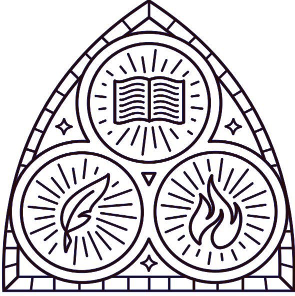

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EDITORIAL

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is dedicated to the integral relationship between our thoughts about God and our worship of God. The following essays explore important aspects of the biblical basis for that relationship as well as historical and contemporary discussions regarding theology and worship.

Franklin Segler, who taught for 21 years at Southwestern Seminary after more than a decade in the pastorate,[1] argued dogmatically and with passion that we must recognize the necessary connection between worship and theology. Segler's position was, in short, "Christian worship is God-centered."[2] To worship properly first means knowing God through his Word and then responding to the grace wrought by his Spirit. That God's personal revelation in Christ requires a heartfelt response was deemed axiomatic:

> The basis of Christian worship is not utilitarian but theological. Worship depends upon revelation, and Christian worship depends upon the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. Worship is therefore a revelation and a response. It springs from the divine initiative in redemption. By faith man responds to grace as he finds it in a face-to-face encounter with God.[3]

Likewise, William J. Reynolds affirmed the link between theology and worship was inextricable. "Widely recognized as the foremost Southern Baptist leader of and writer on hymnody,"[4] this Southwestern distinguished alumnus [5] led the committee for the *Baptist Hymnal* to make sure every

[1] Segler was one of the 25 faculty singled out for recognition by James Leo Garrett Jr. C.W. Brister, "Franklin Morgan Segler," in James Leo Garrett Jr., ed., *The Legacy of Southwestern: Writings that Shaped a Tradition* (North Richland Hills, TX: Smithfield Press, 2002), 171-82.

[2] Franklin M. Segler, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1967), 58.

[3] Segler, *Christian Worship*, 57-58.

[4] David W. Music, "William Jensen Reynolds," in *The Legacy of Southwestern*, 311.

[5] Robert A. Baker, *Tell the Generations Following: A History of Southwestern Baptist Theological*

hymn text was "critically examined for theological accuracy and doctrinal soundness" as well as for "musical experience."[6] The recipient of many awards and accolades, Reynolds served on Southwestern Seminary's music faculty from 1980 to 1998 and "provided the foundation on which all subsequent studies of Baptist hymnody and church music" would be based.[7]

As this issue demonstrates, the current faculty in the School of Church Music and Worship, the School of Theology, and Texas Baptist College are building on that solid Southwestern foundation. Joshua Williams, associate professor of Old Testament and director of the seminary's research doctoral studies program, analyzes the worship practices of Israel in 1 and 2 Chronicles. He demonstrates how David and other righteous kings both kept the Mosaic Law and introduced new elements without contradicting that standard. His reflections upon divine holiness, liturgical precedent, and innovation should prompt further contemporary reflection.

The next two essays review important persons and events regarding worship and theology from the early church. Research professor of theology D. Jeffrey Bingham rehearses the responses of Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons to heresies which roiled the early church and attempted to lead the people of God astray. One of Bingham's many helpful reflections on their work, though shocking, must compel us toward embracing theological orthodoxy. "Error in Christological doctrine breeds failure in humanitarian care; heresy yields hatred." In the next essay, assistant professor of humanities Coleman Ford offers a helpful review of the efforts of Ambrose of Milan to sustain Nicene orthodoxy. Ford argues that the heresiarch Arius, who diminished the Son in his relationship with the Father, and the Arians were able to further their heresy through the use of song. Athanasius evaluated the problem and Ambrose borrowed the same strategy to combat Arianism and exalt Jesus Christ. Ford's work should prompt more pastors and theologians to help further orthodoxy through crafting helpful hymns, songs, and other helpful artistic forms.

In the next three essays, faculty from the School of Church Music and Worship demonstrate both their stellar theological acumen and excellent musical capabilities. The dean of the school, Joseph R. Crider, re-visions the congregational gathering by offering three keys for the transformation of our worship. Marcus Brown, assistant professor of church music and

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Seminary 1908-1983 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983), 513.

[6]William J. Reynolds, "Introduction," *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1975), viii.

[7]Music, "Reynolds," 317.

worship, calls for worship leaders to carefully examine the link between the "law of faith" (*lex credendi*) and the "law of prayer" (*lex orandi*). Finally, associate professor of music theory Nathan P. Burggraff provides insightful analysis on how our worship has been changed in ways that inhibit congregational singing. Burggraff argues that simply evaluating the type of music we use can have an impact on participation. All three essays should be consulted both by worship leaders and other theologians.

We conclude the introduction to this important issue of the seminary's academic journal with some encouraging words about worship from Southwestern Seminary's lodestar for systematic theological reflection:

> Worship needs to glorify the triune God, to awaken worshipers to the presence and leadership of God, to enliven and apply the biblical story, to equip worshipers for their mission and service in the world, and to quicken the anticipation of the last things.[8]

David S. Dockery and Malcolm B. Yarnell III

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[8]James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2001), 657.

THE STABLE BUT DYNAMIC NATURE OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP: REFLECTIONS FROM 1 & 2 CHRONICLES

Joshua E. Williams*

What qualifies as worship seems to differ from one congregation to another. Just looking at the Sunday morning worship service among Southern Baptists reveals a diversity of experiences: a miniconcert of a professional recording artist, a corporate prayer of repentance, a standup comedy routine, a children's sermon, a singing sermon, a clip from a popular movie, a seasonal drama, interpretive dance, congregational singing, choral singing, a praise band performance, a recitation of the Nicene Creed, a time of financial offering, a time of public financial commitment, spontaneous congregational testimonies, small group prayer times, baptism, the Lord's Supper, a personal interview with a member of the congregation, a retelling of a biblical story, an expository sermon, a thematic sermon, a Fourth of July celebration, a magic show, a time of public confession of personal sin, a flannel board presentation, a bells concert, a puppet show, and probably much more. This diversity makes me wonder whether anything goes in worship these days.

To address this issue, I offer some observations from the Old Testament, specifically 1 and 2 Chronicles. Although Chronicles may not seem like a natural choice for this task, it recounts a history of Israel focused on Israel's worship.[1] Therefore, it provides a look at what God has accepted

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*Joshua E. Williams serves as associate professor of Old Testament and director of the research doctoral studies program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[1]To elaborate on the choice of Chronicles, I mention three features of the book that make it a helpful resource. First, from the genealogies in the beginning to the words of Cyrus at the end, the book highlights the significant role that the Levites and priests play performing their worship practices at the Jerusalem temple. Second, Chronicles stresses proper worship. On numerous occasions, Chronicles records how YHWH punished someone for improper worship. Therefore, it may provide some principles for distinguishing appropriate from inappropriate worship. Third, since Chronicles is a picture of Israel's history, it can provide insight into how Israel's worship developed over time if it did develop.

and rejected in the course of Israel's history.[2]

I. NARRATIVE SNAPSHOTS TO CONSIDER

Chronicles records several narratives that are helpful for the topic. I offer snapshots of some of them to start the discussion. For the first snapshot, Chronicles recounts a disastrous event within Israel's history of worship. One of the first narratives in Chronicles describing David's reign recounts Israel's failed attempt to transfer the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chr 13:1–14). The narrative begins by recounting that David and the people decided to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The people placed the ark on a new cart pulled by oxen. Uzzah and his brother Ahio guided the animals as they headed to Jerusalem. When one of the oxen stumbled, Uzzah stretched out his hand to steady the ark so that it would not fall to the ground. When he did so, God became furious with him and killed him. David responded in fear and decided to abandon this attempt to bring the ark.

For the second snapshot, Chronicles recounts a different aspect of David's reign. In Jerome's introduction to his Latin translation of Chronicles, he characterizes some of the material as a "forest of names."[3] At first, one may think of this forest as the chapters of genealogy introducing Chronicles (1 Chr 1–9); however, another list of names occupies several chapters in the middle of the narrative account of David's reign: 1 Chr 23–27. These chapters outline David's work to organize the priests and Levites into various divisions and expanded roles. David organized the priests into twenty-four divisions and assigned some of the Levites various roles.[4]

The third snapshot also comes from David's reign. During David's second attempt to transfer the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David appointed certain Levitical families to serve as musicians. These musicians

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[2]For a look at the importance of the temple in determining whether a king's reign is upright or wicked, see Troy Cudworth, "The Temple Context for the Law in Chronicles," *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 21 (2021), https://jhsonline.org/index.php/jhs/article/view/29591.

[3]Jerome, *Chron*., Praef. 3.

[4]When speaking of the Levites, some confusion may arise because the term *Levite* may refer to three distinct groups: 1) generally to a member of the tribe of Levi (including priests), 2) more specifically to other members of the tribe of Levi excluding the priests (although including musicians, guardians, etc.), or 3) most specifically to members of the tribe of Levi who serve as the assistants to the priests (excluding musicians, guardians, etc.). I find it useful to call this third, most specific group "cultic Levites," following the suggestion of Jonker; Louis C. Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Understanding the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 148–49. When David organized the tribe of Levi in 1 Chronicles 23–26, he recognized the following roles: priests, cultic Levites, musicians, guardians, officials, and judges.

first processed with the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:16–24). Once the ark lay in Jerusalem, David appointed some musicians to perform regularly before the ark (1 Chr 16:4–6, 37–38) and others to perform regularly before the altar of sacrifice (1 Chr 16:41–42). In this way, David introduced music into Israel's worship.

The fourth snapshot comes from the reign of Hezekiah. After Hezekiah reinstated Israel's ritual worship at the Jerusalem temple (2 Chr 29:35), he invited all Israel, including the northern tribes, to observe Passover in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30:1–5). Hezekiah, in consultation with the people, determined to observe Passover in the second month because few people were in Jerusalem and the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient numbers (2 Chr 30:3).

The fifth snapshot relates to Josiah's reign. After Josiah's reform and the discovery of the Law scroll within the Jerusalem temple, Josiah decided to observe Passover (2 Chr 35:1). The celebration took place in Jerusalem. Josiah and his officials provided the sacrifices (2 Chr 35:7–9), and the priests and Levites acted as representatives for the various families, performing the sacrifices and distributing the meat to the families (2 Chr 35:11–14).

Of these snapshots, only the first has negative results. The other four snapshots are positive pictures of piety. One often overlooked difference between the first snapshot and the remaining four is the role of the king. When Uzzah touched the ark, he did not act according to the command of King David. However, in every other case, the Davidic king, whether David himself or one of his descendants (e.g., Hezekiah and Josiah), commanded Israel's worship practices. Perhaps, the Chronicler is describing a situation similar to the end of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel, so everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25).

The observation suggests that the Davidic king is the key to proper worship. However, one more snapshot from Chronicles requires attention. After King Uzziah of Judah became wealthy and influential because of God's blessing on him,[5] he became proud and decided to offer incense within YHWH's temple (2 Chr 26:16). As the king entered the temple with the censer in his hand, the priests confronted him. They warned Uzziah that God would not reward him for offering incense in the temple because only the priests are appointed for that task. The king responded in anger, and when he did so, God immediately punished him with a skin disease

[5]The account of Uzziah's reign (2 Chr 26) highlights that God helped Uzziah gain military victory, wealth, and renown (see vv. 5, 7, 15).

that broke out on his forehead.[6] This skin disease rendered Uzziah ritually unclean so that he had to leave the temple immediately. Uzziah remained diseased throughout his lifetime such that he never returned to the temple.

Uzziah's case demonstrates that the Davidic king is not the key to proper worship. If the king is not the key, then what is? A natural answer would be the Law of Moses: If the people obeyed the Law of Moses, then their worship would lead to blessing, but if they disobeyed the Law of Moses, then their worship would end in disaster. However, the situation is not quite so simple in Chronicles. To demonstrate this situation requires a closer look at the narratives beyond just snapshots.

II. CLOSER LOOK AT THE NARRATIVES

1. *Uzzah's Death and the Ark.* The narrative of Uzzah's death as he touched the ark presents an account of God's terrifying power and destroying punishment. What went wrong? How does Chronicles hint at the reasons for this disaster? The simple answer is that Uzzah touched a holy object, God's ark, and, therefore, he died. However, examining how this failed attempt compares to Israel's later successful attempt to transfer the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:1–29) provides further insights into what went wrong.

Several contrasts point to the reasons for the failed attempt. First, for the successful attempt, David prepared a tent for the sole purpose of housing the ark (v. 1). David made no such preparations for the failed attempt. Second, David commanded the priests and Levites to prepare themselves to bear the ark on their shoulders using poles, following Mosaic regulations (compare vv. 14–15 to Exod 25:14; Num 7:9). For the failed attempt, David did not reserve a special role for the priests and Levites even though they were among those invited to bring up the ark. Third, David organized an entire procession of Levitical singers and guardians and placed them under the supervision of the Levite Chenaniah (v. 22).[7] For the failed attempt, the people made no preparations for the Levitical

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[6]Although the traditional translation of the term used in Hebrew (צָרַעַת) is "leprosy," the Hebrew term can refer to a variety of skin diseases sharing common visible symptoms, not just leprosy (technically known as Hansen's disease).

[7]Chenaniah's role is not clear because the term used to describe the area of his supervision is ambiguous. The Hebrew expression reads בְּמַשָּׂא. English translations treat the word as referring to the singing; however, the term more often refers to a load or burden. I would argue that Chenaniah is overseeing the whole procession. As Kleinig states, "He was therefore responsible for both the physical and musical 'transportation' of the ark"; John W. Kleinig, *The LORD's Song: The Basis, Function, and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*, JSOTSup 156 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1993), 47n1.

transfer of the ark. Fourth, the people performed sacrifices before the ark as it moved to Jerusalem (v. 26), whereas during the failed attempt no sacrifices took place. These differences point both to the care that David took to bring the ark during the successful attempt and to the people's obedience in following Mosaic regulations regarding the transport of holy vessels such as the ark.

