and marked as such. Each of the major categories was utilized in this manner: the ways in which church members use their creative talents in worship; the challenges which members face when using their gifts in worship; the motives that drive them to perform in worship; and the future dreams which they desire to pursue in worship. As information arose on each topic, it was sorted into categories of data for analysis.

Researcher Position

In this type of qualitative study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Thus, the observations and analyses are filtered through the researcher's perspective and bias. The researcher should be aware of these conditions and sensitive to any potential to influence the direction of the project. Some areas of caution will be discussed below.

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[269] Ibid., 30.

The researcher is a Christian believer and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. More significantly, the researcher has served as a church musician and pastor/director of worship for over twenty-five years in multiple congregations, in both England and the United States. Most of the researcher's ministry years have been in small university towns in the South, in fairly traditional churches that were not strong in pursuing the creative arts liturgically, at least initially in my ministry. Through God's grace, the researcher has been on a journey which has witnessed many creative people begin to use their gifts to present beautiful truth in worship, but there have been many challenges along the way. The researcher freely admits that he may be very connected personally to the purpose of this study. However, the researcher believes that his perspective strengthens this particular research, as it enabled him to have instant validity and sympathy with the participants. It is the researcher's hope that his experience in this realm has added depth to the research process without preventing him from maintaining as much objectivity as is humanly possible.

Study Limitations

Due to time and cost limitations, this study utilized seven participants, each of whom had a different specialty or creative talent in leading worship. Despite their distinctions, the participants' interests and gifts also overlapped greatly. Almost all of the participants, for example, led music in some fashion in addition to their primary art. Finally, there may be other types of liturgical creativity, such as architecture, filmmaking, or sculpture, which were not explored in this project. The study primarily focused upon mainstream liturgical arts. Thus, readers will determine if the study's results may be transferable and relevant to other contexts.

The following chapter explores the results of the outlined research methods, the semi-structured interviews, and the constant comparative analysis. The researcher reports how church members who use their creative gifts in the context of public worship address the project's research questions.

Chapter Four

Data Report and Analysis

The purpose of this study is to explore how church members use their creative talents in public worship. Four areas have been identified as critical to understanding this topic: the ways in which church members use their creative talents in worship; the challenges which members face when using their gifts in worship; the motives that drive them to perform in worship; and the future dreams which they desire to pursue. These areas led to the four research questions that guided this study:

1. How do church members use their creative talents in public worship?
2. What challenges do church members who use their creative talents in public worship face?
3. What motivates church members who use their creative talents in public worship?
4. In what ways not currently exercised do church members desire to use their creative talents in public worship?

In order to seek answers for these research questions, seven Christians who possess creative and artistic talent and also use their talents in the context of public worship in their respective local churches were interviewed for this study.

Introduction of Research Participants

While their names have been changed to ensure their anonymity, each participant will now be briefly introduced. Understanding the participants' ministry context facilitates the interpretation of their responses.

Alison is a professional dancer and choreographer from the west coast of the United States. She owns a dance studio where she teaches dance. At the studio, she also trains and supervises a staff of instructors who work with her. This dance studio is open to all dancers, whatever their religious background. Some of her instructors are not Christian believers. Within this context, she offers specifically Christian dance instruction and integrates teaching on worship as part of her curriculum. Some of her students work with other professional dancers whom she hires for a dance group that she founded and leads. This group performs at her local church and other congregations in the area in worship services and other special events.

Alison grew up in the church and became a Christian at an early age. Her parents strongly encouraged her to pursue dance as a legitimate vocational and ministry calling from God. She has extensive experience dancing in local churches, from her early childhood days as a solo performer to her adult years as a member of a traveling team. She also has years of leading other dancers in worship ministry. Currently, she crafts and choreographs original dance that her dance team then performs.

Jenny is a vocational dramatist and playwright from an urban context in the central United States. She currently writes short plays and directs volunteer actors as a ministry within her local church. Most of Jenny's original work is crafted for and presented in the context of public worship. Additionally, she is a frequent speaker at conferences on drama and storytelling. Jenny has a broad equipping ministry for Christians who pursue liturgical drama. Her primary specialty is adapting passages directly from scripture into a dramatic moment or short scene that will specifically be used in a worship context.

Jenny grew up in a pastor's home and became a Christian early in her life. She was highly interested in the performing arts as a child. Jenny's family was very supportive and helped her attend an undergraduate college for theater and music. She pursued a master's degree that focused on embodying and living the stories of other people in a literary and dramatic context. She has many years of experience as an actor, director, and playwright both inside and outside the church.

Kate is composer and musician who leads music and worship at an urban church in a university town in California. She has over twenty years of experience in vocational music ministry and regularly composes original music for liturgical use. Indeed, during certain seasons of the Christian year, Kate remarked that she would write new music almost every other week. She actively recruits and equips musicians from her community, both Christians and non-Christians. Kate is well regarded as a conductor and composer by the performers with whom she serves in worship.

Kate, like several others in this project, was raised in a pastor's home and was involved in church life from her earliest years. She became a Christian as a child and began serving as the music director in her local church when she was still in high school. She has stayed professionally involved in church music since that time. She honed her musical skills through college and graduate school, and Kate now has a Ph.D. in composition and theory. Although she writes all types of music, from choral to instrumental, she specifically focuses on bringing new instrumental music that increases the beauty of congregational worship.

Ron is a music director at an urban church in the southeastern United States. He has worked at this church over three years and has seven more years of full-time music

ministry experience in two other congregations. Ron weekly leads by directing a choir and playing the guitar and piano. Additionally, he regularly composes and arranges new songs for the choir and congregation to sing in corporate worship. These new songs are used almost every week in some context, whether sung by the assembly, presented by the choir, or offered from a soloist or small ensemble. Like Kate, Ron creates all genres of music. He, however, has a specific interest in making new vocal or choral songs for his worshipping community to use as part of the regular liturgy.

Ron grew up in a Christian home and became a believer early in life. He began playing music in worship and then started leading worship vocationally after college. Early in his ministry, he worked for a season at a church in Florida. Ron credits this church as the place where he grew in his appreciation of liturgical creativity and beauty. The church's multi-cultural, diverse, and talented community stretched him musically and personally to push the boundaries of the published congregational music available at the time. Since then, Ron has intentionally sought to give a voice to the people he serves by writing songs directly born from his community of faith.

Dan is the senior pastor of a suburban church in the southeastern United States. He has only been at his current church for a couple of years, but he has served in other pastorates in the past. Dan preaches and leads the worship most Sundays. Notably, Dan weekly builds a narrative framework to unify the entire liturgy. He also inserts moments of storytelling at strategic places in the service. In one portion of the service, Dan interacts with one of the families in the congregation through improvisational narrative. Dan also equips the other pastoral staff and release them to do liturgical storytelling as well.

Dan became a Christian early in his life. He moved into vocational ministry after working in medicine for around twenty years. After completing seminary as a working adult, he has served in various pastoral roles. One of the first pastors with whom Dan worked was extremely uncomfortable with art and imagination. In response, Dan began to articulate a conviction that every pastor should be a great storyteller, someone who can balance between art and science, right-brain and left-brain. This is critical, Dan believed, because pastors must be the bridge from the truth and beauty of scripture to the hearts and minds of people in the congregation and community.

Eric is a practicing visual artist with over ten years of experience in both private and church contexts. He served for many years as a teacher before sensing a call to become a vocational artist. Eric desires to make new and beautiful art for worship and as an act of worship. Ironically, Eric believes that he was not technically a "great" artist when he took up this call. He has served as an artist-in-residence at several urban congregations over the course of his career in the southwestern United States.

Eric grew up in a believing home and went to church from early in childhood. He also attended Christian school. Eric says that his faith, however, became real and life-transforming when he grasped the weight of a God who weeps for his people and knows their suffering and pain. Eric became an artist to express this truth about God and about human experience. Presenting visual art in corporate worship allows Eric to connect God's heart and people's experiences in a tangible and powerful way. Eric now spends significant time equipping other Christian artists as a speaker and author in order to encourage them in their calling.

Jack is the director of liturgy and music at a large, charismatic Anglican congregation in a city in the Midwestern United States. His church strives to have a threefold emphasis on "high" expressive worship, preaching the gospel of grace, and outreach to the community. They also follow the Christian calendar and use eclectic music and other creative arts to weekly flesh out the liturgy in imaginative and participatory ways. The culmination of the year comes in their celebration of holy week, which has garnered national attention as a model of worship practice and attracted many thousands of worshippers at the services. Particularly noteworthy is the last service, an overnight Easter vigil that joyously runs into Easter morning.

Jack grew up in a Christian family, where his mother was a pastor and his father was a lay leader. Because of his parents' high involvement in church life, he initially resisted the call to ministry. Eventually he drifted into choral music. Over the years, he quickly fell in love with liturgy and its heritage while he assisted the worship director on a part time basis. He worked through an advanced degree in church music and liturgical history, and he is currently the full time pastor of worship. Now, with fifteen years on staff at his church, he controls every aspect of corporate worship and has great freedom to creatively develop parts therein. While he is a musician, Jack goes beyond simply directing music; he has responsibility for the overall liturgical framework that is broader that what most church musicians carry. This gives him a unique authority and perspective on the liturgical layers of worship.

Indeed, all of the participants are actively involved in using their talents in public worship. They are also involved on a higher level—crafting and evaluating portions of the liturgy that involves their specialties. Finally, the participants seek to equip and

release other members to use their own gifts as well. All of these factors lend weight and credibility to their insights into the research questions that guided this project.

Using Their Creative Talents in Public Worship

The first research question explored how church members currently practice their gifts in the context of public worship, seeking to discern some of the best practices currently happening in a liturgical context. The participants talked about services in which the liturgy devoted time to their performing art. They also spoke of times when they equipped and released members of the congregation or community to present liturgical art they had prepared. Additionally, the participants related significant information about how they engaged the congregation in the artistic activity. Since these additional layers of experience were prominent throughout the interview process, the data will be organized according to these three sub-categories.