Examining the contrasts between the two attempts highlights the different consequences for how this service to God was carried out for both attempts. At the same time, the two narratives do not present all matters of Israel's worship as responsible for the different outcomes. The narratives do not point to the people's activity before the ark as a reason for the tragedy. During Israel's failed attempt, David and the people celebrated before the ark with music (1 Chr 13:8). Mosaic Law does not command such celebration, calling into question its appropriateness. However, the same language describes how David acted before the ark during the successful attempt (1 Chr 15:28–29); therefore, the activity of musical celebration does not constitute a reason for the failed attempt.

The narratives describing the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem highlight the danger of improperly worshiping God. On the one hand, they point to matters that the Chronicler presents as important for proper worship: 1) careful attention to the matters of worship and 2) obedience to the stipulations of the Law. On the other hand, they present no condemnation for the people's efforts that extend beyond what the Law requires. For instance, the organized procession of priests and Levites is not required by the Law, and the use of music is not addressed in Mosaic stipulations.

As the incident with Uzzah reveals, the Law of Moses provided an important written source for regulating Israel's worship. This point of view makes sense because beginning with the Ten Commandments, the Law lays out stipulations prohibiting certain worship practices, promoting other practices, and providing proper procedures for even others. A common thread running through these stipulations is that they intend to distinguish what is holy from what is mundane. Violating these stipulations, as Uzzah did by touching the ark (Num 4:15), resulted in God's immediate wrath. Therefore, one would expect that obeying the Law would provide the firm parameters for Israel's worship. However, Chronicles recounts instances in which Israel's worship deviates from the legal stipulations of the Law, but their worship is still acceptable, even honorable. Furthermore, Chronicles records elements of Israel's worship not addressed in the Law of

Moses. A look at these deviations and additions to the Mosaic stipulations regarding Israel's worship helps to address the issue of what is appropriate or inappropriate in worship from the viewpoint of Chronicles.

2. *Timing of Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 30)*. The timing of Hezekiah's Passover raises questions about the role of Mosaic Law in regulating Israel's worship. Mosaic Law commands the observance of Passover on the fourteenth of the first month (Exod 12:5; Lev 23:5; Num 9:3, 5; 28:16; cf. Deut 16:1). The month of Passover is emphasized in Mosaic Law because it is the month in which God brought the people out of Egypt, even reorienting their calendar to this event (see Exod 12:1–3; also Deut 16:1–8 mentions only the month, not the day).[8] Despite the importance of observing Passover in the first month, Hezekiah, along with all the people, determined to observe Passover in the second month. The circumstances help explain the decision. Following Ahaz's reign, Hezekiah needed to restore worship at the Jerusalem temple, which he did quickly (2 Chr 29:36). As a result, few people were in Jerusalem, and few priests were consecrated for the task (2 Chr 30:3). For these reasons, Hezekiah delayed observing Passover. Although delaying Passover seems reasonable in such conditions, the people still did not obey the Law as commanded.

However, the Law provides a caveat for the timing of Passover. Under certain conditions, the Law allows one to observe Passover in the second month: If a person becomes unclean or is too far away on a journey to observe Passover, then he may observe Passover in the second month on the fourteenth day (Num 9:6–12). The caveat arose because even though some individuals could not participate because of uncleanness caused by a dead body, they did not want to miss out on the observance. Although Hezekiah and the people delayed Passover for everyone, their situation resembled the conditions for observing Passover in the second month according to the Law. They wanted to observe Passover, but they did not have enough sanctified priests for the offerings or enough people in Jerusalem. As a

[8]Exodus 12:2 describes the month of Passover as the head (ראשׁ) of months. Durham argues that this designation is a wordplay such that the expression has two intended senses: 1) the first month of the year and 2) the most significant month of the year (John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 [Waco: Word, 1987], 153). The syntax of the expression supports Durham's claim regarding the significance of the month, see Helmut Utzschneider and Wolfgang Oswald, *Exodus 1-15*, trans. Philip Sumpter, IECOT (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015), 236–37. There are linguistic and historical issues regarding how this verse relates to Israel's calendar. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 206, for a brief summary of those issues.

result, the timing of the observance was disrupted although Hezekiah and the people found an analogous case in Mosaic Law to justify their modification of the normal timing for this worship practice.

3. *Performance of Josiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 35).* In many ways, Josiah's Passover corresponded closely to what the Law stipulates. Josiah observed Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, following the timing dictated by the Law (see above). Passover lambs were sacrificed, and the people, organized by their families, presented the burnt offerings to YHWH "according to what was written in the scroll of Moses" (v. 12).

Despite these similarities, other elements of Josiah's Passover differed from Mosaic stipulations. In the Law, Passover is largely a household celebration whereby the people are to bring their own sacrifices and eat them together. In Josiah's Passover, Josiah and his officials provided the sacrifices (vv. 7–9), and the priests and Levites acted as representatives for the various families, performing the sacrifices and distributing the meat to the families (vv. 11–14). Even though Mosaic Law does not assign these specific tasks for the priests or Levites, the Chronicler comments that they are to be done "according to YHWH's word through Moses" (v. 6).[9] Therefore, how Israel celebrated Passover under Josiah deviated in some respects from what Mosaic Law stipulated, but it still took place in a proper manner.

These differences between what the Law commands and what Josiah observed could lead one to doubt that the Chronicler knew the laws in the form preserved today[10] or doubt that Josiah rightly observed the laws.[11] However, one may explain these similarities and differences another way. The Chronicler mentions repeatedly that various authorities validated Josiah's practices. The account mentions the authority of David and Solomon (v. 4), the authority of David and his musical prophets Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (v. 15; also see 1 Chr 25:1–2, 5; 2 Chr 29:30;

[9]Although one could interpret the phrase "according to YHWH's word through Moses" in v. 6 as referring to the entire verse, the phrase modifies only the immediately preceding words "for your brothers to act" since Mosaic Law does not require that the Levites sacrifice the Passover lambs; Ralph W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*. Hermeneia. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 520.

[10]See Judson R. Shaver, *Torah and the Chronicler's History Work: An Inquiry into the Chronicler's References to Laws, Festivals, and Cultic Institutions in Relationship to Pentateuchal Legislation*, BJS 196 (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1989), 114–17, 124–28.

[11]See Christine Mitchell, "The Ironic Death of Josiah in 2 Chronicles," *CBQ* 68, no. 3 (July 2006), 427–31, who suggests that Josiah may have observed Passover improperly by expanding the role of the Levites.

35:15),[12] the authority of the king, that is, Josiah (v. 16), the authority of what Moses wrote (v. 12), and the authority of YHWH's commandment as delivered by Moses (v. 6, also see above). The Chronicler's portrayal suggests that authorities beyond just the Law of Moses also regulated Israel's worship. These additional authorities are tied to Israel's additional institutions of the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem temple. As a result, this "account respects the authority of the Law while affirming the authority of the king (David or Josiah) to adapt specific ritual applications (such as the role of the priests and Levites, the addition of musicians, etc.) to address changing circumstances."[13]

To gain a clearer sense of the relationship between Josiah's Passover and Passover in the Law, I will closely examine the specific language associated with one of the authorized activities: the cooking of the Passover sacrifices. The Law of Moses contains two commands regarding the cooking: 1) in Exod 12:8–9, the law commands the people to eat the meat roasted (צְלִי), not raw or boiled in water (נָא וּבָשֵׁל מְבֻשָּׁל בַּמָּיִם), and 2) Deut 16:7 commands the people to cook (וּבִשַּׁלְתָּ) the meat.[14] There is some tension between the commandments because the same word (בשל) is used, but Exodus prohibits it while Deuteronomy commands it. However, Chronicles resolves any tension by combining the commands when he recounts the event in the following way: "They cooked [בשל] the Passover in fire [בָּאֵשׁ]." In this way, the people did not violate the command in Exodus and followed the command of Deuteronomy. Therefore, the specific language of the Law

[12] When Chronicles recounts how David organized the musicians, it uses the term "prophesying" (*Niphal* נבא) to describe Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (1 Chr 25:2, 5–6). Because of the prophetic nature of their music, David trusted them as seers and their songs were divinely inspired (and preserved in the Psalter).

[13] Joshua E. Williams, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Kerux Commentary (Grand Rapids: Kregel), forthcoming.

[14] There is debate regarding the meaning of the verb בשל. Most often when the verb בשל occurs, it clearly refers to boiling meat rather than roasting (Ben Zvi gives a number of reasons for understanding the verb as "to boil" rather than the general sense of "to cook"; Ehud Ben Zvi, "Revisiting 'Boiling in Fire' in 2 Chronicles 35:13 and Related Passover Questions : Text, Exegetical Needs and Concerns, and General Implications," in *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Peter J. Haas, LHBOTS 439 [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 240–41); however, one may argue that the word בשל refers to food preparation in general and boiling in particular only when stated that the preparation takes place with water (so Benjamin Kilchör, "בשל – Das Essen ist bereit," *ZAW* 125, no. 3 [2013], 483–86, https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/zaw-2013-0030/html.) Understanding the verb in a general sense helps alleviate the tension between the laws in Exodus and Deuteronomy; however, there are other means for alleviating the tension. For instance, one could argue that Exodus 12 presents the regulations for the first observance as the people were fleeing Egypt while Deuteronomy 16 presents regulations for future observance (note that Deut 16:7 looks forward to the place that YHWH chooses). In either case, the issue does not affect what the Chronicler is doing in combining the language of both passages.

informed the worship practice so that the Chronicler could affirm that this cooking took place as prescribed (v. 13, כַּמִּשְׁפָּט), that is, according to how Israel understood the way the Mosaic stipulations related to one another regarding this issue.[15]

4. *Organization of Priestly and Levitical Groups*. Chronicles records in considerable detail how David organized the priests and Levites (1 Chr 23–26). What is important to note in this context is David's activity is not commanded nor anticipated in Mosaic legislation. David's innovations in priestly and Levitical organization affected Israel's worship. The grouping of worship personnel into divisions affected which personnel would perform their duties at what time. The expansion of roles supplemented Israel's ritual service by synchronizing certain musical activities with sacrifices[16] and required Levitical guardians to preserve the sanctity of the temple precincts (e.g., 2 Chr 23:19) and to be present during ritual observances (e.g., during Josiah's Passover the guardians maintain their posts, 2 Chr 35:15). In other words, David's activity introduced new elements into Israel's worship practice and refined the regulations regarding which personnel could serve at the sanctuary at what time.

Three observations are important to keep in mind as one examines this change in Israel's worship practices. First, even as David organized the priests and Levites into new administrative groupings, he drew on the Pentateuchal picture of the Levitical tribe, organizing the personnel by genealogy.[17] Furthermore, as Chronicles describes the expanded responsibilities, it characterizes their primary tasks according to Pentateuchal legislation. In 1 Chr 24:19, it draws on Deut 10:8 to specify the priestly duties. In 1 Chr 23:26, it draws on Num 3:5–8; 18:2–7 to specify the Levitical duties. Therefore, the innovations draw on previously prescribed practice. Second, the organization of the personnel took place at a pivotal moment in Israel's history. With David, YHWH established a new monarchic dynasty and declared that Jerusalem would be the place he chose as the site for the temple. This moment introduced a new authority within

[15]See William Schniedewind, "The Chronicler as an Interpreter of Scripture," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, by M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 173–78, for interpretation of מִשְׁפָּט in this context as "interpretive tradition."

[16]Regarding synchronizing music with the sacrifices, see John W. Kleinig, *The LORD's Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*, JSOTSup 156 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic), 108–114.

[17]See Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 150.

Israel's worship in the Davidic king and a new permanent location for this sanctuary, formerly a tabernacle but now a temple.[18] The change from a mobile tabernacle to a larger permanent temple appears to justify some changes in Israel's ritual worship. For instance, after David recognized that the Levites would no longer need to carry the ark, he expanded their responsibilities to other areas of service (1 Chr 23:25–32). The shift to the Jerusalem temple prompted and justified David's action.

Third, David's reorganization of the sanctuary personnel and specification of new job responsibilities did not contradict Mosaic legislation but refined it. As mentioned, David did not abolish the genealogical organization of the priests and Levites, but he placed within that structure the priestly and Levitical divisions as well. Furthermore, David did not abolish the Levitical duties, but he redirected their duties to other ways in which they could assist the priests since they no longer had the chance to carry the ark and the other implements found within the sanctuary (tabernacle or temple; see 1 Chr 23:25–32). By doing so, he maintained the role of the Levites as priestly assistants, a role that the Mosaic Law grants them (e.g., Num 3:6–9).[19] As a result, at a crucial moment in Israel's worship, that is, the building of the Jerusalem temple, David refined the worship personnel's organization provided by the Law of Moses and redirected some of that personnel's duties without violating Mosaic stipulations.

5. *Introduction of Levitical Music*. Perhaps the most striking addition that David introduced to Israel's worship is music. The Law of Moses depicts the Tabernacle as "a sanctuary of sacrifice and silence," but because of David, Chronicles depicts the Jerusalem temple as "a sanctuary of sacrifice and song."[20] The Pentateuch does address the matter of music in one passage: Num 10:2–10. The passage recounts how God commanded Israel to make trumpets for the priests to use for the following reasons: 1) to assemble the people to the sanctuary, 2) to signal the people to set out from their camps, 3) to warn the people of an incoming military attack, and 4) to call attention to the people's offerings before God on special

[18]Regarding the Davidic king's authority related to Israel's worship, see 1 Chr 17:14 in which God promises to appoint the Davidic descendant within God's house, indicating that the Davidic king plays some role in regulating the worship of all Israel. Regarding Jerusalem as the site for God's sanctuary, see e.g., 1 Chr 23:25; 2 Chr 6:6.

[19]David's words closely resemble the language of the Law of Moses in assigning the Levites the role as assistants to the priests. See especially 1 Chr 23:28 in relation to Num 3:7–9.

[20]Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12A (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 429.

occasions.[21] Three observations regarding these regulations require notice: 1) they restrict the music to trumpets, 2) restrict the use of the trumpets to the priests, and 3) restrict their use to special occasions. According to this passage, the trumpets play a role in Israel's life as a community but quite a limited role in their worship.

In contrast, when David introduced music into Israel's worship, he included singing along with playing various instruments (harps, lyres, cymbals, etc.), assigned Levites (not Aaronic priests) to play them, and included them in the regular service at the sanctuary. Music became a significant, regular feature of Israel's worship. At the same time, David did not overturn the Mosaic regulations. The priests continued to play the trumpets as the Law prescribed (see 1 Chr 15:24; 16:6; 2 Chr 5:12; 29:26). This evidence confirms that David introduced a significant innovation into Israel's ritual worship but not entirely unprecedented within the Law.

A look at the Chronicler's account of the ark's successful transfer may provide insight into what brought about this innovation in Israel's worship. When David and all Israel successfully transferred the ark to Jerusalem, they placed it in a tent which David prepared to house it. At the same time, the tabernacle with its implements, including the altar, remained at Gibeon. As a result, Israel's worship was divided between the tent in Jerusalem where the ark lay and the tabernacle in Gibeon where the altar remained. As this division of worship took place, David introduced music to accompany the ark. He first called on the Levites to appoint musicians to process with the ark during its transfer (1 Chr 15:16–24). After they deposited the ark in Jerusalem, David appointed musicians to offer praise and thanksgiving before the ark (1 Chr 16:4–6, 37–38). Since David's tent did not contain the altar or other items used for service in the tabernacle, the Mosaic Law did not provide another means of worship. In this void, David introduced music as a means of worship beyond the scope of Mosaic legislation but not contrary to it.[22]

[21]Even though the text describes the occasion as "your day of rejoicing" (יוֹם שִׂמְחַתְכֶם), it elaborates this time as the appointed holy days (מוֹעֲדֵיכֶם) and beginnings of months (רָאשֵׁי חָדְשֵׁיכֶם). The Law commands that these holy days be times of rejoicing (Deut 16:14). See Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 306.

[22]Please note that I am not claiming that David introduced the music for this reason. I am only pointing out the context in which he introduced music. Furthermore, whatever David's reasons for introducing the music, Chronicles highlights the important roles that prophecy plays regarding Israel's musical worship. For instance, Chronicles refers to the heads of the Levitical musicians as those who prophesy (1 Chr 25:2–3) and reiterates that David and the prophets determined the place of the Levitical musicians within the service of YHWH at the sanctuary

Then, David extended the role of the musicians to include worship at the tabernacle. Immediately following the record of David's appointing musicians before the ark, Chronicles records that at the tabernacle in Gibeon David left the priests so that they could offer the regular offerings upon the altar, as required by Mosaic Law (1 Chr 16:39–40). Only after mentioning the duties of the priests to offer sacrifices on the altar does Chronicles mention that musicians accompanied them (1 Chr 16:41–42). In other words, the introduction of musical worship began as an appropriate means of worship in the absence of options commanded by the Law. From there, it joined the regular worship as regulated by Mosaic Law. It became an integral part of Israel's service to God rendered at the sanctuary, including the later temple. When Hezekiah restored the service of YHWH's temple (2 Chr 29:35), he not only restored the proper sacrificial rituals, ensuring the purity of the temple and its implements, but he also required the performance of musical worship along with the making of the sacrifices (2 Chr 29:27–31).[23] Therefore, the measures that David took to address a specific historical condition became a precedent justifying the use of such a practice within Israel's continuing worship.[24]

6. *Uzziah's Leprosy (2 Chronicles 26).* When Uzziah went to offer incense in the temple, he violated the Law of Moses. The Law clearly requires that only the Levitical priests offer incense in the sanctuary (Exod 30:1–8; Num 16:40 [17:5 HB]; 18:1–7). Even as a Davidic king, Uzziah was not allowed to overrule the Mosaic stipulations regarding proper worship, specifically offering incense within the sanctuary. The text does not condemn Uzziah because he violated the timing, procedure, or practice of the offering; there is no indication that he did. Furthermore, since the high priest warned that the act would not bring honor to Uzziah, he implied that Uzziah intended to make his offering for God's glory and his own benefit. Despite Uzziah's partially proper practice and sincere intention, God punished him severely with a lifelong disease that required his isolation from others (see v. 21). God obviously considered Uzziah's direct violation of the Law of Moses

(2 Chr 35:15).

[23]See also Kleinig, *The LORD's Song*, 108–114, for the details regarding how the musical worship integrated into the rituals of offering sacrifices.

[24]In fact, David's precedent did more than justify later practice; it required it (see 2 Chron. 35:4). See also Simon J. De Vries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *JBL* 107, no. 4 (December 1988), 626–31, https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/sblpress/jbl/article/107/4/619/183758.

as unacceptable worship and punished him for it.

Uzziah's illness warns against assuming authority to violate directly what God has commanded. Again, in this way, Uzziah's deviation from Israel's practice differs from the other examples. Unlike David, Hezekiah, or Josiah, Uzziah directly violated what God had commanded. Furthermore, God punished Uzziah because his act violated the special role of the priests for making an incense offering. In fact, the high priest uses the language of holiness in his warning to Uzziah: only the priests are sanctified (הַמְקֻדָּשִׁים, from the root קדשׁ "to be holy") to offer incense. In other words, what Uzziah did violated God's holiness by disregarding God's choice to appoint only the priests to enter the sanctuary to offer incense. In this way, Uzziah's case resembles Uzzah's case; both violate God's holiness in some aspect: Uzzah by touching a holy object; Uzziah by performing a rite reserved for the holy priests.

III. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CLOSER LOOK

The passages examined above share several threads in their treatment of Israel's worship. A look at these common threads regarding the deviations and innovations in Israel's worship will hopefully clarify how the Chronicler understood what constituted appropriate and inappropriate worship. These common threads are as follows: 1) appropriate worship respects God's holiness, 2) the deviations and innovations in Israel's worship are formed from previous practice, 3) the shift from tabernacle to temple prompted these changes, and 4) the establishment of the Davidic dynasty introduced another authority into Israel's worship.

1. *Respects God's Holiness*. Chronicles recounts two disastrous events of worshiping God. Both accounts deal directly with God's holiness. Although holiness is a difficult term to define, in this context, I am using the term to refer to a special status.[25] What is holy is distinct from the mundane so that it requires careful, special treatment. The examples of Uzziah and Uzzah communicate that anyone who does not respect God's holiness suffers. This holiness extends to his appointed vessels (i.e., the ark), his appointed personnel (the priests and Levites), and his appointed place (e.g., the Jerusalem temple). Uzzah violated a holy object by touching

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[25]For recent treatments of the root קדשׁ in Biblical Hebrew, see Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament." *BSac* 170 (October 2013): 400–17, and David J.A. Clines, "Alleged Basic Meanings of the Hebrew Verb *qdš* 'Be Holy': An Exercise in Comparative Hebrew Lexicography." *VT* 71 (2021): 481–502.

the ark when the oxen stumbled. Uzziah violated the holy space and the holy personnel by attempting to usurp their holy duties in the holy space. The issue of holiness is hard to miss in these negative examples. However, holiness is also an issue for David, Hezekiah, and Josiah. When David appointed guardians for the future temple, he appointed them to protect the holiness of God's holy space and vessels (see 1 Chr 16:37–42). Furthermore, David respected the status of the priests and Levites when he selected Levites to serve as musicians. In Chronicles, this activity contrasts to the activity of Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom. Jeroboam drove out the Levites by appointing priests from anyone willing to pay for the position (2 Chr 13:9). Furthermore, David maintained the Levites' role as assistants to the priests even though the form of that assistance changed with the building of the Jerusalem temple. Like David, Hezekiah and Josiah also respected God's holiness in ensuring that the proper personnel (priests and Levites) carried out the proper procedures (slaughtering the animals and splattering the blood) in the proper places (within the sacred precincts of the Jerusalem temple).

2. *Formed from Previous Practice*. One of the repeated observations from the narratives discussed above is deviations or innovations in Israel's worship practices are based on previous practices, especially those from the Mosaic Law. First, in the case of Hezekiah, the Law allows for an alternative date to observe Passover. Even though the Mosaic Law provides different conditions for this alternative date and only applies the alternative to individuals rather than the nation, the concerns that gave rise to the alternative date for observance still applied in the case of Hezekiah and the people: the people wanted to observe Passover but there were not enough sanctified priests or participants in Jerusalem. Therefore, Hezekiah and the people extended the original application of the alternative timing even though they did not apply it within the same circumstances. For Josiah's Passover, the people again extended the previous practice specified in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and they combined and reapplied the same underlying principles within a different historical circumstance. For instance, the priests properly cooked the sacrifices and distributed the meat to the families. During the reign of David, David refined Israel's previous worship practice regarding its personnel, as outlined in Mosaic Law, by organizing the priests and Levites into various divisions and various roles (e.g., musician, guardian, etc.). Also, during the reign of David, David

extended the sparse information in the Mosaic Law regarding music to apply it to the Levites, specifically the Levitical singers, and the use of various instruments.

The survey of passages from Chronicles reveals that the Law of Moses takes center stage in regulating Israel's previous worship. However, Israel did not look only to the Mosaic stipulations. When David organized the divisions of priests and Levites, he followed the traditional genealogical shape of these groups. This genealogical shape comes from the Pentateuch, but it does not derive from Mosaic stipulations. Furthermore, it appears that David's ad hoc provision for the worship at the tent where the ark of the covenant was housed became a permanent statute for Israel. One may see this same use of precedent when talking about the Passover celebration although this precedent was not discussed above. During Hezekiah's Passover, the Levites assumed a greater role because of unique circumstances, that is, many participants were unclean so that they could not slaughter the sacrifices themselves (2 Chr 30:17). As a result, the Levites killed the animals while the priests sprinkled the blood (2 Chr 30:16). During Josiah's Passover, Josiah carried over many of the ad hoc provisions of Hezekiah's Passover to finalize the form of Passover.[26] In this way innovations or deviations in Israel's worship practices derived from and built upon those previously sanctioned.

3. *Shifts from Tabernacle to Temple*. Another common feature that stands out from the narratives is that the shift from a movable tent as the sanctuary to a permanent temple as the sanctuary resulted in some shifts within Israel's worship. This point becomes explicit and obvious in two passages in Chronicles: 1 Chr 23:25–32 and 2 Chr 35:3. These two passages recount how the Davidic king (David and then Josiah) reassigned the Levites to different tasks because they no longer needed to carry the ark, the tabernacle, or any of its implements (as required by Mosaic Law). Therefore, the shift of the sanctuary's form created an opportunity for the king to introduce changes into Israel's worship practices. David also introduced music at this crucial time. When Israel's worship was divided between the tent in Jerusalem and the tabernacle in Gibeon, he brought music into worship when the Mosaic Law did not provide other means of worship.

[26]See Louis C. Jonker, *Reflections of King Josiah in Chronicles: Late Stages of the Josiah Reception in 2 Chr 34f*, Textpragmatische Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel 2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 2003), 57–60.

4. *Acknowledges Davidic Dynasty's Limited Authority.* A final common feature that one finds across the narratives is that as long as the Davidic king does not violate Mosaic prohibitions, he carries authority to deviate or innovate Israel's worship. David does so when he divides the priests and the Levites into various divisions and assigns the Levites expanded roles as guardians, musicians, and other administrative capacities. David also does so when he introduces music into Israel's worship. On more than one occasion later, Chronicles points to David's authority to justify the way in which Israel worshiped.[27] Hezekiah also appears as an authority figure when he commands Passover to take place within the second month. In this case, he does not act alone because he requests the people's input, but his authority still stands behind the deviation in practice. For Josiah's Passover, Josiah's authority becomes a key element of the entire observance as demonstrated by the comment that Passover took place according to the king's command (2 Chr 35:16). In this case, the evidence suggests that the authority of the Davidic king plays a role in innovating Israel's worship; however, the case of Uzziah qualifies that authority. Uzziah demonstrates that even the Davidic king cannot violate God's holiness without paying a serious penalty.

VI. CONCLUSION

By examining these narratives from Chronicles, I have attempted to show that Israel's worship was not static. Rather, it was dynamic based on certain changing circumstances. At the same time, these narratives reveal that such dynamic elements of Israel's worship were not chaotic or haphazard. Certain commonalities among the narratives point to stable principles that governed how Chronicles characterizes the events. These two aspects of Israel's worship as presented in Chronicles may provide some guidance in evaluating whether worship is a matter in which anything goes or is restricted to only what the Bible prescribes.

When Jesus came in the flesh, he addressed many aspects of worship. He highlighted elements otherwise ignored and ignored elements otherwise highlighted. His coming brought about significant changes in how the people of God worship. In some ways, Chronicles already anticipates such changes. It associates changes in worship with changes in the form of the sanctuary and assigns the Davidic king a role in such changes. At the same time, Chronicles does not anticipate all that would be transformed

[27]See especially the reigns of Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:25, 30) and Josiah (2 Chr 35:4, 15).

in Jesus's coming. For instance, its emphasis on obeying Mosaic Law does not carry over as an emphasis within the Church. Therefore, one must be careful when trying to apply to contemporary practice all that Chronicles highlights.[28]

Despite such caution regarding applying Chronicles, the passages examined have something important to say about worship practices in today's churches. I offer two areas that I find particularly significant.