Presenting Art in Worship

The artists emphasized personally implementing their art in public worship. They each spoke about participating in church from an early age and how this experience prepared them for their vocation. Alison, for example, spoke of her parents as being strongly supportive of her desire to dance in worship. She recalls, “They always encouraged me to…use dance as ministry and as worship.” She therefore began dancing in a liturgical setting while in her late teens. Kate, likewise, ministered in the church where her father served on the pastoral staff. She said, “When I was 16, I took on the role of the music director and essentially have been doing that ever since.” Another aspect to this category comes from Steve’s early days. His parents were so deeply involved in ministry that he jokingly told himself that he would “never work for the church.”

However, Steve immersed himself in church music as a teenager, and this passion for liturgical choral singing shaped his later life, “My passion was always choral music.” Although Steve initially resisted the call to church work, he eventually found his niche as the leader of a multi-faceted worship ministry in a large urban congregation.

Each participant also related at length how they currently, or at least more recently, used their creative talents in public worship. Strikingly, all but one spoke about being directly involved in personally and regularly sharing their art. Most of the participants led worship on a weekly basis. Alison, who presently does not perform, was still very involved, however, in the process of coaching dancers and choreographing new material for them.

Ron spoke about his constant immersion in crafting new songs. In certain seasons, he writes new music, which is often coupled with existing poetry, “almost every Sunday.” He then sings and plays these compositions in worship. Eric, a visual artist, had periods of ministry where he painted artwork in the context of the service. Eric recalls a period where he “used to paint at all the services.” The others also had similar observations about the frequency of presenting in worship, especially as it coincided with significant parts of the ecclesiastical calendar. Holidays such as Advent and Easter presented many opportunities for regular production and performance of liturgical art. Jenny shared one example of this seasonal emphasis where she scripted, directed, and performed a series of plays about waiting during the entire month of advent. She recalled how she was “thinking about what it would look like to wait.” Jenny and others acted out silent scenes where everyone expectantly waited for someone to arrive. Likewise, Kate spoke of how each major holiday was a chance for her to compose both new instrumental

music and congregational responses, "I've written all new (music) for Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost."

Equipping Others to Present Art in Worship

Even though the prior question focused on the participants' own participation, it is almost impossible to separate these two sub-categories. All of the artists in this study passionately equipped and released teams of other creative people. They all expressed a desire to make and present the liturgical art in partnership—with a spouse, colleague, or community of artists. Dan enthusiastically expressed that a role as pastor was recruiting and freeing artists to succeed in worship ministry. He said, "I'm going to find artists. I want to unleash artists! I'm going to work with the creative (people) in the church." Instead of negating his primary role of preaching, teaching, and storytelling, Dan saw his support of artists as a necessary component of pastoring.

Jenny had a similar view in the realm of theatre, as most drama involves more than one actor. Along with acting, she also writes and directs plays. Jenny spoke of how she seeks out a small team of people who have theatrical interest or skill and works directly with them as her performance troupe. She related, "I hand-pick people and talk to them individually, because it seems faster and more effective…I actually get to know people better."

Ron taught his new songs to both the choir and the band so that the music is played and sung by a full team of musicians in worship. He describes his creative niche as "finding ways to make this (new) hymn work for large choirs and…a group of rhythm-section players." Kate, likewise, presents her music within a team context. She works alongside her husband who is also a liturgical musician at the church. Kate has a small

choir and a few instrumentalists as her core team, but she is often forced to hire students and professionals to supplement the team. Because her music is well-received by the musicians in her community, many players and singers respect Kate and enjoy working in a church, even though they are not Christians. Kate's team building thus contained aspects of evangelism. She said, "It's really fun to get that collaboration between them…it takes on kind of an outreach tone." In fact, sometimes even families and friends from the surrounding town come to hear the musicians perform as part of the worship service.

Alison's dance ministry illustrated another example of team building. Alison has transitioned in her artistic career from performance to a full-orbed vocation of teaching, training, coaching, and choreographing. She explained, "My gifts are now in terms of choreography, discipleship, administration…and my dancers perform as part of worship services." She is now fully invested into multiplying her dance talents from just herself into dozens or even hundreds of students who go out into worship and the world.

Engaging the Congregation in Liturgical Art

All the participants also sought to engage the congregation in both the presentation and execution of their art. Due to the liturgical setting, each participant took great care to move the congregation beyond watching into active interaction with the art and the artists. Alison intentionally desired to "draw people into worship." One way she achieved this goal was to choreograph commonly known hymns and songs for her dancers. She then had them sing at various points in the dance, and the congregation joined in as well. She commented, "It can be a more active worship experience rather than just a passive one of observing." She further explained that in her culture, most

worshippers are still a bit hesitant to join unplanned dance in the middle of a church service, and she sensitively planed how and when to have the congregation dance with her team.

Jenny, in her work of connecting the congregation to a theatrical performance, spoke earnestly about intentionally scripting and blocking out the play to make it more suitable for public worship. She often used certain types of sketches that seemed to appeal to the audience in an engaging manner. She said, “It creates mental anchors” for them and gave deeper meaning to the scene. Jenny also used scripture carefully and intentionally. She typically only used scenes or readings directly from the Bible, which she felt were transformational for the listener in a worship service. In her view, theatre vividly brings scripture to life in a way that helps the hearer engage with it, memorize it, and take it to heart. She remarked, “If we're formed by what we do, I believe we are being formed by these stories, because we can't say it's just a story.”

In a similar way to Jenny, Kate invited the congregation into liturgical music. One simple technique she used was to balance a repetition of her new compositions with familiar aspects of the service that changed weekly. She recounted that the worshippers seemed to sing more confidently when she did this, “They respond well for mainly one reason and that is that we repeat them a lot!” She also used specific moments of the liturgy to bring in new material so that the songs have a larger context and fulfill a thematic or theological purpose. Finally, she used logistical innovations to achieve the goal as well. She occasionally moved her choir out among the people to blur the distance and distinction in the assembly, “We have the choir surrounding (them)…really trying to bridge my choir with the congregation.”

Ron, in his efforts to teach new songs, also used similar techniques. His style of repetition was more complex. Ron sang a new song for two weeks in a row; he then took a week off. Ron would sing it again, then took two weeks off. He repeated this pattern until the new song repeated once a month. The new song did not occur every week, but it appeared regularly enough that the members sang it well. He desired to calm any congregational apprehension about attempting new works by introducing it well each time, "I know you don't know this very well yet, but that is okay!" This reassurance gave the congregation freedom to participate without fear. Another approach Ron used was to vary the musical languages he spoke with the new songs in order to prevent them from being too one-dimensional stylistically. He commented, "I just try and find ways to mix up the style of the music to where people remain engaged."

In the area of storytelling, Dan enlivened various parts of the worship service that he believed many churches did simply for the sake of tradition. He sought to rejuvenate liturgical elements such as the call to worship, catechism, and the pastoral prayer by telling them in narrative form. Dan believed that it significantly increased audience participation, "You take a very dry, boring catechism question and you make it active and interesting." He further used narrative in the children's talk, sacraments, and the main sermon because he noticed people actively listening during the service and retaining the story when they left church. He asserted that when he told a story, "the whole audience is, of course, listening!"

Eric helped worshippers vicariously experience religious events, such as sacred journeys, without leaving the church building. He devised art that connected with wounded people because they came to church "needing a pilgrimage." Like Dan, Eric

claimed that current worship was often stale. To enliven worship, Eric led his church to create new liturgical art "because we needed new words to say." The congregation then robustly experienced the entire service empowered by the unconventional and moving art.

As the chief liturgist of his church, Jack had the "ultimate responsibility for all things worship on Sunday." Because he serves a large congregation with many staff and volunteers, one of his primary tasks was to connect the puzzle pieces in such a way that the congregation had ample creative resources to worship well. Additionally, Jack coordinated with the other pastors and worship leaders to ensure that everyone knew their role. Jack's church had an unusual mission in how it enabled the congregation to worship and in the types of worship languages it spoke. Jack tried to balance a three-fold Christian heritage, which he called, "an evangelical scriptural tradition; a great Anglican, church fathers and church history tradition; and a Charismatic-Pentecostal, 'Holy-Spirit' tradition." Jack believed that members of the assembly all leaned towards one or more of these strains. Thus, as he creatively used art, music, and liturgy that flowed from these three strains, Jack felt that his work enabled the worshippers to join in the art, music, story, and other service elements.

Challenges Faced in Using Creative Talents in Public Worship

The dissertation's second research seeks to discover potential challenges and obstacles that the participants faced and overcame when presenting their art in worship. All of the responses in this section deal with external challenges, either from other people or the environment. Internal struggles will be treated later in the chapter in the section on personal motivation. Thus, the broad category of external challenges will be fleshed out

into three sub-categories. The first deals with challenges that originated from the artists' interaction with church leaders. The second deals with challenges experienced in dialogue with other members of the congregation. Lastly, the third is related to physical challenges or struggles arising out of the environment, rather than from people. Items in this subcategory will be addressed under the heading of logistical challenges.

Challenges from Church Leaders

Although her own church was open to liturgical dance, Alison heard many stories from the dancers she instructs about certain churches whose leaders do not support dance in the service. She remarked, "There is a lot of resistance or hesitance especially to have dancers…be part of a worship service." Alison also spoke of a few situations where the leaders failed to communicate sufficiently. These situations enabled her to hone her skills at asking crucial questions. Alison now believes she knows enough "to get the answers" she needs to make the process work more smoothly.

Jenny recounted that she often struggles with church leaders over defining the goal of drama in worship. She regretted that she did not always intentionally seek to be conscious of members' needs, "I've never had anything on pastoral care, ever! In art, we're often taught that self-expression is the highest goal. That is not the point of liturgical art." Jenny often found the balance between her own prophetic self-expression and the pastoral needs of the people a challenge to maintain consistently.

Kate related that one of the challenges she faced from the leadership had to do with planning and concepts for the service. In some churches, only the pastor's scripture text unified the service's motif. Kate observed, "The only theme for the Sunday was the pastor's choice of a topic or scripture text." Subsequently, the liturgy was often one-

dimensional and limited Kate as to what music she could create and use in the service. Another challenge she faced is communication with the pastor and worship leaders. Kate's church services had a great deal of complex interchanges that presented hindrances to strategize well. She explained, "We have to work together to plan congregational response vs. leader response, song vs. speaking, and everything else." The planning became even more of a challenge because she and her husband are the only worship staff and shoulder the responsibility on their own.

Ron spoke of theological differences between himself and the leaders that sometimes created challenges. He remarked, "I know as Reformed people, we're scared of the word 'emotion'." He felt that writing creative songs that were scripturally sound, winsome for singing, and theologically acceptable was a tough balancing act for worship artists.

Dan pointed out that he often had to overcome challenges in how he communicates to the leaders of the church. He said, "Artists see the world very weird," and thus they looked at the same situation differently than the pastors. Dan further explained, relating the challenge to his own strengths and weaknesses, "I see metaphors everywhere, but I don't think every pastor does that." Even in normal everyday life, Dan believed he lived in a narrative world.

Eric mentioned that sometimes, church leaders have a difficult time thinking beyond their preconceived expectations for Christian art. For example, some leaders expected Eric to paint prominent symbols, such as the cross, in his work. Eric said, "As an artist, if I look at the cross, I don't think it has a lot of power right now, because it's

everywhere. It doesn't mean anything anymore because you find it in so many different places."

Steve also mentioned some misunderstandings that occurred with other pastors on staff. Although the senior pastor was very supportive, the other staff did not always clearly understand what his job entailed, "because their jobs are a little more straightforward in that their main call is to pastor people." He explained how "time intensive and emotionally intensive" crafting liturgy and preparing all the worship leaders can be. He felt that liturgical planning can become a heavy burden. Steve spoke at length on how worship pastors relate to other church leaders and have certain roles to perform. He summarized his view by speaking of liturgical ministry as a unique pastoral track with unique challenges. One of challenges he outlined was the dual role that most worship pastor must play in most congregations. He felt that balancing between his shepherding role as pastor to the entire creative team and his artistic role as the worship leader on Sunday created a draining tension. He said, "That's time…and emotionally intensive and it can put you very much in a mode of churning stuff out." It became a treadmill just to keep up with the pressure of both roles. Another unique challenge of the worship pastor he spoke of was the misunderstanding that other pastors often have about his position. The worship track is not the normal career path for most assistant pastors in congregations. Their main job is simply to shepherd people, while the worship pastor must also have gifts and talents in the music, artistic and liturgical side of the equation. Finally, he said that even in a healthy job situation like his, he felt that he was unable to fulfill his primary artistic calling. He recounted that he always has to ask himself, "What percentage of my time do I get to use toward the gifts that most excite me?" These

challenges make the worship pastor's job quite a different arena than a typical minister with a focused job description.

Challenges from the Congregation

Alison voiced numerous challenges that stemmed from her dance team or from the congregation. She commented that she and her dancers battled the temptation to view their dance merely as an act seeking adulation from the crowd. Alison taught the dancers to view their art as an offering to God, "I am really careful to talk to my dancers about it not being a performance, but about them worshipping the Lord." Further, in her interactions with members of the congregation, Alison has noticed that many American Christians are not equipped to perform improvisatory liturgical dance. Comparing it to having an amateur guitar player lead music, she asserted, "There should be an appropriate context provided for people who don't have the necessary skill or excellence to still express themselves in that way, just not on Sunday morning."

Jenny believed that many people in churches failed to see scripture presented well and thus did not understand the Bible. This presented a massive challenge every time she thought about writing another liturgical play or sketch. She contended, "When the Bible is read at church, it's often really boring; and when it's studied…it never lives. If the Bible were like television, everybody would know it!" Thus, she generally used drama that quotes or directly connects to scripture. On a few other occasions, Jenny presented theater that was more difficult for the people to engage. She said, "It worked the way experimental theater works. People were deeply uncomfortable…I know there was push back about it." Finally, Jenny recalled certain times when members of the congregation came to her with negative judgments on her theatre presentations. She said, "It's hard,

because occasionally when the critique doesn't go to the pastor, and it comes to me, it's disheartening."

When Kate introduced new songs, she occasionally faced challenges from the congregation when they felt overwhelmed by the newness of the piece. She observed, "Because people don't sing, you know they are too new. I see their faces and I know." A corollary to this was her view that her congregation lack extensive musical knowledge, "They aren't that learned musically."

Like Kate, Ron faced the challenge of trying to write new songs for a congregation that had a very low threshold for musical difficulty. He said, "The more people that you get to try to sing one thing, the less…challenging it has to be" in order to succeed. He attempted to compose songs that were attainable for most people on one hand, but which also had a rich, artistic craftsmanship. Furthermore, some members occasionally spoke very negatively about Ron's songs. They were a small minority of the church, but their harsh complaints hit him very hard. One way he coped was to let them go, "Those kinds of things—you try not to remember them for too long."

Dan spoke about the challenge of preaching and telling stories to the congregation. He noticed that it was "easy to get up and tell people a propositional truth and just have the audience be flat." Telling stories was harder work, he believed, but it reached the congregation in a way that mere facts did not. Dan said he carefully searches for the right types of stories to use with different groups of people. He felt that if a story failed to connect with at least a portion of the assembly, it was a significant missed opportunity. He asserted, "When you're getting the wrong story, most of our congregation is tuning out because the bridge is weak or non-existent." A final challenge

from Dan about crafting narratives for the congregation had to do with ensuring the tale was genuine and transparent. He said, “Tell a story that's self-effacing. Tell a story that’s really beautiful. Tell a story that will show people that you actually understand their life.”

Eric spoke of how a season of overwhelming grief and suffering in the community challenged the worshippers at his church to push their creativity and compassion to deeper levels. He recounted, “How do you respond? We found that our songs and our prayers and our practices were lacking and we needed to find new things to do.” Eric and the other artistic leaders sought ways to bring comfort and hope into worship, “The real journey as an artist…is to be able to express the human experience.” Eric also remembered a few occasions where the congregation reacted in an extremely negative manner to some art he created for worship. He remembered some of the comments as follows, “‘You guys are idiots’… ‘you guys are heretics’…you get a lot of hate mail, which was just awesome.*”* In general, most of his art was well-received, but any overly critical words were painful for him.

Jack mentioned how wrestling with the possibility of new and radical liturgical ideas challenged the congregation. He remembered discussing a new direction for one of their most well-loved and long-running services where “the people had concerns about what we might lose, what might change.” The journey of liturgical change with the members was a long and sometime painful road. He said, “There were lots of mixed emotions. It was a huge leadership challenge just to walk people through it.” Later, he realized one of the ironies of this challenge was that it involved a beautiful, creative, and successful worship event; it was not something that was inherently broken and in need of repair.

Logistical Challenges

Alison noted that, many times, churches where she and her dance team performed did not have adequate stage space to support a full dance routine. She related, “They seem to think a ten-foot square is going to be sufficient. That's difficult. Especially if the worship team is playing on Sunday morning, they don't want to have to move their stuff out of the way!” In these situations, she had to stretch her experience and skills to successfully navigate tricky building design.

Jenny, like Alison, discovered that most churches are not designed for group storytelling or large-scale drama. Churches typically do not possess the correct multimedia equipment. She commented, “Architecture and sound are a huge problem!” Finally, in her experience, she noted the unusually large amount of time inherent to theatre preparation. Her rule of thumb for any theatrical production was, “for each minute of performance, you have an hour and a half of rehearsal.” In her experience, this ratio between rehearsal time and performance time was unusual among the performing arts.

Ron pointed out a significant technical obstacle between the artist and the congregation in churches that utilize a contemporary worship style. He realized that most weeks, he had little awareness of the assembly because the amplified monitors hid him from their sight and separated him from their sound. He admitted, “We have in-ear monitors and sometimes I’m so focused on making sure everything’s together that I don’t hear the congregational singing.” Another architectural challenge was the poor acoustics of the worship hall. The building needed significant renovations, but the church was “waiting for the funds” before starting the project.

Jack also spoke about the difficulty of maintaining a vibrant and successful worship ministry with insufficient funds to support the necessary venues, material, and people. He recalled, “It also became completely crazy and almost unsustainable because our financial situation wasn't necessarily allowing us to really support the kind of gifted, artistic leaders we needed.” He believed that his church was not able to take full advantage of the talent-rich community where his congregation lived.

Motivations of Church Members Who Use Their Creative Talents in Public Worship

The dissertation’s third research question explores what drives creative believers to start and maintain a vibrant worship ministry. This question will be divided into two sub-categories to reflect the types of responses from the participants in the project. The first will treat external motivation that comes from people or circumstances. The second will deal with internal motivation that the participants recounted. While the boundary between internal and external motives was sometimes blurry or arbitrary, these classifications will help track patterns and thus give better insight into the data.

External Motivations

Alison talked about receiving great external encouragement from her parents throughout her early life. She recounted that “using dance as ministry and as worship was something they embraced.” She also spoke highly of several pastors and church leaders who supported her dance group. Of one in particular, she said, “He really accepted our team and felt like it was an important part of worship.” Another pastor was also highly moved by their program and called it a “transcendent worship experience—their dance is a sermon in and of itself.” Lastly, she spoke of the general positive feedback most

worshippers shared with her. She reflected, “Dance is a universal language: everyone relates to it in some way.”

Jenny also pointed to several occasions when pastors and leaders of her church gave her strong support. They spoke highly of one sketch, calling it “perfect” and “very effective because of its use of humor.” The leaders’ commitment to protect her as a staff person also encouraged Jenny. Since they were involved in the planning and approval process for her plays, they sheltered her from any complaints or negative feedback, “They take responsibility for it—I don’t have to deal with that!” Further, many members of the congregation quickly and regularly offered positive feedback. She recounted one person saying, “When you told the story, it came alive to me for the first time.”

Kate likewise shared many stories of external encouragement from both members and pastors. After one particular service, she said, “I got a lot of great response from people saying they loved the music.” Another aspect of positive reinforcement was from the musicians she recruited to play at the church. Kate was surprised to discover how much she enjoyed working with them and how much they respected her, especially since some of them were not Christians. She said, “It’s really fun to work with them, and get that collaboration among them.” Over time, some have even professed faith and started attending the church as believers in Christ. Finally, Kate related an account of one member who had been somewhat critical towards her music over several years. After a recent Easter service with some of Kate’s music in the liturgy, this member came up to her and said, “You know, you really changed my mind--we're talking about this music. I love this, I do. It’s taken me a long time, but it is beautiful.”