First, appropriate worship respects God's holiness, that is, his special status that requires special treatment. As holy, he is the source of unimaginable blessing or unprecedented devastation. Therefore, one must respect his status and recognize that worship is serious business. However, this point concerns the attitude toward worship rather than the mood of the worship. When David prepared to transfer the ark the second time, he took great care in ensuring that there was a place prepared for it (1 Chr 15:1), the proper personnel accompanied it (1 Chr 15:3–13), and the people were protected from approaching it too closely (thus the role of the guardians in verses 18, 23, and 24). At the same time, David and the people were filled with joy (see vv. 25–29) because God's holy presence, if respected, would be a source of tremendous blessing for them individually and as a nation. At other times, people felt shame during their worship because they were not prepared for it (see 2 Chr 30:15 for a case involving the priests and Levites). In both cases, the worshipers treated worship as serious business even though the mood varied greatly. Such variation seems appropriate today as well.

Second, it is wise to remember previous practices both from God's written revelation and his appointed leaders. Chronicles would warn against both maintaining practices when they no longer function as they did (like the Levites carrying the ark) and introducing practices that bear little to no resemblance to the previous practices of the Christian tradition. Our contemporary culture highly values novelty. Sometimes such a value can make its way into the churches such that the churches look for new ways

[28] I would also be careful about viewing David's role in worship as typological within Chronicles. I have argued that David plays an important role in innovating Israel's worship; however, it does not appear that Chronicles intends to cast David individually as a type of the coming Messiah. The Chronicler's presentation of David functions as a model for the Davidic king and is therefore representative to a degree. However, the Chronicler repeats that God refused to let David build the temple. Furthermore, the narrative regarding Uzziah and its significance for the position of the Davidic king within Israel's worship does not suggest a simple correlation to Jesus. Taken as a whole, Chronicles does not portray the Davidic king in such typological terms for this specific issue.

to engage God as they understand it. However, in Chronicles innovation is always tied to tradition. In other words, there is a balance in worship between innovation and preservation with the result that worship is both dynamic and stable.

What Chronicles presents is a warning against treating worship flippantly while recognizing that changing circumstances may lead to changes in worship practices that honor God by treating his presence as holy, forming new practices from previous revelation, and respecting proper authority.

CHRISTOLOGY AND COMMUNION: WORSHIP AS DOCTRINAL CONFESSION IN THE SECOND CENTURY

D. Jeffrey Bingham*

> There is only one physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord (Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians* 7.2)

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."[1] In these words the apostle Paul teaches that the Lord's Supper is an act of communal announcement. A church's continual, worthy partaking of the Supper heralds two aspects of the Christian Gospel. First, the gathered brothers and sisters in their taking of the bread and cup declare that the "the Lord died!" Second, as they faithfully and enduringly join each other for the sacred gathering, intending to gather again, and again and again for Communion, they declare that "the Lord will return!" Both the crucifixion and second advent of Jesus are announced in the repetitive celebration of the ordinance performed in a worthy manner. Jesus himself indicates an eschatological aspect to celebrations of the Lord's Supper. While Paul teaches that the church persistently takes the cup until Christ's second coming, Jesus places the cup aside until the establishment of the future Kingdom of God: "I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."[2] In taking the bread and cup, churches look *back* and remember the humble, meek, bloody, bodily death of Jesus with its New Covenant blessings of the forgiveness of sins and *forward* to his glorious advent with the blessings

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*D. Jeffrey Bingham serves as research professor of historical theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[1] 1 Cor 11:26; New International Version.

[2] Matt 26:29.

of resurrection from the grave and the promised consummation of other redemptive victories over sin and the devil. Not to be missed is Paul's indication that the purpose of the gathering of the Corinthian church was to share in a worthy manner the Lord's Supper.[3] In whatever way contemporary Christian communities perceive of "worship gatherings," they may wish to consider that the ordinance of Communion was an essential feature. It was Jesus's ordained way of remembering him and, along with the teaching of the apostles, fellowship, and prayer, was one of the disciplines to which they were devoted.[4]

But my main interest in this short discussion on the Lord's Supper is not its frequency or merely its recollection of the Lord's death and the church's expectation of his return. Instead, I wish to draw our attention to some second-century Christian understandings of the Lord's Supper that view it, in part, as demonstrative of the church's faith in the Son of God's incarnation, or in John's language, the Word's becoming flesh, and his bodily resurrection.[5] In an early Christian context in which some teachers and pastors denied the true enfleshment of God's preexistent Son, the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, functioned as a prime Christian ritual that recalled and confessed not only the death of Christ in which his flesh was torn and his blood poured out of him, but also his true existence as a flesh and blood human being in birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and return. We find that in the early Christian contemplation of the Lord's Supper at the weekly worship gathering around the Lord's Table where the faithful broke bread while the Good News of Jesus was celebrated. The sharing in the loaf and the fruit of the vine was a communal means through visible tangible elements of coming face to face with the memory of Jesus's past acts and the expectation of his future coming in his flesh, blood, and bone revealed by the prophets and apostles in Scripture.

Some of John's letters, written near the end of the first century, bear witness to a group of false teachers that were already countering the apostolic teaching regarding the real flesh and blood Christ. They insisted that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh.[6] Such antiapostolic instruction

[3] 1 Cor 11:19; cf. Acts 20:7.

[4] Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25. Acts 2:42. In Paul's passage, "remembrance" is a term parallel with "proclaim." They are simultaneous, for gathered believers proclaim in their act of remembrance.

[5] John 1:14. For themes running from early Christianity to the beginning of the Reformation see D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation: The Second Century and Luther," in *Rediscovering the Eucharist*, ed. Roch Kereszty (New York: Paulist, 2003), 116-41. Elements of some of those themes are discussed here.

[6] 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7.

continued into the second century. Although the apostles and evangelists had emphasized not only the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ from the beginning of their Gospel narratives, in their accounts of his passion, in his post-resurrection appearances and within their epistles, there persisted a dedicated campaign to declare only the deity and spiritual nature of the Christian Savior. Contrary to this campaign, John was adamant that the eternal Word became flesh, the apostles confirming his fleshness by sound, sight, and touch.[7] Luke records that the risen Jesus had to take steps to calm and reassure the disciples that even after his resurrection he remained enfleshed and was not a ghost or some type of mere spirit. He proves he is flesh and bone, as we are told in 1 John, by their hearing his words, their seeing and touching his extremities, and their watching him eat:

> Now while they were telling these things, Jesus Himself suddenly stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were looking at a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why are doubts arising in your hearts? *See my hands and my feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you plainly see that I have.*" And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and astonishment, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They served Him a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate it in front of them.[8]

Paul, on the other hand, testifies to his full, physical humanity by pointing to his Davidic human lineage, not unlike Matthew's Gospel.[9] Paul links Christ's fleshly nature to the flesh of his father David and goes on to relate his deity to his divine Father on the authority of the Spirit's witness and his bodily resurrection. This Pauline construct of two lineages, one human and one divine, lays a foundation for the reality of Christ's flesh and deity. He is as much one as the other; he is as truly of David as the Father.

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[7]John 1:14; 1 John 1:1.

[8]Luke 24:36-43. Italics mine.

[9]Matt 1:1-17.

> From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. This gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the *flesh*, who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.[10]

Yet, despite such a consistent, diverse apostolic testimony, rejections of Jesus Christ's flesh and blood nature continued, or at least their teachings were perceived by others as denials of his having come in the flesh. The orthodox theologians of the second century corrected such denials.

I. THE SECOND CENTURY AND THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

1. *Ignatius of Antioch*. For example, in the early second century, Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch (ca. 110), speaks of "certain people [who] ignorantly deny him," and consequently, "have been denied by him."[11] Such people, he goes on to say, must relish death rather than the truth. For in denying him, by denying "that he was clothed in flesh," they must be advocating for death rather than bodily resurrection, for their refusal to confess his incarnation, leave them "clothed in a corpse" with no hope of rising from their graves. Such unbelievers are best left unnamed and forgotten, he says, because in denying Christ's enfleshment, they deny his suffering in flesh and blood, which is the basis for the believer's resurrection in flesh and blood.

In answer to such people, Ignatius speaks to the real flesh of Christ, especially his death, in an attempt to accomplish his doctrinal responsibilities as bishop. It is Jesus's crucifixion and suffering in the flesh in real space and time under Pontius Pilate and Herod that renders life.[12] Yet, consistent with Paul's mention of his appearances to more than five hundred people including the disciples, and the Gospel accounts of his appearances, he recognizes that the biblical text has just as keen an interest in the flesh of Jesus after he came forth from the grave. Luke's post-resurrection account,

[10]Rom 1:1-4. Italics mine. Cf. Rom 9:5.

[11]Smyrnaeans 5.1-3; trans. Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. after the earlier work of J. R. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 253.

[12]*Smyrnaeans* 1.2.

mentioned above, is summarized by Ignatius to demonstrate that his union with flesh continued after he was raised:

> For I know and believe that *he was in the flesh* even after the resurrection; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: "Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon." And immediately they touched him and believed, *being closely united with his flesh and blood*. For this reason, they too despised death; indeed, they proved to be greater than death. And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them *like one who is composed of flesh*, although spiritually he was united with the Father.[13]

So important to Ignatius and his communities in Asia Minor is the doctrine of Jesus's true flesh and blood during death and after resurrection, that in one of his letters he makes the teaching part of his closing. He signs off "in the name of Jesus Christ and *in his flesh and blood*, his suffering and resurrection (which was both physical and spiritual), in unity with God and with you."[14]

2. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons (ca. 180), also had a variety of theological adversaries all of whom he represents as denying that the Word of God (the eternal Son of God) became flesh. His opponents included the followers of Valentinus, the Valentinians, especially the descendants of Ptolemy, the Ptolemaeans, and a variety of "gnostics." He emphasizes that they had many ways to account for a human Jesus, but none of them embraced John's teaching that the Word became incarnate.[15] In a manner very similar to Ignatius, we see Irenaeus linking the possibility and promise of the resurrection of human beings in the flesh to the Word of God becoming flesh. Although in his pre-incarnate ministry to humanity Christ was present with his creation in one fashion, he had not yet joined his divine nature to human nature. But when he did, by his suffering, resurrection, and glorious return in the flesh, he will raise the dead, reveal salvation, and exercise judgment. To this point he says of his adversaries that in their Christology they were:

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[13] *Smyrnaeans* 3.1-3; trans. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 251. Italics mine.
[14] *Smyrnaeans* 12.2; trans. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 261. Italics mine.
[15] *Against Heresies* 3.11.3.

> … ignorant that His only-begotten Word, who is always present with the human race, united to and mingled with His own creation, according to the Father's pleasure, and *who became flesh*, is Himself Jesus Christ our Lord, who did also suffer for us, and rose again on our behalf, and who will come again in the glory of His Father, *to raise up all flesh*, and for the manifestation of salvation, and to apply the rule of just judgment to all who were made by Him.[16]

In Irenaeus's mind, to significant degree, the gospel is the good news of Christ's fleshly past and future, for by being flesh he redeemed flesh, by being human, visible, and corporeal, he redeemed visible, corporeal humanity.[17]

Citing four words of the evangelist John, briefly referenced above, that Irenaeus believes apply to the opponents of his own day and clearly set forth the church's faith, he sternly notes that John warned the church to avoid the false teachers who deny the Word's visible, corporeal advents attested to by the apostle: (1) "I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist;" and (2) "many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world;" (3) "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us;" and (4) "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."[18] By knitting these Johannine passages together, Irenaeus forms a testimony to the present-day threat of false teachers who deny the fleshly, corporeal coming of the Word of God, lays an apostolic foundation for the church's incarnational faith, and declares that, to believe in Jesus Christ means, in specific, to believe in one Jesus Christ, the Word, who came, died, and will return in flesh. He puts it this way: "[Since we know] Jesus Christ to be one and the same,

[16]*Against Heresies* 3.16.6; trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* [ANF 1]: *The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 442.

[17]See *Against Heresies* 3.16.6.

[18]*Against Heresies* 3.16.8: 2 John 1:7; 1 John 4:1-3; John 1:14; 1 John 5:1.

to whom the gates of heaven were opened, *because of His taking upon him flesh*: who shall also *come in the same flesh in which He suffered*, revealing the glory of the Father."[19]

Some of Irenaeus's adversaries teach that Christ only appeared as, or seemed to be, flesh, but he was not truly flesh. In Irenaeus's faith, a Savior with real flesh was required to save humanity. True salvation necessitated a true incarnation, so the incarnate work of God had to be true, not merely appearance. He calls in the ancient Moses to testify as to the true works of God, which seals the claim that what Christ appears to be, he is in truth:

> Thus, then, was the Word of God made human, as also Moses says: "God, true are his works." But if, not having been made flesh, he did appear as if flesh, his work was not a true one. But what he did appear, that he also was: God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore, his works are true.[20]

But it is not as one who is merely human that Jesus Christ brings salvation. No, Irenaeus proceeds to prove through the prophets Isaiah, Micah, Joel, Amos, and Habakkuk, that he is also the Lord, the Word, the Son of God, and God, yet not only divine. He redeems not only as God; he delivers not merely as human. The Lord himself in his first advent came down as Savior in Bethlehem where he joined humanity to his deity and with feet of flesh walked and preached among the people.[21] The Scriptures are replete with references to Messiah's human features and his divine properties. One should not be distracted by biblical material that points to one or the other nature, even when it does so in isolation from mention of attributes associated with the opposite nature. "We should not understand that he is a mere man only, nor, on the other hand . . . should we suspect him to be God without flesh."[22]

As we saw Irenaeus knit several texts written by John together in witness to the Word's incarnation, he does the same thing with three passages from Paul to underscore that not only did the Word become flesh, but

[19] *Against Heresies* 3.16.8; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:443.