Ron spoke of external motivation from both pastors and members of the congregation. His pastor, although not a musician, nevertheless loved music and helped Ron grow in surprising and beneficial ways. Ron related, “He is a lover of art and music, and he is actually pushing me in ways that I didn’t expect.” The pastor has been especially useful in helping Ron gain confidence when trying new songs or ideas for worship. Ron related that his pastor said, “Don’t worry about offending anybody or whatever. Just go for it.” Another component of encouragement for Ron involved one of the elders of the church who was heavily involved with the music ensemble Ron led. This elder became a strong source of reassurance for Ron and also a vital link between the congregation and the staff. Ron recalled a situation where “that elder had actually seen the process of my work and went to bat for me” in a difficult dialogue with other members of the congregation.

Dan talked about some of the feedback he got from worshippers regarding his stories. Many of the people visiting their church made positive comments and appreciated the artistry of his preaching, saying, “We've gone to the church for years… Thank you for taking me seriously: you know what I read.” He told stories to which they could relate quite well. Another said, “That story made me sit up closer. That story made me see God clearer.” Dan drew confidence for his ministry vision through support like these examples.

Jack related one season in his church where they had months of church-wide conversation about large changes in worship. After this season of dialogue and planning, they made the changes to the liturgy and received mostly highly positive feedback. One comment he shared was, “I really do think you've simplified it in a way that kept it

beautiful and powerful and wonderful." The entire ministry staff shared this journey, and they were moving together towards the correct goal. He said, "It meant we had planned well" and that was very encouraging to him. Finally, he mentioned his strong relationship with his senior pastor, "He really gets the full range of what I bring to the table. I have to say, by and large, I feel incredibly appreciated." Jack felt that the senior pastor took the time to build a deep, working relationship with him.

Internal Motivations

Alison shared some of her vision for teaching students about dance in the context of faith. She tried to teach that worship is bigger than Sunday, saying, "Worship is our whole life and dance can be a part of that." She also described being surprised at how much she worshipped even after she transitioned from dancing to choreography. While observing her troupe perform, she found herself "drawn into worship which is really sweet and I can just worship along with them." She has discovered this aspect of her ministry to be quite refreshing. She also passionately related how dancing made her feel. She recalled, "Dance was the way that I most connected to God emotionally—when I danced in worship I felt like I had the Lord's pleasure."

Jenny spoke about her enthusiasm for developing a uniquely Christian perspective on embodiment, which generally refers to a method of training actors who seeks to unify the mind and the body in rehearsal and performance. She believed that "theater is all about embodiment: embodying and living the stories of other people, in a way that other art forms don't do just by their nature." This enthusiasm drove Jenny to continue writing plays and training actors. Another strong passion she expressed was her view that all humans are shaped by their practices, particularly in worship. Therefore, Jenny felt her

liturgical drama should contain primarily only the words of scripture. She related her own journey along this path, “I am experiencing deep internal transformation from learning the story of God and telling it to the congregation, in the styles of a biblical storyteller.” She summarized her sense of call to ministry as follows, “God wants me to use my education and experience and passion to tell the story of the scripture.” Finally, Jenny related that she sensed a strong prophetic edge to her worship ministry. She felt so secure in God’s call and presence that she was able to persevere even when the external circumstances were difficult. She described, “Part of the artist's job is to listen to the Spirit guiding us to name idolatry in a way that is evocative; it also isn't necessarily to be accepted. When people have complained, since I believe that God gives me these ideas, I am confident in what I'm doing. I don't mean that to sound self-righteous.” Most of the time, Jenny was quick to confirm, the worshippers appreciated her prophetic role and responded well in and out of the services.

Dan shared some of his internal motivation for liturgical creativity. Dan’s drive to reach certain people greatly motivated him. He said, “I want to attract musicians and people across the artistic spectrum.” He also spoke of his excitement over people responding to the stories, “I like it when somebody likes the story and sees the beauty of Christ—that gets me excited!” A second motivator for Dan is his own call to ministry. He believed that pastors and preachers should always seek to tell stories, “Storytelling is big. I think seventy-five percent of the Scripture is narrative. Jesus was a storyteller.”

Eric also shared his inner motivation. In summary, he desired “to use art as a catalyst for inspiration, for ideas, and how I respond to and imagine the future.” He believed his entire life has been shaped by his calling as an artist. Eric did not initially

pursue art as a vocation, but did have a strong sense of internal calling to embrace his new career. He recalled, "I started having this weird dream and visions of art that I had never made before: I felt what I was being offered was this invitation to a conversation which is, how should one live in the world? How do we live in this world?" Finally, he spoke of art as learning to "navigate the conversation of the heart." In the context of worship, it "allows us to approach God with words, emotion, ideas, space, and so on, and identify the human experience."

Jack expressed another component of internal motivation: evangelism through worship. He summarized his belief, saying, "To show from creation to eternity, how God has sought after the people he loves and has created in His own image; and how rewarding it was through all of that artistic planning and rehearsing, all of that effort, and then to see people come and accept Christ, was a whole new level of why we do this." This zeal for sharing the gospel was a powerful incentive for Jack to risk creating innovative liturgy accompanied with the cost of painstaking labor and practice.

Dreams and Desires for Creative Talents in Public Worship

This research question will explore the contributors' long-range dreams in the area of liturgical creativity. Each of them shared their hopes and desires for the future. Some, however, felt constrained by their current contexts and only developed goals that seemed attainable in that particular setting. Others did not limit themselves to their present surroundings and felt free to imagine without boundaries. The responses will be organized by participant responses.

Alison shared one dream that she hopes to achieve over the course of her future career. She remarked, "I would really love to see worship dance classes offered for

people that feel like that's a way that they would like to express themselves in worship. They just love the Lord so much and want to worship him in some way other than just singing. Giving people tools to do that on their own would be a really important thing." She thought that her local church and her dance studio could potentially be partners in this effort. In a complementary goal, Alison wants to find a vehicle and venue for people who desire to dance but who are not equipped to lead worship. She said, "There should be appropriate context provided for people who maybe don't have the skill to be able to still express themselves…just not on Sunday morning." She believed that this type of informal opportunity would be open to anyone, and not have the pressure of trying to perform in the context of public worship.

Jenny also expressed some long-range goals. Her first was to find occasions to tell biblical stories in a liturgical setting. She said, "I look for opportunities to serve professionally as a storyteller in worship." Jenny believed that her experience and gifts in theater would serve equally well in the expression of liturgical narrative. Unfortunately, many churches lack the vision or the funds to promote this creative ministry. A corollary of this situation led to another dream: finding a church that would be open to hiring a liturgical staff member who was not chiefly musical. Jenny was eager to find a church "looking for a worship arts director who was not primarily a musician." In her experience, she felt that most churches willing to open worship staff positions to musicians more easily than to thespians or playwrights. Finally, she expressed a hope to write and perform a longer play based on entire book (or a part of a larger book) of the Bible, such as a portion of Genesis, Jonah, or Ruth. She believed that doing this occasionally in place of the spoken sermon might benefit worshippers. She remarked, "I

think if it's done by people who are gifted and skilled, then the congregation would understand what they're hearing. It could really affect biblical literacy, and just people bathing in the words and the stories in a new way."

Kate likewise longed to try some new musical directions in the future. She hoped to maximize how she used her choir and musicians in her current church context. She said, "I have been inspired by other music directors to try and be more creative with how I use the choir, both musically and as an encouragement" to the congregation in worship. She also believed that there was room in her current liturgy to add more newly composed works of both instrumental and choral music. She commented, "There are slots in our service for more artistic music, that don't need congregational participation." One aspect of this dream was to complete a large-scale new work that would be performed by the congregation, choir, and orchestra from her church in worship. She wanted "to write a complete setting of the Mass. We do parts of it each week, but not the whole thing." She even mentioned that this new large work might be partially in a post-tonal musical style, "there is something of a place for modern-sounding 'twentieth-century' music in worship." Lastly, she expressed a desire for more musicians from her community and church, both in number and type. She said, "I would love more, brass, more strings, more musicians in general!"

Ron hoped to move both the congregation and the musicians to a place of greater beauty and risk by adding improvised instrumental music into some of the worship songs that are mostly sung at present. He said, "we should just let our musicians share their gift in a way that says, 'Let me help you think through that verse for a while. Let me play this and let it take your emotions to a new place.'" Ron also sought to use special seasons of

the year as natural opportunities to try new music that was not necessarily in the church's typical language. He remarked, "I want to find creative ways to continue throwing in things that maybe folks didn't expect, that they found helpful, like writing a piece for a special service." Finally, Ron hoped to see his own congregation and musicians respond to creative new music in a style that was cross-cultural and cut against the grain of their typical worship style. He was in a wealthy, suburban church with mostly white Southerners as members, and Ron longed to see the church write and sing new songs that are in a black gospel style that would potentially connect to another part of their community that they do not currently attract. He said, "It would be one thing to do the black gospel style and hopefully attract people that like that type of music: I would love to see our church change its demographic a little bit." He hoped new songs would bring new worship that embraced all the people in their community.

Dan also spoke of long-term goals for his current congregation. He saw a small number of families who had spoken well of the worship services and started reaching out to their neighbors, inviting them to attend. He said that he wanted everyone to tell people, "my pastor will tell you a story. My pastor will connect to you. That's how they'll make the church attractive." He also hoped to get the entire congregation involved in telling stories as some level. He asserted, "We need to be a group of storytellers that is so amazed at the simple story of the gospel that we can't help but tell our stories." Finally, Dan expressed a longing to someday help church leaders develop their narrative creativity. He reflected, "If the Lord brings me to a teaching setting, whether its writing a book or getting a degree, I would like to help other pastors use metaphor, story, and illustration better in worship."

Eric hoped for an opportunity to help people gain a richer appreciation of God through deeper and more beautiful worship. He said, “Some are Christians because of the empty tomb. I am a Christian because of: ‘Why have you forsaken me?’ and ‘Jesus wept.’ I can’t relate to a God that never has tears in his eyes because he’s insulated from this experience.” Liturgical art, Eric believed, should express the totality of Jesus’ life and work: the glory and the brokenness. He longed to equip artists to do this more effectively. He summarized his views, “We get the victory side all the time, but I think it’s more compelling to show the world a suffering servant. We have the suffering God, the man of sorrow, the man acquainted with grief.”

Jack was another participant who looked at both his current context and far beyond. For his current church, Jack and the other pastors desired to connect intentionally and tangibly with creative Christian believers and unleash them in worship and other ministry. He related, “In terms of staffing, something we're working through is how artists are supported, and how we really focus in and give them support, and release more of them in the church.” Moving beyond his present context, he yearned to artistically develop a liturgy that recaptures the choral centrality that he feels is lacking. He asserted, “I have a hard passion to see a reconnection in this generation between the beauty and the vibrancy of traditional, choral, organ-led worship and the proclamation spreading the Gospel. I just believe in that. Right now, I don't really get to dig into that.” He admitted that his preferred dream of music and liturgy would not be accepted in his current church despite his wide-ranging artistic freedom. He concluded his interview by linking his future dream and present labor. He spoke of possibly “developing a semi- or totally professional choir and for our community alongside what I do at the church.” His final

comment went even beyond this, however, as he said he was wrestling with perhaps going out to plant a new church. This was most definitely a long-term goal that ranged far beyond his present work.

This section introduced the seven research participants and presented their interview responses organized according to the categories and sub-categories of the research questions of this project. All of the participants were Christians with creative and artistic talents who regularly used their gifts in public worship. The disciplines of performing and fine arts which were represented included the following: dance, theater and drama, instrumental music, vocal song, storytelling, painting and visual art, and poetry and prose. To answer the first research question, each participant shared some of their faith journey and recounted stories of how they got involved in crafting liturgical art. Additionally, all of them spoke of how they personally presented art in worship, how they equipped others to present art which they had prepared, and how they engaged the congregation in artistic activity. To answer the second, the participants spoke about challenges and obstacles they faced and overcame when presenting their art. Some challenges came from church leaders, some came from others in the congregation and some came from physical and logistical obstacles inherent in the environments where they worked. To answer the third question, each participant related stories of both their external and internal motivations to keep sharing their art in worship. This question also explored the best practices of initiating, maintaining and growing a vibrant worship arts ministry within a congregation. Finally, the participants explored the fourth research question as they talked about their long-term dreams and desires for art. Some spoke only

about their current ministry context, while others went far beyond and shared their imaginations without boundaries.

The next chapter will present a thorough discussion of findings from this study. These will include issues raised in the process of pursuing this study. Furthermore, common themes which arose in both the literature and the participant interviews will be explored in detail. In light of the findings from the project, the researcher will offer recommendations toward the practice of ministry. Key points which will encourage Christians to pursue the best possible approaches to worship ministry will also be thoroughly examined. Finally, the researcher will offer recommendations for further in-depth study in this area of ministry.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to explore how church members use their creative talents in public worship. Four critical areas of understanding influence this topic: the ways in which church members use their creative talents in worship; the challenges which they face when using their gifts in worship; the motives that drive them to perform in worship; and the future dreams which they desire to pursue. These areas led to the four research questions that guided this study:

1. How do church members use their creative talents in public worship?
2. What challenges do church members who use their creative talent in public worship face?
3. What motivates church members who use their creative talents in public worship?
4. In what ways, not currently exercised, do church members desire to use their creative talents in public worship?

Summary of Study and Findings

Chapter One clarified the perceived need for further research and understanding of worship and the arts. Several terms were then defined which provided understanding on certain aspects of liturgical creativity. The terms included art, song, instrumental, myth, sub-creator, and secondary world.

In Chapter Two, literature relevant to this study was reviewed and analyzed. The biblical foundations of creativity, art, and worship were explored first, with a particular emphasis on Bible passages that related these themes to each other. Second, material on

the history of art in Christian worship was examined, tracing significant, historical trends that influence the present conversation on liturgical creativity. Third, sources dealing specifically with current theological expositions of liturgical aesthetics or art in public worship were analyzed. Finally, literature was researched which expounded the Christian perspective and practice on creativity and imagination. Most of the literature promoted a positive view of creativity, encouraging Christians to use their imaginative gifts for the glory of God and good of their neighbor.

Chapter Three reviewed the methodology of the project, including a summary of the principles of qualitative research, the techniques of data collection, and the system for data analysis. The criteria for selecting the participants were discussed along with the process used for interviewing them. The chapter also stated the limitations of this study and the researcher's position and bias.

In Chapter Four, the study introduced the seven research participants and presented their interview responses organized according to the categories and sub-categories of the research questions. All of the participants were Christians with creative and artistic talents who regularly used their gifts in public worship and practiced a wide variety of performing and fine arts. First, the participants shared about their spiritual and creative journey. The participants spoke of how they personally presented art in worship, how they equipped others, and how they engaged the congregation in artistic activity. Second, the participants spoke about challenges when presenting their art. Some came from church leaders, some came from others in the congregation, and some came from logistical obstacles. Third, each participant related stories of their motivations to keep

growing a healthy ministry. Fourth, they talked about their long-term dreams and desires for art. Some spoke of their current context, while others went far beyond.

Discussion of Findings

The following discussion addresses the critical findings from the biblical material, literature, and interviews. It pays particular attention to material that was debated or that received significant reinforcement.

Biblical Material

The opening chapter of Genesis provides a firm foundation for pursing a biblical theology of creativity. Simply by creating the cosmos, turning the void into existence and life, God becomes humankind's primary model for creativity, since people are made in God's image. Because God's work was very good, people can freely and fully embrace the creative gifts given to them. Furthermore, God calls humans to fill, subdue, and rule the earth as his stewards: thus acting as artists and craftsmen under God's authority.

As explained in the biblical review, sin causes problems for human creativity. In this world, humans can no longer create without sin marring and bending to some degree. People's motives for making art are no longer pure, but the mandate to create has not been abrogated. In Isaiah, God tells of how he will purify and redeem broken works of humanity for his own glory, using them in the new heavens and new earth. The New Testament explains this mystery more as God reveals his perfect word, Jesus Christ. Through the work of Christ, God will make all creation new, and all Christ's people will join in perfect worship and workmanship for all eternity.

Another key theme from scripture is that God's people, from the beginning of time, have crafted works of beauty and truth. Corporate worship throughout the Bible is

immersed in song, art, architecture, and other creative works. However, one major passage about liturgical art still causes significant disagreements among Christians. When God gave the ten commandments, the opening injunction prohibits making an image that would be worshipped instead of God. Sadly, misunderstanding or misapplication of this command continues to influence the use of art in worship. Many have taken this passage out of context and forced it to endorse a prohibition on making any liturgical images whatsoever.

Alongside many other theologians and in light of other clear scripture passages, I believe the prohibition in the ten commandments forbids worshipping the artwork, which is indeed idolatry. The commandment does not forbid the making of artwork, which is part of humanity's creation mandate. People should rightly heed and fear the warning against idolatry, but this should not paralyze them from making all liturgical art.

Literature Review

One critical theme that repeatedly arose from the literature about the history of art in worship was the Protestant Reformation's negative legacy on liturgical creativity and beauty. The Protestant tradition, especially the Reformed line, seems to struggle the most with art in worship. Martin Luther's influence helped moderate this difficulty in the Lutheran tradition; John Calvin, likewise, was not as radical as many Calvinists would later become. Even so, many would-be reformers destroyed or removed the musical instruments and art from churches in Switzerland, Germany, Scotland, and England in the name of preventing idolatry. A lingering climate of fear and misunderstanding persists in many of these traditions today.

A winsome and proactive view of beauty that upholds the benefits of liturgical art can correct this imbalance. Jaroslav Pelikan, for example, speaks powerfully about the urgency to correct the problem, asking questions like whether the holocaust in World War II would have occurred if German Christians had pictures of Mary, the mother of Jesus and a Jewess, in their sacred spaces and services.

The American colonial society built upon the errors of the Protestant Reformation, even though it was far removed in time and space from Luther and Calvin. Many colonial worshippers were from traditions that followed a distorted view of liturgical art and thus viewed beauty in worship skeptically. Since survival was their overarching priority in the new world, colonial worshippers cast away anything that seemed unnecessary to worship and life in general. Functional architecture, bare walls, and a reduction of worship services to a sermon and some songs are the sole vestiges of liturgy that remained in America's colonial churches.

The literature on liturgical art revealed a striking trend in how different cultures and non-Western religions have very similar perspectives on the importance of sacred space and religious architecture. Worship and art converge in a sacred space to produce adoration and transcendence as the worshiper is connected to other times and places. Christian writers extrapolate and speak of liturgical art and architecture complementing one another to encourage prayer and renewal. One powerful image comes from theologian William Dyrness, who boldly claimed that worshipers could glimpse the new heaven and new earth when sacred space and works of art come together well. Another striking analogy comes from philosopher and musician Bruce Benson, who likens the

connection among art, space, liturgy, and the worshipers to an improvisational dialogue of jazz musicians that bridges the artificial divide between real life and art.

Worship without art is one-dimensional at best and harmful at worst. Art has the power of multi-dimensional communication—beauty and truth, symbol and proposition come together and become meaningful in the deepest sense of the word. Anytime Christians gather for worship, especially if the sacraments are present, they perform the gospel story, acting it out to some degree. Even a service with preaching, prayers, and songs alone, artistic elements remain. Christians who accept this level of liturgical art have drawn an arbitrary line on the creative spectrum and decreed that certain things are permitted, but others cross the line into being too radical. For example, would anyone want to listen to a sermon with no voice inflection whatsoever or a song without any dynamics or phrasing? These artistic elements help communicate with the worshippers more effectively and help them apprehend the essence of worship.

Worship is inherently symbolic and substantive. It carries meaning and real spiritual power that leads to spiritual formation. Theologians such as Stephen Guthrie, James Smith, Brian Godawa and others surveyed assert that singing, praying, engaging in contemplation of beauty, and wrestling with truth actually grow worshipers in grace while they execute the actions and bathe in the sensory experience of worship. Aesthetic worship is when a true and beautiful liturgy becomes the means of spiritual formation. What worshippers sense and feel shapes them as much as what they think. Simple intellectual assent to theology is trumped by heart, soul and mind in doxology. Our worship should thus be bathed in artistic creativity that points worshippers toward the kingdom of God.