[20] *Against Heresies* 3.18.7; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:448, slightly altered. The Moses quote is from Deut 32:4.

[21] *Against Heresies* 3.20.4. Isa 63:9; 33:20; Micah 7:9; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2; Hab 3:3, 5.

[22] *Against Heresies* 3.21.4; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:452, slightly altered.

Mary, his mother, in David's line, with a human ancestry going all the way back to Adam, was the source of that flesh. Irenaeus has in mind the analogy between Adam and Christ that aligns their common share in human nature in Romans 5 read in light of Genesis 2:7. The analogy lacks legitimacy if both are not truly human and if Christ was not really incarnated in the image and likeness of the first of the human species taken from the earth and formed by God.

Irenaeus is also mindful of two other relevant verses: one that links Christ to Mary and the other that connects him to David. First, he cites part of Galatians 4:4: "God sent his Son, *born of a woman*" and then, second, he quotes Romans 1:3-4: "concerning his Son, who was born of a descendant of David *according to the flesh*, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." These Pauline words support his claim against his opponents. "Those, therefore, who allege that He took nothing from the Virgin do greatly err, [since,] in order that they may cast away [Christ's] *inheritance of the flesh*, they also reject the analogy."[23]

Ultimately, in the theological schema of Irenaeus, the incarnation is necessary to the salvation of humanity. And in so many ways it finds its center in the manner in which the evangelist, Mark, begins his Gospel: the prophetic announcement of the messenger, John the Baptist. This announcement is also present in Matthew and Luke. Luke 3:4-6, however, refers to Isaiah 40:3-5, while Mark 1:3 and Matthew 3:3 have only Isaiah 40:3. Irenaeus cites Luke's version:

> The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low: and all the crooked ways shall become straight, and the rough places will become plains. And the glory of the Lord will appear, *and all flesh* will see the salvation of God: for the Lord has spoken."

Note that in Isaiah 40:5, "all flesh will see" the Lord and the salvation he brings. For Irenaeus, this is crucial for one only sees visible things, corporeal things, and in the case of humans, those who have flesh. As having flesh, ourselves, we know with our senses those things that are

[23]*Against Heresies* 3.22.1; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:454, slightly altered.

sensible and, here, the prophet Isaiah emphasizes the sense of sight. The Word, in his incarnation, condescends to our bodily limitations, taking on our flesh, thereby providing to those with eyes the gift of knowing by sight the one who both judges and glorifies them. Irenaeus puts it this way:

> There is therefore one and the same God, the Father of our Lord, who also promised, through the prophets, that he would send his forerunner; and his salvation—that is, his Word—he caused to be *made visible to all flesh*, [the Word] himself being made incarnate, that in all things their king might become manifest. For it is necessary that those who are judged do see the judge and know him from whom they receive judgment; and it is also proper, that those who follow on to glory should know Him who bestows upon them the gift of glory.[24]

II. COMMUNION AND CHRISTOLOGY

1. *Ignatius of Antioch*. We return now to Ignatius as we consider his thought on the relation of Christ to the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, the meal of thanksgiving. In his letter to the Smyrnaeans his Christological discussion turns particularly to the Eucharist.[25] He argues that from cradle to post-resurrection meal, Christ was flesh and blood. Those who deny this are condemned. He reminds the reader that such persons are contrary to the mind of God, they think in an erroneous, blasphemous manner.[26] Also, he stresses the foundational importance of the flesh of Christ: it was in the incarnate revelation of Christ that the "grace of Jesus Christ" came to humanity. He then describes those who deny that such grace comes by Christ's flesh. The Christological denial of these false teachers leads them to abstain from "the Eucharist and prayer because they do not acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins and who the Father by his goodness raised up."[27] Their doctrine of Christ leads them to abstain from Christian devotion. In avoiding the communal meal that included the Eucharist, they denied Christ's real fleshly presence in passion and post-resurrection meals. For the bishop

[24] *Against Heresies* 3.9.1; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:422, slightly altered.
[25] Cf. Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 118.
[26] *Smyrnaeans* 6.2.
[27] *Smyrnaeans* 7.1.

of Antioch, there is a pattern of Christ's presence in flesh from death to post-resurrection to Eucharist. Each is a pivotal moment in the revelatory history of the incarnate presence of Christ.

Ignatius obviously holds to a realistic view of the Lord's Supper. For him, the bread and cup *are* the body and blood of Christ. His opponents abstain because they disagree with both his Christology and the way it informs the worship of his communities. If they do not believe in the flesh and blood of Jesus, they certainly cannot partake in it at the Lord's Table. This point seems valid even for those with a memorial view. One must believe in the blessings brought uniquely through the flesh and blood of Christ in order to remember and announce with integrity the incarnate Christ's death symbolized by the bread and cup. If one does not confess that salvation was accomplished only by the Word become flesh, it is pointless and meaningless to remember something one does not believe was true.

In the conviction of Ignatius, the Eucharist entails a corollary of ethics. Paul's complaint about the Corinthians and their behavior at the Supper was that they refused to be concerned for their fellow worshiping Christians. They were not waiting for all to arrive before they feasted in a selfish, unworthy manner. Therefore, Paul instructs them to examine themselves before they take the bread and cup. In context, this means they are to examine themselves to ensure they have not been selfish and thoughtless toward their fellow believers. Paul's concern is communal care.

Ignatius might well have been meditating on this teaching as he developed his next point about the Eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharist as a communal confession of the *real flesh* of Christ draws his blueprint for the meaning of Christian love. The faith in Christ's real flesh expressed at the table is to have consequence in the community's *concrete acts of love* toward the oppressed. Belief in actual Christological corporeality should produce sensible, tangible acts of compassion and mercy.[28] Error in Christological doctrine breeds failure in humanitarian care; heresy yields hatred. It is against this background that he indicts the false teachers who do not believe in the flesh and blood of Christ:

> Now note well those who hold heretical opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ that came to us; note how contrary they are to the mind of God. They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the

[28]Cf. Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 119.

> oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released, none for the hungry or thirsty. They abstain from Eucharist and prayer because *they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ*, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by his goodness raised up.[29]

William Schoedel points out that Ignatius manifests two central ways in which the Supper was related to communal concerns that the false teachers eluded by not attending the meetings. First, it was a gathering of the community at which each ideally showed care and compassion for the other. By avoiding the Supper, a love-feast, their opportunity and responsibility to minister and demonstrate love for each other was dodged. Second, Ignatius is teaching that the Eucharist anticipates tangible acts of love founded upon the example of the concreteness which the Lord's flesh signified. Caring for the oppressed, the cold, the hungry, the sick, the thirsty and the impoverished requires palpable, material, sensible care in continuity with the nature of Christ's real, incarnate flesh. Failure to embrace the revelation of the incarnate Lord leads to failure in love. But by loving in tangible ways, the community continues to reveal Christ in his flesh. Communal love must attend the Eucharist, as Paul taught the Corinthians, in order for it to be a worthy act of worship. Furthermore, the Supper teaches, along with its announcement of the Lord's death, that the members of his body are to imitate him with acts of love and mercy that minister emotionally and bodily, in attendance to the needs of the whole person.[30]

Ignatius's perspective on the bread and wine being Christ's body and blood, of course, differs from the Baptist memorial view that the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* summarizes in this manner: "The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming."[31] Yet, in Ignatius's view there is also a symbolism, or spiritualizing.[32] For example, we find him using the flesh and blood of Christ as representative of the virtues of

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[29] *Smyrnaeans* 6.2; trans. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 253-55. Italics mine.

[30] 1 Corinthians 11:17-33; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 21. Cf. Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 119.

[31] Article 7: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

[32] Cf. Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 120.

faith and love.[33] From this we are to understand that the Eucharist is the communal event where the members proclaim their faith in Christ and practice their love for each other. His words are pastoral as they are meant to keep his flock from being entwined in the devil's snare:

> You, therefore, must arm yourselves with gentleness and regain your strength in faith (which is the flesh of the Lord) and in love (which is the blood of Jesus Christ). Let none of you hold a grudge against his neighbor. Do not give any opportunity to the pagans, lest the godly majority be blasphemed on account of a few foolish people. For "woe to the one through whose folly my name is blasphemed among any."[34]

The Eucharist stands as the witness to the truth announced by Jesus concerning his heavenly origin and fleshly state. Even in its symbolism, it produces life, for faith and love are life's beginning and end, together in mature unity they model godliness, for the one who believes steadfastly and the one who loves truly, does not sin or hate.[35]The Lord's Supper is a setting in which worshipers in gathered fellowship together contemplatively consider the Christology and the requisite Christian virtues that are to attend the bread and cup. Far from modern, contemporary individualism, the ancient perspective of Ignatius was that worship, engaged in by sharing the same elements of the Supper around one altar, was an event of communal participation in unity. This can be seen in his emphasis on the one flesh of Christ, the one body of Christ, the one loaf, and the one cup all shared from the one altar in the Eucharist. There is not a flesh of Christ for one believer and another flesh of Christ for another. There is not a blood of Christ for Ignatius and another blood for you. In Christ there is one flesh and one blood. Believers share together, not separately, in the one Christ.

One can hear in Ignatius's teaching echoes of Paul's own teaching: "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of

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[33] *Romans* 7.3.

[34] *Trallians* 8.1; trans. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 221. Cf. Ignatius, *Romans* 7.3.

[35] *Ephesians* 14.1.

the one bread."[36] Consequently, the supper must be done with words and actions that highlight the oneness of the church in Christ. Such a Lord's Supper, also, for Ignatius, takes place within a church that is connected in unity with other churches joined doctrinally in the apostolic teaching guarded by the regional and local ecclesiological leaders.[37] In his *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, he says,

> Take care, therefore, to participate in one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup that leads to unity through his blood; there is one altar, just as there is one bishop, together with the council of presbyters and the deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.[38]

Participation in the Eucharist proclaims a church's unified faith in the one flesh and blood of Christ. But the Lord's Supper for Ignatius, as with Paul, involves more than simply eating bread and drinking from the cup. Love for each other, tangible, sincere, active compassion for the wholistic needs of one other, consistent with the real corporeality of the incarnate Christ's flesh, must be the characteristic virtue of the community. Between Christ's bodily resurrection and the flesh and bone resurrection of Christ's followers at his coming, the Lord's Supper announces the death of Christ and unifies in faith and love those who worthily eat and drink.

2. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Irenaeus, about seventy years after Ignatius, writing in modern day France, takes issue with his understanding of his own theological adversaries, the Valentinians. In part he focuses on a theological point mentioned in our last words on Ignatius above: "the flesh and bone resurrection of Christ's followers at his coming." For Irenaeus, who also held to a realistic view, the Lord's Supper signals not only Jesus's incarnate flesh, but the salvation of the flesh of Christian believers. God's ministry of redemption as loving creator of both the immaterial and material includes both body and soul, flesh and spirit. He uses the term "universal" to mean "total, entire" in order to teach that both corporeal and incorporeal things are included in the ultimate salvific work through Christ. Also, there is

[36] 1 Cor 10:16-17.

[37] Cf. Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 120-21.

[38] *Philadelphians* 4.

a "universal (or general) resurrection" of all the dead in both body and soul.[39] God values humans as embodied souls and includes both created aspects in salvation as the Spirit imparts incorruptibility to the flesh.[40] With this in mind, in *Against Heresies* 5.2.2, Irenaeus rebukes the heretics who "deny the salvation of the flesh."

He goes on to argue that there is no redemption through Christ's blood and no meaning in the church's communion with his blood and body through the wine and bread if in the end the flesh is not saved in resurrection.[41] For him, the Eucharist which is founded upon the Lord's taking and shedding blood promises the salvation of the flesh. The Eucharist has meaning only because God created and values not only spirit, but also flesh and blood, both in the incarnate Christ and in human believers. His world, his Son's incarnation and death, his people, and the Lord's Supper are all corporeal, and therefore consummative redemption includes the corporeal, not merely the spiritual. Here are Ignatius's own words that allude to 1 Corinthians 10:16:

> But if the flesh does not attain salvation, then neither did the Lord redeem us with his blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist the communion of his blood, nor the bread which we break the communion of his body.[42]

The allusion to 1 Corinthians 10:16 at the end of this passage, which we saw was informing Ignatius's thought as well, is important. Earlier in *Against Heresies* 3.18.2 he had cited it in support of his point that the Son of God had become truly human. Against the heretics who deny Christ's participation or communion with true blood Irenaeus cites Paul who speaks of the church's participation in the *blood of Christ*. The death of Christ, the pouring forth of his blood, in which the church partakes at the Eucharist verifies the incarnation of the Word of God. Like Ignatius, the Eucharist points to both the incarnation and the death of Christ.

Irenaeus polemicizes not only against the Valentinians. Marcion, who

[39] *Against Heresies* 5.31.1. See Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29.

[40] *Against Heresies* 5.10.1; 13.2. Antonio Orbe, *Teología de San Ireneo: Commentario al Libro V del "Adversus haereses"*, 3 vols. (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1985–88), 1:130–31; Ysabell de Andia, *Homo Vivens* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986), 243. Cf., too, Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 127.

[41] Cf. on the development of this point, Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 126-30.