Much of the literature on creativity speaks about how art needs a redemptive undercurrent. Jerram Barrs builds a rubric, drawn from humanity's experience in the Garden of Eden, where people once enjoyed beauty and glory. People now live in a world where paradise has been broken and mostly lost, although they know that it will one day come again in the renewed and transcendent Eden. Works of art contain bits of this truth and beauty and can thus show glimpses of heaven, which Christians can discern for their benefit and enjoyment. Philip Ryken reinforces this threefold perspective by emphasizing that human sub-creators should first direct their art towards God and for his glory. This redemptive thrust acknowledges the brokenness and sin that permeate human lives and their art this side of heaven. Dorothy Sayers also believed that redemption and brokenness would be mixed in every human creative endeavor.

Discernment and grace are critical to this process in the mind of the believer. Steve Turner acknowledges the struggle between Christian artists and their consumers who often desire works that are overtly religious or filled with explicit Christian symbolism. Art that is truly Christian should contain subtle and pervasive moments of grace that do not always shout at the audience. Leland Ryken pushes this example even further. His perspective, based upon Jesus himself being artistic, is that Christians should reclaim a lead role in the area of the arts across the spectrum.

Another common theme explores the tension between God's creative power and people's creative activity. Jeremy Begbie and Trevor Hart ground human creativity in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the ultimate expression of God's speech and his greatest work of art. Christians should humbly recognize that their creativity is bound up in God himself and is thus empowered by and subordinate to his creativity. Dorothy Sayers,

taking a slightly different path, affirms a very high view of human inspiration. Humans are closest to God when they create and do more than simply rearrange existing material. Sayers argues that there is something profoundly new about an artist's work.

Todd Johnson and Dale Savidge consider theatre to be inherently incarnational, since it involves actors incarnating a role with other live performers to a live audience. Benson adds another nuance to this humility by noting a distinction between God's pure creation and humanity's improvising or using material that was already present and simply needed to be brought to light. Both of these perspectives dovetail nicely with J. R. R. Tolkien's view of sub-creation. Nicholas Wolterstorff also believed that art should have an internal verisimilitude: its own world should be rich, deep, and function according to its laws. This draws the audience in very powerfully. Moreover, the audience does not need to waste energy forcing itself to suspend disbelief. Brian Godawa built on this theme as he spoke of the need for stories that are subversive. They are well told and speak the audience's language clearly, thus reaching out and enfolding them in the narrative journey. Sayers also applies this principle to theatre, challenging playwrights to craft excellent plays rather than trying to force conversion on the audience.

Two writers who joyfully explored the eternal implications of creativity are Richard Mouw and C. S. Lewis. Mouw's winsome understanding of the new Jerusalem in the books of Isaiah and Revelation clarify how imperfect works of culture can enter into the new, perfect earth. Mouw rightly argues that humanity's mandate to fill up creation with new things will not stop once we are glorified in eternity: heaven will not be a static place. Moreover, all of humanity's works of creativity this side of heaven will not be lost or cast away in judgment. Rather, Christ's transforming grace and power will purify and

redeem them, making them new. Mouw points out that God even purifies our machines of war in heaven and will do the same for our works of art. Finally, Mouw notes how the heavenly city's worship is so tangibly real and powerful that it fuels Christians' remaining journey in this world, and fills their worship with community, creativity, and charity to God's glory.

Like Mouw, C. S. Lewis had an unquenchable joy and longing for heaven that infused all of his life and writings to some degree. Lewis had a healthy love for Plato and constructed some of his views of heaven from the best parts of Plato's philosophy. Strikingly, Lewis' pervasively writes that heaven contains the real objects and persons in their fullness, while the current earth only has shadows or copies, much like Plato's cave. Human existence is truly life in what Lewis calls the shadowlands. This present life's powerful feeling of dissatisfaction drove Lewis to look and long for the ultimate reality of heaven. From accounts of his life, Lewis enjoyed living very much, so his love for heaven was strong indeed. Lewis felt that one could perceive glimpses of heaven in art, stories or music, and he spent countless hours chasing these glimpses before he began to perceive their true essence. In a moving scene, towards the end of *The Last Battle*, the final book in the Narnia series, the characters see and sense that the new world they entered. It's similar but infinitely different from the one they knew. Colors are deeper, tastes are richer, sounds are sweeter. Even the characters' bodies were glorified. They had finally made it home: they lived real life for the first, but certainly not the last, time.

Lewis, like Mouw, is keenly aware that the brokenness and perversion which now dominate people's souls and the world will be made right in the new heaven and the new earth. This world's brokenness will never trouble people again in the new earth. Creative

people will experience great freedom in the new earth because in this life, even when they make something beautiful, they often craft it for the wrong motives. Sin taints all craft and creativity. Apart from God's grace, all works of creativity will crumble into dust. Lewis rightly reminds his readers that the highest purpose of art is to show glimpses of truth, of beauty, of God, of heaven, and of real life. Only in heaven will Christian artists find their ultimate fulfillment and purpose.

J. R. R. Tolkien held one of the healthiest and well-formed views on creativity. However, he wrestled with God for years over the validity of his call to be a writer of fictional stories. This internal struggle, coupled with the external weight of his teaching responsibilities, his family expectations, and his own tendency to procrastinate, caused him to set aside his work on *The Lord of the* Rings for many months, even years. In the midst of that dark season, God used the persistent encouragement of his dear friend, C. S. Lewis, to restore Tolkien's confidence in writing his story. Not long afterward, Tolkien set forth his rationale and defense for storytelling as a legitimate Christian use of the creator's gifts. Tolkien believed that a story could present the great truths of Christianity through art and stir the audience's hearts and imaginations, moving them toward redemption. Readers could thus hear echoes of the gospel's great story in human stories told this side of heaven.

Once he knew his place in creation, Tolkien passionately partnered with God to make the world more beautiful. Tolkien also taught that humans are sub-creators: people make things that have their source in God, and they make them under God's authority. One day, all creation will resound with God's glory. If people have crafted something as a Christian believer, they have the incredible privilege of joining with God in making the

cosmos more beautiful. Jesus Christ, who is making all things new, will redeem failures and mistakes—by his grace and mercy—which haunt artists in this life.

In Tolkien's autobiographical and allegorical short story, *Leaf By Niggle*, he explores two radical and poignant themes that gave him lifelong inspiration as a sub-creator: by crafting art, humans help make both earth and heaven more beautiful. Tolkien believed that works of human creativity add to God's primary work of creation in this earth, and then somehow God will purify, redeem, and incorporate them into the new heaven and new earth. I have had the joyous privilege to lead discipleship and travel groups to England and Ireland most summers for over fifteen years. Although the groups cover many other authors and venues, reading and discussing this short story in the place Tolkien wrote it is always a powerful moment of the journey. Many of our travelers see the possibility of human creativity after death, in heaven, for the first time.

Tolkien fully acknowledged humanity's potential to bring evil and sin into the creative process. His stories contain dark characters who pervert creation and destroy beauty simply for spite or to satisfy their lust for domination. Other characters, thinking they pursued a noble goal, fell into evil due to misguided motives. Though humans often squander gifts and turn away from God's design, Tolkien believed that humanity's right to be creative has not been abrogated. People should strive to resist evil while crafting art, but they take ultimate comfort in God who will redeem his world beyond what they can imagine or achieve in their strength. Properly understood, this view of sub-creation can free and empower Christians to be creative in a rich and powerful way.

Interviews

I will next discuss some the responses of the participants, particularly when there were striking convergences or critical information shared. One common theme among the participants had to do with their family background and childhood. All of them were raised in a supportive, Christian family that participated in the church's worship and ministry. Several had parents who served in vocational ministry. Moreover, a few shared specifically about how their parent gave them the support and strong encouragement they needed to pursue an artistic vocation or ministry. Kate, a pastor's child, started leading music while still in high school.

Another area of convergence related to their frequency of leading in public worship. All but one led or presented their art in worship multiple times per month, with several leading on a weekly basis. Because they presented their art regularly, they sought to make their art accessible and religiously meaningful for the people in the congregation. This minimizes audience passivity and draws the people into active artistic worship. Jenny believed art could ground people's imagination and bring scripture to life. Alison, the outlier, performed less regularly because she shifted her focus from performance to coaching. Her stage of life changed, but love for dancing remained.

Another area of convergence was the challenges they had faced from church leaders. While most of the participants were currently in healthy ministry contexts, all at some point had faced challenges or heard negative comments from church leaders. One reason this challenge arose was that many leaders did not understand the participants' art well or know how to best use it in worship. Dan believed that most pastors and lay leaders in the Reformed tradition see the world in very word-centered ways and thus do

not appreciate or comprehend symbols or stories well. Eric felt that some pastors just wanted him to paint crosses and overt Christian symbols in worship rather than painting real life, true, or beautiful things. Steve felt that most typical pastors do not understand the world and struggles of being a worship pastors.

The participants all received occasional and various negative feedback from the congregation. All the participants had solid congregational support most of the time. Steve noted that adequate communication often helps diffuse tensions over sensitive topics like liturgical art and changes thereto. Several indicated that they rarely heard complaints from people. Ron spoke of one particular church leader who took care of him well and defended him with people who complained. Nonetheless, all also had a certain individual or two react powerfully and negatively to their art. Eric recalled a member who called him a heretic and even worse, which was painful to hear.

The participants spoke about similar logistical challenges. All struggled with insufficient or improper infrastructure. The buildings often did not have enough space or did not configure the existing space in a manner conducive to performing arts. Alison noted many occasions where her entire dance team was expected to squeeze into a tiny square of cleared floor. Ron, likewise, needed significant acoustical renovations in their entire worship hall, but the church could not afford the changes. Many churches had inadequate sound and media equipment. Jenny was frustrated that most churches she knew of had the wrong type of sound gear to reinforce live theater properly.