[42] *Against Heresies* 5.2.2; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:528, slightly altered. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:16.

sets forth two different gods, one of the Old Testament and its creation and the other of Christ and the heavenly kingdom, is also a concern for Irenaeus. Marcion, too, denies the real incarnation of Christ. In a passage that takes the reader back to Christ's own ordination of the Lord's Supper, where he invites the disciples to take, eat and drink in remembrance of him after giving thanks, Irenaeus counters the positions of Marcion and the Marcionites:

> Moreover, how could the Lord, with any justice, if he belonged to a Father [other than the Creator], have acknowledged the bread to be his body, while he took it from that creation to which we belong, and affirmed the cup to be his blood? And why did he acknowledge himself to be the Son of Man, if he had not gone through a birth which belongs to a human being? How, too, could he forgive us those sins for which we are answerable to our Maker and God? And how, again, if he was not flesh, but was a human merely in appearance, could he have been crucified, and how could blood and water have poured forth from his pierced side? And what body, moreover, did those who buried him consign to the tomb? And what was that body that rose again from the dead?[43]

With these rhetorical questions, Irenaeus joins the Eucharist to the issues of Christ's human birth, the identity of God, not only as Christ's Father, but also as Creator, and the reality of Christ's flesh, blood, death, burial, and resurrection. Irenaeus understands the Lord's words that ordain the Supper and unite the bread and wine with his body and blood, as disallowing the denial of Christ's flesh and a belief in two gods. The Father of Christ, the Son of Man, is the Creator who made the material world, including the flesh and blood of Christ which underwent birth, death, burial and resurrection. In the Lord's words Irenaeus sees the Christian doctrine of the one God, who is both Father of Christ and Creator; the Christian doctrine of Christ's mortal flesh and blood; and the Christian doctrine of the created, physical world, good and godly. He takes us from the Eucharist's implications for Christ's incarnation to its implications for theology and cosmology. Incarnation is now seen as a part of the

[43]*Against Heresies* 4.33.2; trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF 1:507, slightly altered.

redemptive sequence beginning at God's initial communion with the world at Creation. The Eucharist reveals more than just the unity of the Word of God with humanity. It also reveals the enduring compatibility of the Father with the human creature and the material world. God the Father created human flesh and blood, sent his Son to become it, provided salvation through it in all of Jesus's incarnate acts from birth through second advent, and will through those acts transfers to us forgiveness of sin, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and our own confident expectation of bodily, fleshly resurrection at his glorious coming.[44]

III. CONCLUSION

Joining the early church in its celebration and fellowship around the bread and cup by which the flesh and blood of Christ is recalled requires some basic doctrinal understandings. First, God values flesh and blood, and accomplishes miraculous blessings through them. Of course, he values, as its creator, the immaterial human spirit/soul as well. He is the Creator of both human aspects, material and immaterial, visible and invisible, and saves both aspects of the whole human. At the creation human flesh and bone were celebrated by Adam in his first words to Eve, for they shared them in common as the blessed creations of God.[45] And, we must not forget that when our adoption as God's children is consummated at Christ's coming our flesh will be raised, our bodies will be redeemed, and Christ will transform our mortal bodies making them like his resurrected, glorified body.[46] The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* puts it this way: "The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord."[47]

Second, we must distinguish two of the biblical meanings of the term "flesh" in Paul's writings: (1) Paul uses "flesh" in a very negative sense to signify the rebellious, ungodly, selfish deeds and vices of our fallen human nature that struggle against the godly, obedient, other-centered virtues of the indwelling Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruit; and (2) he uses the same word "flesh" in a neutral sense to signify human nature, human beings, and the material human body.[48] Jesus, as the incarnate Word of God, became a very real human being, a true human male person, but he did

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[44]Cf. Bingham, "Eucharist and Incarnation," 124-25.

[45]Gen 2:23.

[46]Rom 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 15:35-41; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2-3.

[47]Article 10: Last Things.

[48]E.g., Gal 5:16-25; Rom 7:5-6; 8:5-11; Rom 3:20; Gal 1:16; 2:16; 1 Cor 1:29; 15:35-41; Eph 6:12.

not possess a rebellious "flesh" in conflict with the Spirit and full of vice.

The early Christians entrust to us this pattern. When a believing community gathers together to worship, includes the Lord's Supper as an essential component of their concept and practice of worship, and partakes of the Supper in a worthy manner that demonstrates love and concern for other worshipers the whole gathered body of Christ is edified in two ways. First, the gathered body, by compassionately attending to the needs of each other, finds blessing and a holy basis from which to partake worthily in the communion of the Lord's Table. Second, as it shares together, each believer passing to and receiving the bread and cup from one another, the gathered, worshiping community remembers the death of the incarnate Word of God and hopes for his second coming in glorified flesh. Moreover, by extension, it recalls as well the Word's incarnate ministry to the world in his birth, his resurrection, and his ascension to the Father's right hand. Perhaps, too, we might think, that a fitting end to each such gathering would be to speak together the words of the Apostle John, the fulfillment of which would end the appointed season of the Supper: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

THE PRO-NICENE HYMNS OF AMBROSE: A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO ARIANISM

Coleman M. Ford*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of Ambrose of Milan's most overlooked achievements during his ministry as bishop was the creation of hymns intended to convey Nicene Orthodoxy to his congregation.[1] As bishop (374-397 AD), Ambrose employed significant influence over not only his flock but leaders and emperors as well. As bishop, Ambrose understood his primary role to be one of a shepherd. While Ambrose was unapologetically Nicene in his Christology, significant Arian influences surrounded his ministry context. With the continuing Arian controversy in the background, Ambrose remained undaunted in his pastoral task. One of the main roles of an overseer within the church of Christ has always been the crucial role of teacher.[2] While Ambrose produced numerous sermons and theological treatises, his pastoral response is best demonstrated in the creation of his hymns.

Writing about early Christological issues, D. Jeffrey Bingham says, "Church leaders who care for their congregations don't allow unacceptable thinking about the Trinity and Christ's person to go unchecked."[3] There is an explicit pastoral obligation to teach what is true about the Christian faith, and to contend with false views. To understand the gravity of the theological environment, as well as the ingenuity of Ambrose's response, we need to understand the "egocentric soloist" (Arius) who inaugurated

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*Coleman M. Ford serves as assistant professor of humanities at Texas Baptist College.

[1]Works that neglect to include the role of hymnody in Augustine's life and ministry include Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), D. H. William, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), and most recently John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London: Longman, 1999), though the latter has provided two pages within his work to discuss the basics of Ambrose's hymns.

[2]1 Timothy 3:2.

[3]D. Jeffrey Bingham, *Pocket History of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 52.

the dissonant chorus of the Arian heresy. From there, we will turn to the "exacting virtuoso" (Athanasius) who corrected the theological sheet music that led to the disharmonious tones of Arianism. Finally, this essay will explore the life of the "reluctant conductor," (Ambrose) and his pastoral response, concluding with a brief survey of the theological content of his hymns.

II. ARIUS: THE EGOCENTRIC SOLOIST

Maurice Wiles reminded his readers, "The influence of heresy on the early development of doctrine is so great that it is almost impossible to exaggerate it."[4] Indeed it was Arius of Alexandria (ca. 256–336 AD) who played that first cacophonous note, forcing the church to turn their ear and respond. Arius, a presbyter from Boukolia outside Alexandria, in the year 318 began openly criticizing the Christological teachings of Alexander, the bishop of the city. His charisma and asceticism appealed to the common people and fellow ascetics alike.[5] Lewis Ayres notes various social factors at play which allowed Arius to gain a wider following.[6] What we know of Arius and his teaching comes from a handful of letters and fragments, as well as fairly extensive quotations from his *Thalia*, verses written in certain style in order to set forth his doctrine.[7] Rowan Williams translates the term *Thalia* as "dinner party songs."[8] For an uneducated lay population, his method of conveying his theological perspective seemed quite appropriate. What better way to reach small town folk than with a lively dinner party ballad? Thus, his ideas spread among the working classes through popular songs "for the sea, for the mill, and for the road."[9]

These letters and verses conveyed that Christ was a created being and therefore not co-equal with the Father. Arius summarized his thought as follows:

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[4]Maurice Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 36.

[5]Rowan Williams, "Athanasius and the Arian Crisis," *The First Christian Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Church*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 159.

[6]Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16. Ayres notes that "even while Alexandria moved towards a monarchical model, it apparently maintained a tradition of independent priests whose relationship with the bishop was complex."

[7]R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 5–6.

[8]Williams, "Athanasius and the Arian Crisis," 161.

[9]Philostorgius, *History of the Church*, 2.2 cited in F. M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 59.

> That the Son is not unbegotten nor in any way a part of an Unbegotten, nor derived from some (alien) substratum, but that he exists by will and counsel before times and ages, full of truth, and grace, God, Only-begotten, unaltering. And before he was begotten, or created or determined or established, he did not exist. For he was not unbegotten (or unorignated).[10]

Arius, in his literal exegesis of Proverbs 8:22 and Colossians 1:15–16, surmised that Christ was a created being. He can say, however, that Christ is "beyond change or alteration" if one understands that he was first created.[11]

Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296–373 AD) established the content of Arius's *Thalia*. Among the doctrinal affirmations, Arius taught the following:

> We praise Him as without beginning because of Him who has a beginning. And adore Him as everlasting, because of Him who in time has come to be. The Unbegun made the Son a beginning of things originated; and advanced Him as a Son to Himself by adoption. He has nothing proper to God in proper subsistence. He is not equal, no, nor one in essence with Him…. Hence the Son, not being (for He existed at the will of the Father), is God Only-begotten, and He is alien from either… nothing which is called comprehensible does the Son know to speak about; for it is impossible for Him to investigate the Father, who is by Himself. For the Son does not know His own essence, For, being Son, He really existed, at the will of the Father…. For it is plain that for that which hath a beginning to conceive how the Unbegun is, or to grasp the idea, is not possible.[12]

According to Arius, there was a time when God was not Father and there was a time when the Son did not exist. God was solitary and his Word and Wisdom had yet to come into being.[13]

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[10]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 6.

[11]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 8.

[12]Athanasius, *De Synodis*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd series, vol. 4 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 457–58.

[13]Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 13.

It is important to consider, as both Hanson and Ayres note, that Arius was not the prolific spearhead as some might believe.[14] Later so called Arians "seldom or never quote him, and sometimes directly disavow connection with him."[15] It is perhaps best to see him as the "spark that started the explosion."[16] It is clear in his few letters, however, that numerous others in agreement with him held to his theology. In his letter to Alexander of Alexandria, numerous presbyters, deacons and bishops are cited at the close of his letter.[17] Arius confirmed his position that "he [Christ] is not everlasting or co-everlasting or unbegotten with the Father" as well as "God is thus before all as a monad…. he is also before the Son." Refuting any novelty, Arius attributed this teaching to Alexander himself![18]

Alexander quickly replied to criticisms from Arius.[19] The official response came in the form of the first ecumenical council of the church at Nicaea in 325. Constantine, following the Edict of Milan in 313, which pronounced formal toleration of the Christian faith, called together between 250 and 300 bishops from the empire in May of 325.[20] Nicaea, contra Arius, declared that the Son was "of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being one substance with the Father." All Arian bishops were subsequently excommunicated if they refused to affirm the Nicene statement of Christology. Kelly provides further insight when he says, "Arianism proper had, for the moment, been driven underground, but the conflict only served to throw into relief the deep-seated theological divisions in the ranks of its adversaries."[21] The aria of Arianism was far from complete.

III. ATHANASIUS: THE EXACTING VIRTUOSO

Though ecumenical, the Council at Nicaea was not extensively effective. Great numbers evidenced loyalty to Arius and Arian teaching and,

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[14]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, xvii; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 145. Specifically, Ayres notes how later theologians following Arius never "made any claim on Arius' legacy."

[15]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, xvii.

[16]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, xvii.

[17]"Arius's Letter to Alexander of Alexandria," in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, Sources of Early Christian Thought, ed. and trans. William G. Rusch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 31–32.

[18]Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 32.

[19]See "Alexander of Alexandria's Letter to Alexander of Thessalonica," in Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 33–44.

[20]For an extensive discussion on the Council of Nicaea see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 152–78; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 85–104.

[21]J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: Continuum, 2011), 237.

as one author reminds us, "It also shows the insidiousness of false teaching and how easily the charisma of the teacher and the trendiness of the delivery can lead people away from orthodoxy."[22] Arian bishops would eventually be reinstated and Arius himself continued to reside in the good graces of emperor Constantine.[23] The chorus remained divided, and the jarring polyphony persisted. The definitive theological answer to the Arian question would come from a pupil of Alexander of Alexandria. This apprentice, destined to surpass his master, showed the promise of a virtuoso who could masterfully command the attention of an expectant audience. Athanasius would masterfully compose the definitive work against Arius's disharmonious melody, though not all would be willing to listen. The Arian controversy would ultimately persist through the end of the fourth century to the time of Ambrose.

Louis Berkhof remarks, "Arius was first of all opposed by his own bishop Alexander…. However, his real opponent proved to be the archdeacon of Alexandria, the great Athanasius, who stands out on the pages of history as a strong, inflexible and unwavering champion of truth."[24] Athanasius, archdeacon and pupil of Alexander of Alexandria, was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and soon succeeded his master as bishop of Alexandria. He was subsequently a consistent defender of Nicene orthodoxy. The center of Athanasius's "polemical and theological argumentation was his use and interpretation of Scripture."[25] The Arian argument required a firm hermeneutical response. To Athanasius, the Arian hermeneutical scheme led essentially to polytheism and explicit idolatry. Peter Leithart notes, "[Athanasius] would charge that the Arians have been co-opted by an alien metaphysical scheme and that their Hellenism has led them into idolatry and polytheism."[26]

While hermeneutical, the issue was ultimately soteriological. In his pivotal work *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*, Athanasius states, "For naturally, since the Word of God was above all, when He offered His own temple and bodily instrument as a substitute for the life of all,

[22]Carl Beckwith, "Athanasius," in *Shapers of Christian Orthodoxy: Engaging with Early and Medieval Theologians*, ed. Bradley G. Green (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010), 159.

[23]Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), 72–75.

[24]Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 85.

[25]J. J. Brogan, "Athanasius" in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 129.

[26]Peter J. Leithart, *Athanasius* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 25.

He fulfilled in death all that was required."[27] Later he adds, "Thus by His own power he restored the whole nature of man."[28] The soteriological issue rested in the restoration of man from his fallen state, and for Athanasius the Arian answer to the question was insufficient. "The Word of God came in His own Person," says Athanasius, "because it was He alone, the Image of the Father Who could recreate man made after the Image."[29] The Arians themselves confessed the humanity of Christ and held no issue with the Word becoming flesh. After all, they were not Docetists. The issue lay, however, at the generated *nature* of the Son. According to Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, "The Arian Christ was a 'creature' or a 'work' of God the Creator who had been promoted to the rank of a divine son and redeemer."[30] Stead, in analyzing the philosophical assumptions of Arius, sees connections between his belief in the generation of the Son at the will of the Father and Plato's teaching of subordinate gods brought into being by a supreme power.[31] The Arian notion of the incarnation of the Son "necessitated a reduction of lowering so that they had to be undertaken by a being who, though divine, was less than fully divine."[32]

According to Arians, God could in no way be apprehended by his creation; therefore the Son must have been a created being in order to become the mediator for the intentions of the Father.[33] He is a subservient to the Father and is the only-begotten, "produced before everything, before anything conceivable, but is still not co-eternal with the Father."[34] Athanasius, seeking to exact this errant view, gives the following reply:

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[27]Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. and ed. by a religious of C.S.M.V (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 35.

[28]Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 36.

[29]Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 41.

[30]Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 1. Numerous treatments on Arian Christology point to the Greek philosophical idea of God as the indivisible monad unable (or unwilling) to condescend to a fleshly state. This necessitated a created being with God-like abilities yet ultimately unequal to the ungenerated one and therefore able to take on flesh. The Arian view of God could not fathom divine condescension. In a Neo-platonic view of God, Sonship was an impersonal property or attribute. For in-depth discussions on the influence of Greek philosophical notions of God on Arius, I refer the reader to Christopher Stead, *Doctrine and Philosophy in Early Christianity: Arius, Athanasius, Augustine* (Aldershot: Ashgate. 2000) as well as Christopher Stead, "Platonism of Arius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 15, no. 1 (1964): 16–31.

[31]Stead, "Platonism of Arius," 27.

[32]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 100.

[33]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 101.

[34]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 103.

> Since he is the peculiar Son of God who always is, he exists everlastingly. It is distinctive of men to reproduce in time because of the imperfection of their nature. God's offspring is everlasting because of the continual perfection of his nature. Therefore if he is not a Son but a work that came into existence from nothing, let them prove it![35]

The begotten Son of God is not like any normal begotten son; he is uniquely and peculiarly begotten of God which implies something everlasting, and eternal based on the nature of God himself. The image of God is nothing less than co-eternal. "There was never a time when he was not" is the functional reply of Athanasius to the Arians. For Athanasius the impassibility and transcendence of God informed the nature in which the Son was to be understood. Again, he states, "If the Son was not before he was begotten, truth was not always in God…. Since the Father exists, there is always in him truth, which is the Son who says, 'I am the truth.'"[36] To deny the eternality of the Son was to deny truth and in so doing, be subject to the charge of impiety. The Arians are impious, not because of any fleshly immorality, but since they do not uphold the truth of God and his Son.

For our exacting virtuoso, the Arian chorus was disharmonious because it denied the revealed truth of God in Christ. Only the highest of all beings can bring salvation, and such a being was none other than God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. According to Athanasius, Arius declared such things as, "The Word is not true God. Even if he is declared God, he is not true God. By sharing grace, just as all the others is he declared God only in name."[37] Athanasius, alluding to the Arian error, asserted, "For whereas human things cease and the fact of Christ remains, it is clear to all that the things which cease are temporary, but that He Who remains is God and very Son of God, the sole-begotten Word."[38] The atonal notation of Arius declared that the Son did not share in all things with the Father. Such a timbre created a dissonant chorus that continued to be chanted throughout the fourth century. While many sought to address Arianism, a creative and effective response would come from a reluctant conductor

[35]Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 77.
[36]Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 83.
[37]Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 67.
[38]Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 95.

who avoided the spotlight yet finally assumed its responsibilities.

IV. AMBROSE: THE RELUCTANT CONDUCTOR

By the middle of the fourth century A.D., Milan had become a thriving metropolis and home to emperors and elite. Milan for Ambrose, being a governor of the province who took up residence in the city, was a natural fit for the "Roman of Rome."[39] But what brought Ambrose to Milan? For his background we turn to his biographer, Paulinus. From this we see that Ambrose has a prestigious parentage as his father "was administering the prefectureship of the Gallic provinces."[40] McLynn notes that this placed the elder Ambrose's service during the reign of Constantine II, giving him great power of office yet not necessarily of Roman nobility.[41] It was during this time, in 339 that the younger Ambrose was born. It appears that Ambrose followed in the footsteps of his father. He was educated in Rome, likely studying law and rhetoric, and prepared for a political career.

Much ecclesiastical strife and debate preceded Ambrose before his election as governor and eventual settling in Milan. Auxentius, the bishop of Milan prior to Ambrose, was an unashamed adherent to Arian Christology. As evidenced by Hilary of Poitiers, Auxentius was regarded as the great opponent of the Nicene Creed in the West.[42] Upon Valentinan's rise to imperial power, two consecutive attempts were made to dispose Auxentius of his position. Valentinian, being a devout Christian and probably the first baptized Christian to inherit the purple, spent an entire year in Milan and subsequently became very familiar with her ecclesiastical leadership.[43] Hilary subsequently attempted to persuade the Nicene emperor against Milan's anti-Nicene bishop. His strategies were unsuccessful and Hilary's attempts to expel Auxentius from his episcopal seat failed.[44]

In 374, Auxentius died and left the bishopric of Milan open, subsequently dividing the city into Nicene and Arian factions. This had turned

[39]McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 31.

[40]Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 3, in Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol 15: *Early Christian Biographies* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 34. I will refer to this work as *Life of St. Ambrose* from this point on, with pagination referring to the Deferrari volume.

[41]McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 32.

[42]For a significant discussion regarding Hilary against Auxentius, see Daniel H. Williams, "The Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers and the *Liber Contra Auxentium*," *Church History* 61 (1992): 7–22.

[43]McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 25–27.

[44]Williams, "Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers," 20.

into a civil matter just as much as it was an ecclesiastical one. The popularity surrounding the recently deceased Arian bishop was evident, and the struggle to bridge the two factions together was brought to the forefront. Being the governor of the province, Ambrose chose to intervene in this situation himself. McLynn sees this interruption as Ambrose's attempt to mediate the two positions and allow the Nicene voice to be heard amidst the majority Arian party.[45] Whatever the motivation, the outcome produced something quite unexpected. Not only was Ambrose to be the civic mediator in this situation, but he was destined to become the ecclesiastical conductor who would soon be charged to bring the church into harmony with the proper doctrines of the church.

From the various treatments on Ambrose, both ancient and modern, Ambrose considered himself a "reluctant bishop."[46] His election to the episcopacy was not planned or deliberate, nor upon being called did he necessarily accept the summons. Paulinus recounts Ambrose's election to the episcopate:

> The people were about to revolt in seeking a bishop, Ambrose had the task of putting down the revolt. So he went to the church. And when he was addressing the people, the voice of a child among the people is said to have called out suddenly: "Ambrose bishop." At the sound of this voice, the mouths of all the people joined in the cry: "Ambrose bishop." Thus, those who a while before were disagreeing most violently… suddenly agreed on this one with miraculous and unbelievable harmony.[47]

Paulinus goes on to describe various actions which Ambrose immediately took to avoid the election. He ordered tortures to be inflicted on individuals, then pondered being a philosopher, then attempted to escape and flee the city at midnight that evening.[48] His escape, according to Paulinus, was prevented as a matter of divine will for God was "preparing a strong support for His Catholic church against His enemies."[49]

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[45] McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 43.

[46] The title of "reluctant bishop" comes from the title of chapter one from McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*.

[47] Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 6.

[48] Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 7–8.

[49] Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 8.

Ambrose, upon failure to avoid this election, demanded baptism by a Catholic bishop. In this regard, Paulinus demonstrates Ambrose's Nicene affinities for, "he was carefully guarding himself against the heresy of the Arians."[50] Whether or not Ambrose was as emphatic regarding his baptism as Paulinus says cannot ultimately be determined because, as Williams reminds his readers, "few other sources are available for the reconstruction of Ambrose's early career."[51] Certainly an insistence on proper Catholic baptism conforms to Ambrose's attitude regarding Arianism as seen early in his episcopal career at the Council of Aquileia.[52] As a reader, one has little basis to deny Ambrose's Nicene beliefs. Immediately following his baptism, Ambrose quickly progressed through all the appropriate offices of the church that would lead to his consecration as bishop on the eighth day.[53]

Ambrose, in an effort to maintain peace, did not immediately dispose of the presbyters who were previously loyal to Auxentius.[54] It is also clear that Ambrose was not considered as a "champion of orthodoxy" from the outset of his episcopacy.[55] Ambrose, though set on orthodoxy, chose to be judicious in his early episcopal career because of the deep entrenchment of Arianism within Milan.[56] Ambrose's prior theological training is unclear, but his basic commitment to Nicene orthodoxy as evidenced by Paulinus remains evident. To emphasize the lack of clarity regarding his theological instruction, Williams highlights the fact that there are no theological treatises from Ambrose for the first three years of his episcopacy.[57] There could be numerous reasons for this, yet we hear from Ambrose himself how he initially considered himself "unlearned" and an "initiate

[50]Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 9.

[51]D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 109.

[52]Much is to be said on this episode early in Ambrose's episcopal career and how it explicitly reveals his Nicene convictions. It also highlights his somewhat cynical nature and early attempts to promote Nicene orthodoxy at any cost. Ambrose's episcopal career and activities, while prolific and a treasury of wealth to the church, should also be critiqued openly and honestly. We should use caution, however, not to throw the proverbial baby out with the dirty bath water. Episodes like his behavior at the Council of Aquileia reveal his less than humble qualities, especially as a newly consecrated bishop of the church. Palladius, writing about the council afterwards, accused Ambrose of being nothing more than a catechumen, referring to his hasty election and consecration as bishop. Because this is not the focus of this section, I refer the reader to Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 154–84.

[53]Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 9.

[54]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 121.

[55]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 127.

[56]Angelo Paredi, *Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 176.

[57]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 128.

in religious matters."[58]

The sea-change came following the defeat of Valens at Hadrianople against Gothic forces in 378. A flood of people entered Milan as barbarians began surrounding Constantinople. This brought Arian-sympathizers to the city and a need for a church arose. Emperor Gratian, nephew of Valens and now sole ruler, ordered a church to be sequestered, a decision conforming to his political position of tolerance. Thus, religious toleration under Gratian was foisted upon the city of Milan. It appeared, at least partially, that Gratian's decision regarding implementation of religious toleration to such a forceful degree was partially influenced by Arians in Milan.[59] The act that exemplified this program of toleration was Gratian's request to sequester a church for Arian use and worship.[60] This situation, likely due to negative remarks made by the Arians to the emperor regarding Ambrose, prompted Gratian to request a summary of the faith that Ambrose proclaimed.[61] Ambrose's *De fide* is his response to this imperial request. It is important to understand that Ambrose did not write anything about the Arians until *De fide* books I and II. *De fide*, composed by the reluctant conductor expressing the motif which his choristers were to sing, was Ambrose's first polemical foray into the Arian-Nicene debate.[62] In *De fide*, Ambrose faithfully transmitted the ideals of Nicaea while using "the usual arguments for the Nicene view."[63] It is not inappropriate to say that Ambrose was not as forward thinking of a theologian by the likes of Athanasius in this regard, but it is safe to say that he saw himself as a mouthpiece for the ruling of Nicaea in 325. In this way some regard him as the heir of Athanasius in the West.[64]

An Unhappy Patron. Daniel Williams declares that the basilica conflict of 385-6 is "the most celebrated period of Ambrose's career" and cites numerous ancient sources acknowledging this fact.[65] Though Gratian had issued the original edict procuring a basilica for the Arians, it was ultimately

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[58]Ambrose, *Duties of the Clergy*, 1.4; Ambrose of Milan, *Concerning Repentance* 2.73 in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Father*s, vol. 10, *St. Ambrose Select Works and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 3, 354.

[59]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 140.

[60]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 139.

[61]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 140–41.

[62]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 129; 140–41.

[63]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 670.

[64]Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 667.

[65]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 210.

Emperor Valentinian's edict issued in January of 386 granting liberty for worshipers in the Arian tradition.[66] Ambrose refused to relinquish control and was subsequently ordered to leave Milan.[67] Because the Valentinian edict promoted tolerance based on the creed produced at the Council of Arminum, an Arian-affirming assembly, Ambrose thus rejected it. For Ambrose, the true faith was the Nicene faith and any shifting shadow should thus be repudiated.

During the Easter season of 386 events quickly escalated. A group of counts approached Ambrose on Friday 27 March and demanded that he hand over the entire cathedral, an arrogant demand as the cathedral was the center of his bishopric and would have constituted a relinquishing of position.[68] Nevertheless, Ambrose refused reminiscent of one refusing to turn over a copy of the Scriptures during an earlier time of Christian persecution. Ambrose declined to put down the baton. On Palm Sunday just two days later, word came that various peoples had rushed to the basilica due to reports that the emperor would arrive, yet Ambrose remained unwavering and continued in the liturgy, even as word spread that an anti-Nicene priest was to be lynched by the people. According to John Moorhead, Ambrose sent aid and "wept bitterly … praying that if blood were shed it would be his."[69]

During the week the nobles of the city persisted in their pursuit to apprehend the basilica from Ambrose. By dawn on Wednesday 2 April reports that soldiers had surrounded the basilica reached Ambrose, inciting an impromptu sermon. Preaching from Job and relating the words of Job's wife, "Say something against God and die" (Job 2:9), Ambrose implied that in this similar wrestling with the powers of evil that the emperor's mother Justina was commanding Ambrose to curse God by handing over the basilica.[70] For Ambrose, "The palaces belong to the Emperor, the churches to the Bishop."[71] Ambrose thus spoke frankly of the young emperor Valentinian and his mother, admonishing them for asserting

[66]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 212.