All of the artists also admitted their financial support was often inadequate for their task. At best, the budgets maintained their artistic endeavors but did not promote

vibrant growth. For example, Jack's successful worship ministry ended up in an unsustainable situation due to lack of funds.

Most of the artists also spoke about the challenge of successfully scheduling sufficient rehearsal time to equip the volunteer musicians or artists to lead in worship. Preparing liturgical art with a team takes a practice. Kate commented on not having enough time to teach new songs adequately to the choir. In the realm of live drama, Jenny felt that theater took even more intense time to prepare adequately than music.

Examining the participants' external motivations also led to some important observations about the best practices in leading worship. Expectedly, the artists talked often about their need and appreciation for spoken, written, and other forms of encouragement. Kate shared one story that moved her. A longtime opponent of Kate's musical style came to love and enjoy her music in worship, and this person let Kate know personally. The liturgical artists also value the pastors' and lay leaders' support. Dan spoke of his church's elders embracing his vision for storytelling. Jenny also noted that her pastor's support trumped much of the small complaints members sometimes shared.

Observing the internal motivations of the participants also yielded rich results. Unsurprisingly, personally worshipping by crafting their art motivated and refreshed all the artists. Alison related how much her dancing and choreographing helped her to connect with God in worship. Dan also experienced great joy in worship when people engaged with his storytelling. Eric felt that his art allowed him to worship more deeply, connecting with the whole of human experience in the liturgy.

Furthermore, each prioritized the act of worship and moving through liturgy. A conviction that we are what we worship motivated them all. Liturgy has incredible

potential to shape human lives, for good or for ill. Worship is an act of spiritual formation which must be approached intentionally. Jenny noted that her art, which purposefully brings scripture to life, was growing her in grace. Eric believed that liturgical art helped worshippers imagine and respond to the future.

Several of the participants spoke about the artist's prophetic role in worship. Alison uses dance as an opportunity to teach dancers about worship. Jenny speaks hard truth to the congregation through art, making it easier for the worshippers to hear. All the artists shared a zeal to spread the gospel through liturgy and art. Jack related how seeing people come to faith powerfully motivated him to keep leading worship. Kate, likewise, loves seeing musicians become believers after worshipping several times with the congregation.

The participants' long-range desires varied greatly. Although they all dreamed of expanding their liturgical art's depth and variety, the form varied from person to person. Alison hoped to see more worship dance classes taught in churches, a goal close to her current practice. Ron also mostly stayed close to his present context, seeking to give the musicians and congregation more freedom to improvise and linger on moments in the service and adding additional, new music at special seasons of the Christian year. Dan desired to see the number of members inviting seekers to hear the storytelling sermons grow from a few to all. Jack also had a local dream to build their ministry to more artists in the community and intentionally involve them in the life of the church.

On a larger scale, the participants shared some exciting dreams about their futures. Jack hoped to start a new community choir that would promote a vibrant expression of historical choral worship music. Eric longed to equip artists to express the

totality of Jesus' life and work more effectively. Dan mused upon the possibility of equipping preachers to be better storytellers in a large-scale context. Ron longed to see his church write and sing new songs in a black gospel style that would connect to another group of their community. Kate hoped to compose large-scale works, including setting the Mass and worship music in a post-tonal style. Jenny desired to see many more churches expand their staff vision to embrace a worship pastor or director who is a playwright or actor. Finally, Alison sought to find or create a context to develop an informal dance ministry, where people could dance and worship as individuals, away from a public church service's pressure and limitations.

Some other striking and encouraging trends emerged from their long-range dreams. Most of the participants describe their desire for worshippers in their congregations to grow in their love for God and their appreciation of his grace through more true and beautiful worship. Alison hopes that she could provide contexts for people who express their adoration best by dancing. She observed that most churches' primary language of worship is singing, which does not connect with everyone. Jenny desires to see the church become more open to storytelling and drama as critical parts of the service. Like Alison, Jenny agrees that music is the dominant worship language and feels that adding other artistic genres would deepen people's worship. Kate, speaking as a musician, desires to grow the congregation's appreciation and understanding of more diverse styles of music. One of these, ironically, is the post-tonal, twentieth-century style, which many typical listeners might initially find unsettling. Ron longs to see his musicians and members take more risks during the service by intentionally leaving room for spontaneity and also by trying new genres of songs. He wants to go beyond the

printed bulletin and leave room for the Holy Spirit to act in unscripted moments and for members to add to the service in an improvisational dialogue. Dan wants both leaders and members to grow in their storytelling skill, giving them opportunities to practice. He hopes to have other leaders bring a narrative flow to their liturgical leading and have members take hold of the stories as tools for discipleship and outreach. Eric, as a worship leader, helps people gain a richer appreciation of God through deeper and more beautiful worship. He hopes to use visual art to deepen their understanding of Jesus' life, suffering, death, and triumph. Eric wants to give the congregations' faith an authenticity in the struggles of life. Jack dreams about equipping and releasing many artists and creative people for worship ministry. He would love to see a worshipping community of artists develop within their church that all had opportunities for rewarding liturgical ministry.

These artists want to stretch the boundaries of their current congregation. Much like the prophets of old, creative artists often have a restless striving against complacency and stagnation. While this can lead to change for the sake of change, this drive to push the boundaries can powerfully propel a church's teaching and discipleship ministry. All the participants echoed the view that liturgical music has great transformative power to stretch people beyond their current perspectives and languages of worship. Worshipers can tangibly see, hear, smell, and sense some of the best and beautiful practices from other times and places in the church of Jesus Christ.

Recommendations for Practice

This section will bring together all the previous strands of literature, research, and discussion in order to recommend practices. I have three main goals in the following recommendations. First, I want to offer encouragement to Christian artists by showing

positive examples of how other creative Christians use their talents and gifts successfully in liturgy. Second, I want to share insights with pastors, lay leaders, and worship leaders about how other churches use symbol, story, and song to add beauty and artistry to their worship spaces and services, thus helping them authentically communicate to their community. Third, I want to invite all Christians to recover their common hope for life together in the grace of Jesus and their common purpose in bringing the beautiful and true story of the good news of Jesus to a broken world.

All areas of this project reinforced the importance of families encouraging children to live liturgically and think creatively. Promoting a healthy worldview, that all of life is an act of worship, helps give meaning and vibrancy to the formal services of worship children attend. Since most of their lives are not spent at public worship, it behooves adults to cultivate children's desire to do all things for God's glory. As with the study participants, parents can help children discern their gifts and call in this life at an early age. No matter what vocation they pursue, thinking creatively is an asset. Viewing their whole life as grateful worship will ground children in the gospel of grace. They can then pursue art as one aspect of a healthy life of worship.

Furthermore, families should provide chances for children to explore the arts beyond what happens in school or in community programs. If children find an avenue (or avenues) of artistic expression, starting young is a great benefit for vocational and avocational artists. Almost all the participants explored their artistic craft when they were young and grew their talent into maturity over time. Children more easily learn the tools and techniques required in artistic pursuits than adults. Almost all the artists had their family's support as they chose their vocational paths. For families who are already

burdened or leading busy lives, this exhortation to make room for art is not a guilt trip or just another activity. Rather, I hope that we will all gain perspective about how to use our time, gifts, and talents better, as an offering of worship to God.

Based upon the research, I recommend that families cultivate a healthy relationship with a local church and get involved in leading worship or doing art in the context of ministry. I recognize no church is perfect, and every church member has faults. Even so, Christians are called to the body life of Christ's bride. Public worship generally only happens when Christians come together to gather in Christ's name and revel in his presence with them.

Other key factors contribute to healthy worship. First, leaders must be transparent about their own need for Christ and be honest about their dependence upon him. Second, the church should be open to the Holy Spirit's work of growth and renewal. Third, the gospel of grace should be the foundation of worship and other ministries of the church. The church should be intentional about worship as spiritual formation. It should also be intentional about doxological evangelism, which means that worship—and all areas of ministry—should have outreach as an underlying goal. Again, these factors do not produce perfection, but they do lead to truer and more beautiful worship of God.

Another critical recommendation is for worship artists to lead worship frequently. One of the best ways to learn is to practice. In healthy situations, using one's gifts in worship should also be an opportunity for God to bring renewal, healing, and personal growth in grace. This also involves regularly recruiting, equipping, and releasing other gifted members to serve. Team-based ministry is essential to healthy worship. Artists are able to share the load of leading worship regularly. Having a group of brothers and sisters

to share the journey magnifies the joy and relieves the pain along the way. A team becomes greater than sum of its parts and creates momentum for ministry.

From my own experience of thirty years leading worship, I have seen firsthand the strengths of having a team and also felt the pain of trying to do most things alone or with only professional help. For example, when I lived and served in England for a short season, I dreamed that a big highlight would be meeting popular Christian musicians or discovering new songs. Instead, the most important thing I learned about worship was from everyday worship leaders with everyday church ministries who all spoke wisely and passionately about building community among worship teams. The goal of building a team also resonates with both the literature and the participants in this project.

Another recommendation has to do with the concept of excellence. The term is used often when describing worship goals or as a yardstick to measure perceived success. One danger, however, is the wildly varying expectations of what constitutes excellence among churches in different contexts. Healthy excellence is using people's gifts and talents well and in context. Teams should include both members of the congregation and people from the community. Worship leaders must discern the level of skill, experience, and talent that people possess. Then they give team members opportunities to participate in the worship team at a level that plays mostly to their strengths.

Stretching team members through this process is also a key part of developing gifts. At one end of this spectrum is the error of exclusivity, which demands an almost professional level of perfection and excludes amateurs from leading worship. The other end of the spectrum is just as unhealthy, however. Letting anyone do anything they want in worship fails to account for people's gifts and calling to help lead public worship.

Churches should balance these two extremes in a way that is appropriate for their particular community and congregation. On one side, scripture recognizes artistic standards, and the literature and participants found that public worship differs from most moments in everyday life. Keep in mind, however, that it is not radically different, since all of life is worship. Guard against being too professional or too snobby. There is a real risk of alienating talented people and discouraging them from using their gifts to bless the congregation as the Bible calls for them to do.

When wrestling with the issue of artistic quality and excellence, the categories from J. R. R. Tolkien's essay, *On Fairy Stories*, are useful to develop healthy standards for excellence in both creating art and discerning which art is most helpful for worship. Tolkien used the categories of recovery, escape and consolation in the context of stories, but they are applicable to all forms of creative expression. First, art should promote recovery: Art should help people regain clear sight and be restored to health. Art should give people a new perspective and enable them to see things as they are. Further, this means that art should refresh people's entire being—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Second, art should grant escape: Art should give people a momentary respite from their present self-made misery and the ugliness of the broken world. Ultimately, this means art should portray the escape from the final evil of death. Healthy escape is from circumstances that arise from the fall's perversion of humanity and creation. Unhealthy escape dodges the lawful and good things of God's creation. Healthy escape is also diametrically opposed to the paralyzing sin of escapism, which seeks distraction from, or

deadening of, the pain people normally must endure in this life. Good art enables people to persevere though the brokenness along the path of suffering into glory.

Third, art should contain consolation: Art needs a happy ending or at least a happy turn. Tolkien calls this a "eucatastrophe," a sudden moment of grace which appears in the face of great evil and brings overwhelming good. While some art accurately portrays the fallen world's sin, this type of art should be used cautiously in the context of worship. The good news should break through elsewhere in the service, or perhaps even later in that same work of art. Art without any consolation should not be the main art presented in worship. The best liturgical art should bring people through the brokenness of the world they know, to the happy ending of the new life found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another corollary of the excellence discussion is about the danger of false modesty among many Christians when it comes to sharing their creative gifts and created works with others. One aspect of false modesty is fear of others, of failure, or of looking foolish. Another, more toxic aspect is competition with other artists, either wanting to show them up or to avoid embarrassment at being compared. Personally, I have fought this battle for years in my career. From my human perspective, it seems safer to write material simply for classes or arrange music another composer has written. C.S. Taking a risk to create something new or beyond the ordinary is often daunting. Lewis speaks about one of heaven's greatest gifts—eliminating jealousy among humans. People will be as excited when one of their fellow brothers or sisters creates something as if it were a work they had made themselves, without a trace of jealousy. Likewise, J.R.R. Tolkien speaks of the banishment of pride in that heavenly realm. Humans will give glory to God

and celebrate their works without the slightest taint of arrogance. By the power of the gospel of grace, we can pray for and cultivate these attitudes now. We should freely and fully use the creativity we have been given, at whatever level of attainment it seems to be in this life. All humans can rejoice in our smallness, in the fact that we are sub-creators. Bach, Bubba, and the Blues Brothers are all in the same boat together.

One further application about excellence is that churches should make liturgical art accessible and religiously significant for worshippers. Accessibility and significance minimize passivity and enhance authenticity in the congregation. If the art is too esoteric or over people's heads, many will likely tune out of worship or at least ignore that particular component. If the art fails to tap into the underlying current of worship-related material, many will likely be distracted or dismiss the art as irrelevant. Churches should, thus, factor accessibility and significance into their vision for excellence.

Many pastors and worship leaders spend much of their time talking at each other instead of listening to each other in true dialogue. Because they have the gifts and call to shepherd the flock, pastors and ordained lay leaders should ensure they support the creative artists who serve in ministry. Leaders should prevent misunderstanding by speaking clearly about the role and function of art in public worship. They should also make an effort to speak the artists' language if possible. This may be difficult, since many pastors and elders tend to speak more with their left-brain, using words, logic, and linear sequences to communicate. Many typical creative artists use their right brains more, using symbols, intuition, and holistic thinking to communicate. Most people use both processes, but favor one or the other.

Likewise, creative artists should strive to understand the way most pastors usually speak. Ideally, both groups can meet in the middle and comprehend each other well. Pastors and elders must support the worship leaders, and vice versa. Cultivating self-awareness about different ways of processing information helps different personality types work together in ministry.

If pastors and worship leaders are to speak each other's language, churches must intentionally seek leaders who are right-brained and worship leaders who are left-brained. Having a plurality of personality types helps maintain a healthy perspective on most issues, especially liturgy and creativity. Each personality type has complementary strengths and weaknesses. When different people work in harmony, they cover for each other and find the answer. When one type dominates, it produces a one-dimensional window to see reality and leads to ingrown and stagnant vision.

When congregations speak and demonstrate love and charity to the worship leaders, they build rapport. Congregations should offer words, notes and other forms of encouragement to their liturgical artists. Complaints easily come to worship leaders because of their visibility. Complaints take their toll on any person in ministry, but artists keenly feel their weight, and friendly fire often wounds them. Pastors and elders should stand up for the worship leaders and shield them from complaining's bitterness and venom. This does not mean that artists should not be corrected. Rather, pastors should discern how to best grow worship leaders in wisdom and practice and then help them achieve that goal in the context of relational ministry. The content of most complaints, however, is mostly grumbling and can be ignored or corrected. Knee-jerk responses to complaints usually do more harm than good.

Giving glory to God in corporate worship should be a church's highest priority in both theology and practice. Worship is foundational for life and fuel for ministry. Where a church budgets its financial resources shows clearly where its priorities lie. Even healthy churches, like the ones in this project, often lack finances to fund their worship and arts ministry fully. Most churches seem content with maintaining instead of advancing. This view is unhealthy because there is no middle ground: a church is either growing or dying. Maintenance is a temporary illusion of security that will not last. All members of the church should grow in their stewardship of their time, talents, and resources. As the entire congregation is mobilized, the leaders can prioritize a vision for growing the worship ministry with the finances to flourish.

A similar logistical consideration concerns the resources used to support worship ministry. Churches should investigate and secure the proper media and technical gear to adequately present the desired liturgical art. The people who use this gear should be trained well and equipped to do their jobs correctly. The time and energy invested in researching, purchasing, and training for this area will pay great dividends in the present day and for years to come. Many challenges in the realm of liturgical art can be directly traced to poor or improper equipment and insufficient training.

Likewise, many challenges arise from issues with the church's architecture. Regarding aesthetics, many Protestant churches have plain, functional buildings with little or no form. In addition, the worship space inside the building is often a bare box or rectangle with little beauty. Ironically, these plain rooms, supposedly built to be functional, have poor acoustics, dim lighting, inadequate floor space, or other issues that hinder liturgical art. I recognize that it will be difficult for most churches to afford major

renovations or commit to having a beautiful worship space. Prayerfully opening these discussions, however, can help leaders wrestle with making liturgical space both practical and beautiful as an aid to richer worship. Ideally, churches should have adequate space and structure to do all forms of art well.

Another recommendation for church leaders is to prioritize time for creative artist and worship leaders. Allow people the freedom to find their proper niche according to their gifting and interest. Small congregations may find prioritizing resources for artists difficult. Larger churches may struggle with busyness or over-commitment. However, members will flourish if they find time, space, and support to use their gifts in the proper area of ministry. This is especially true for those with artistic gifts, as busyness can quickly choke creativity.

Once church leaders engage artists in their congregation, allow them a prophetic role and to push beyond the status quo. Art should shake people from moral complacency and spiritual blindness. Based on both the literature and the interviews, Christian artists commonly dream of art that would stretch the boundaries of present tastes and genres to help congregations grow in their understanding of God and his grace. Of course, this stretching should be done according to God's word, with the prayerful leading of the Holy Spirit, and under the pastors' and lay leaders' wise guidance. The whole congregation should move together in the same direction, although many times the artists may see the road to be walked more quickly and clearly than others. Patience and prayerful dialogue will enable unified progress. Church leaders can cultivate freedom for creative people to dream, even if their dreams seem too large or too strange at first glance. Intuitive leaps and thinking outside the box are often part of the right-brained

person's toolbox. Different explorations of current genres, new works of art, and completely unknown forms of art will be the result of this atmosphere.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research project touched on peripheral topics that would be worthy of more study. One issue that surfaced several times was the primacy of music as the artistic language among worship pastors or directors. Although much study exists on presenting other forms of art like dance and theatre in liturgy, there seems to be little written about this phenomenon from a biblical or practical level. Most of the participants corroborated that jobs worship ministry job for people other than musicians are scarce.

Furthermore, although many universities and seminaries now offer classes in worship leadership, more study is needed on how many church musicians and artists have availed themselves of this training. From my own experience and from this study, having a solid biblical, and theological foundation is a great strength for a worship pastor or worship leader. Discovering ways to persuade artists to follow that path and giving them support to do so would be a great opportunity for the church.

On the other side of this dialogue are pastors who go to seminary and never take a single course in worship, aesthetics, or other creative studies. More research could explore the one-dimensional degree tracks at most Protestant seminaries and discuss ways to deepen their training in speaking in the language of metaphor, song, and symbol. This is all the more relevant as western society moves further into a post-modern narrative and longs to hear Jesus in that language.

Another question centers on the present ramifications of worship in the consummation of the new heaven and new earth. As reviewed in the literature, there is

some discussion about how current heavenly worship empowers the present, and many have written about future heavenly worship. The relationship between the current world and works of humanity and the future world and works of humanity could be explored farther. It is perhaps not surprising that there are more fictional stories about this aspect of heaven, such as *The Great Divorce* and *Leaf By Niggle*, since the symbolic imagination probably has an advantage over the rational mind in this case. Even so, a full biblical and theological study of this area by scholars, pastors, and artists would be a welcome addition to our appreciation of heaven.

From the area of liturgical history, some questions arose about the legacy of the centuries-long battles over icons and the great schism between the Eastern church and the Western church in the Middle Ages. While each side of the split has written much, defending their own position or criticizing the other, there is little that explores the common ground on the use of symbols and images in worship. It would be a huge and perilous undertaking, but research towards building a healthy view of liturgical symbolism by tracing strands of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions would be beneficial.

On a personal level, I cannot speak of divisions in worship without mentioning another schism prominent in my own region. There are still many communities in America where the Sunday worship hour is shockingly segregated. While this is slowly changing, bringing more vibrancy and expression into our liturgy may help heal those wounds as well. Perhaps this ambitious future study could lead toward mutual understanding and healing of persistent liturgical rifts among Christians. It seems too

large a task for humans, but God delights in doing the impossible and further declares that the world will recognize Christians by their unity and love for each other. May it be.

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