[67]Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, 212.

[68]John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London: Longman, 1999), 137.

[69]Moorhead, *Ambrose*, 138.

[70]Moorhead, *Ambrose*, 138.

[71]Ambrose, *Letter* 20.19 in Ambrose of Milan, "The Letters of St. Ambrose," in *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth, vol. 10, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1896), 425.

rights over sacred places which were clearly the domain of the bishops.[72]

During this incident, Ambrose bid his people to sing. He knew that "religious singing gave Christians spiritual strength."[73] His biographer, Paulinus, declared that even the soldiers who were sent to ensure that no Catholics would enter the basilica joined in the cause and "acclaimed the Catholic faith equally with the congregation."[74] It was during this time that hymns "first begin to be practised in the church at Milan" and Paulinus affirms to his readers that "this custom remains even to this very day … through almost all the provinces of the West."[75] Augustine makes an almost identical assertion saying, "From that time to this day the practice has been retained and many, indeed almost all your flocks, in other parts of the world have imitated it."[76]

V. DRAFTING THE MOVEMENTS OF NICENE ORTHODOXY

With the theological and social context established, a motive for the creation of Ambrose's hymns emerges. J. den Boeft observes how the hymns of Ambrose arise from motivation to communicate theological truth to his congregation.[77] In his sermon against Auxentius during the basilica crisis of 386, Ambrose spoke to the Arian reaction regarding the success of his anti-Arian hymns:

> They declare also that the people have been beguiled by the strains of my hymns. I certainly do not deny it. That is a lofty strain, and there is nothing more powerful than it. For what has more power than the confession of the Trinity which is daily celebrated by the mouth of the whole people? All eagerly vie one with the other in confessing the faith, and know how to praise in verse the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So they all have become teachers, who scarcely could be disciples.[78]

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[72]Moorhead, *Ambrose*, 139.

[73]Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 273.

[74]Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 41.

[75]Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 41.

[76]Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.7, 15 in Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 165.

[77]J. den Boeft, "Ambrosius Lyricus," in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essay*, ed. J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 83.

[78]Ambrose, *Sermon Against Auxentius*, 34, in Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and*

There is a clear connection between the simplicity of Ambrose's hymns and his people's ability to communicate theological truth. "They all have become teachers," says Ambrose. He composed hymns as a means of instructing his people in a way that they would appreciate and understand; he wrote hymns which they could sing, as heretics had already done before him.[79] This last observation is important as the reader must first understand that Ambrose did not invent the Christian hymn itself, just a particular form of hymnody.

The hymns of Ambrose could be easily learned and sung. More importantly, their doctrinal content "was simple and basic, such that even the uneducated could grasp it."[80] Boeft observes, "He did not compose beautiful songs which were gratifying to the ears, but authentic poetry which could move men's hearts."[81] It was only fitting that Ambrose turn to hymnody, as this had been the strategy of Arius years before. One author conjectured that Auxentius may have introduced Arian hymns in Milan, Arius's *Thalia* being particularly famous.[82] The diffusion of Arianism is often explained through their use of verse. Ballads were sung "*ad nauseam* by sailors, merchants, and travelers in the streets and harbors."[83] It is only natural for a man such as Ambrose to appropriate his opponent's method and employ it for his own means. The erudite pastor was keen on using whatever means necessary to arrest heresy and promote orthodoxy.

The impact of Ambrose's hymns is great when one considers the pastoral paucity of previous hymn writers. Hilary of Poitiers likewise composed hymns for congregational singing, but this endeavor ultimately failed, most likely to the "obscurity and heaviness of his words."[84] Illiterate parishioners likely were unable to learn the rhythmic prose and complex theological reflection. Due to the rapid spread and ease of use, Ambrose's hymns (or at least his style) soon took upon themselves the name of their progenitor with the term "Ambrosian" becoming synonymous with "hymn."[85] Mans

Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 10, *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 436. I will refer to this work as *Sermon Against Auxentius* from this point forward.

[79]Angelo Paredi, *Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 336.

[80]Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 273.

[81]den Boeft, "Ambrosius Lyricus," 89.

[82]Paredi, *Saint Ambrose*, 337.

[83]Paredi, *Saint Ambrose*, 337.

[84]Paredi, *Saint Ambrose*, 337.

[85]Paredi, *Saint Ambrose*, 337.

contributes this important note:

> Although Hilary of Poitiers is credited with being the first to introduce liturgical hymns in the Latin language into the West, Ambrose developed the [liturgical hymn] genre into a simple, highly poetic form, in order to capture the imagination of his congregation, and to communicate particular evangelical messages, thereby making it a very popular and useful medium.… The real history of ancient Latin Christian hymns in the West, therefore, begins with St. Ambrose.[86]

As noted earlier, Ambrose and his congregation refused to vacate the basilica in the spring of 386. With court soldiers surrounding the church, Ambrose implored his people to sing hymns. It is proper to say that it was by his hymns, more than his theological works, that Ambrose was able to triumph over heterodoxy, while producing a profitable instrument to be used in the church's liturgy.[87] In these hymns, Ambrose reveals his poetic nature and orthodox convictions. The hymns that Ambrose composed were wholly conceived to be sung by Nicene-confessing Christians. Any genuinely confessing Arian could not have affirmed their content. By these hymns, Ambrose encouraged the hearts of his congregation and provided a means to gain spiritual strength in the face of spiritual adversity. Of numerous hymns attributed to Ambrose, we will look at four to understand their theological and pastoral value.[88]

1. *Aeterne rerum conditor*. This hymn, translated as *Eternal Creator of Things*, is today "used in the Liturgy of Hours … for Sunday Lauds on the first and third Sundays of the Psalter during Ordinary Time."[89] The hymn relates one who slumbers to the eternal Creator to Jesus. The listener

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[86]M. J. Mans, "The Function of Biblical Material in the Hymns of Ambrose," in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, ed. J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 91.

[87]Mans, "The Function of Biblical Material in the Hymns of Ambrose," 91.

[88]Because of the style and simplicity, Ambrosian hymns were often imitated. Though numerous hymns are attributed to Ambrose, there are four that are universally recognized to be authentic. This is largely based on Augustine's mention of them in his *Confessions*. For a quick reference regarding this, I refer the reader to Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 2:273.

[89]From http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/AeterneRerum.html. Moving forward, the translations used in my analysis of Ambrose's hymns, I will refer to the translations offered in Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose* (London: Routledge, 1997).

is implored to look upon Jesus and not slumber because it is Christ who looks into our souls, and we should be open, willing, and waiting for such an occasion. Christ peers into our souls and declares "Should you look, our sins will founder and tears will dissolve our guilt."[90] Because of this reality, the name of Christ should be on every tongue at the earliest part of the day declaring, "may your praise open our mouths."[91]

Ambrose uses the crowing of a cock, a symbol found both in nature and Scripture, as a warning and reminder to his congregation regarding the Lord's Second Coming. His call is truly redemptive. This image, found in such biblical texts as Matt 26:69–75, Luke 22:56–62 and John 18:25–7, deviates slightly from its use in Scripture. In the gospel accounts, the crowing of the cock symbolizes Peter's prophetic denial of Christ and subsequent contrition. For Ambrose, according to Mans, the cock crowing imagery "should rather be seen in the light of the eschatological alignment" harking to Mark 13:35–6.[92] The imagery of the cock crowing and Peter's denial, according to Mans, "Makes a great impact on the audience's emotion, especially by virtue of his exploitation of Christ's implicit reprimanding look."[93] In this text, the listener is implored to not be found in slumber as one does not know when the master will return. He could return in the evening, or at the crowing of a cock at sunrise.

The hymn again is a call to awaken oneself from slumber and prepare for Christ to peer into the soul by his "piercing ray" (*tu lux refulge sensibus*).[94] This conjures images of impending eschatological judgment. This hymn conveys that it is Christ who not only looks into our souls but has the power to forgive and pardon and subsequently is worthy of praise. Only if Christ were God could he truly pardon sin; a created being cannot accomplish such an endeavor. The ultimate result of recognizing the mercy of Christ is praise; his name should be first upon our tongues as we rise for the day. The hymn closes in a standard Trinitarian formula with direct mention of "God the Father," "Eternal Son," and "God the Holy Paraclete." With a proper understanding of Christ and his role comes a subsequent praise to the triune God for his work that secures pardon for sin and creates a people for himself who will praise him and give him glory.

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[90] Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 167.

[91] Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 167.

[92] Mans, "Biblical Material in the Hymns of St. Ambrose," 96.

[93] Mans, "Biblical Material in the Hymns of St. Ambrose," 93.

[94] Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 168.

2. *Iam surgit hora tertia*. This hymn translated from the Latin is *The Third Hour Is Already Here*. Clearly in the title alone, the listener should realize the referent to which this hymn recalls. The passion of Christ is the emphasis of this work, referring to the gospel account in Mark 15:25. The passion reveals the mystery of Christ's humanity but also involves the entire life course of Christ which began at his miraculous conception. The passion has inaugurated the "days of blessedness."[95] Ambrose describes Christ's placement on the cross as "the lofty summit of his triumph."[96] This triumph is the redemption of mankind and the forgiveness of sins through his atoning sacrifice. Quoting John 19:27, Ambrose highlights the acts of Mary within the life of Christ, which point not only to his humanity but his deity as well.

The reality of the God-man undergirds the entirety of this hymn. There is no hint of subordinationism, de-emphasis of essence, or question of generation. As Ambrose states in the last stanza, "We believe the God who was born, the offspring of the holy virgin, who, seated at the Father's right, has taken away the sins of the world."[97] Implicitly referencing John 1:29, Ambrose communicates the crucial position of Christ as the sacrifice for sins. As he relates in the third stanza, "This is the hour when Christ checked the ancient, dreadful crime, overthrew death's reign, and took the age-old sin upon himself."[98] Only the God-man, that is one who was fully God and fully man was capable of overthrowing the reign of death and exacting payment for the debt of sin. This crowning stanza echoes the assertions of Athanasius years earlier when he states, "For by the sacrifice of His own body He did two things: He put an end to the law of death which barred our way; and He made a new beginning of life for us, by giving us the hope of resurrection."[99]

This hymn also confronts those who do not have a proper belief in Christ. Ambrose connects this to the historic crucifixion but there is also a hint of contemporary disdain. Arians, in the opinion of Ambrose, do not believe in Christ properly and are therefore impious. The reference is likely to the original Jewish audience who rejected Christ and his message, but Ambrose in other places relates the rejection of Christ to the Arian

[95]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 169.

[96]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 169.

[97]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 169.

[98]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 168.

[99]Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, §10.

heresy and must also imply that force here in the hymn.[100] The one who is saved is "the one who has believed." At the end of this hymn, Ambrose's theology of the incarnation is explicitly orthodox. Not only was it Christ as human who was born, but it was "God who was born, the offspring of a holy virgin, who seated at the Father's right, has taken away the sins of the world." John 1:29 is invoked in this final line to highlight the atonement once again; an act possible only with God made man. Regarding the spiritual significance of this hymn, Joel Otto notes, "In a world which seems more evil and sinful by the day, the clear message of Christ's atoning work proclaimed in the poetry of Ambrose is a timeless one."[101]

3. *Deus creator omnium. Deus creator omnium,* or *God Creator of the Universe,* is a hymn for ending the day. It is to be sung with the understanding that God will grant one rest and most importantly, that our faith should never slumber. Though our bodies require sleep, our faith should not. Though "our slackened limbs" are weary from "the exercise of toil," Ambrose implores the listener to not allow the mind to slumber. Slumber is related to sinfulness, and we need help with our sinfulness. This hymn, in its simplicity, conveys the challenge that God's people have before them to perpetually seek after righteousness and to ask for God's help to "not permit our minds to slumber." Though we rest our bodies, our minds are implored to remain active in order that we might grow in holiness.

Of the four hymns, this is admittedly the least Christological. There is no explicit mention of Christ in the main body of the hymn. This is a hymn intended to implore the faithful to continue abiding in faithfulness; sleep does not terminate this obligation. There is an idea implicit in this hymn of a rest that is above one that will regenerate the body. This rest is for those who continue to trust in God and pursue holiness through the confession of sin. Resting in God produces a regeneration of the soul. This hymn encourages the listener not to be disturbed in one's journey towards a godly lifestyle. Though there is no clear mention of Christ in the main body, this hymn concludes with a succinct and simple invocation of the Trinity. Ambrose writes, "We beseech Christ and the Father, and the Spirit of Christ and the Father, who are one and omnipotent. O Trinity,

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[100]Ambrose, *De fides* 4.2.24. Ambrose describes the act of Christ standing at the door of one's soul, yet the Arians can not accept him because they take him to be "petty, and weak, and menial" rather than "Christ in the form of God … exalted above the heaven and all things."

[101]Joel D. Otto, "Teaching the Truth and Defending the Faith: Theological Themes in the Hymns of St. Ambrose," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 113, no. 2 (2016): 103.

assist us who pray to you." This concluding statement draws attention to the fact that the triune God should be one's object of rest and comfort. God knows all things; therefore, our anxiety should be relieved in order that we can rest both physically and spiritually.

4. *Intende qui regis Israel*. Translated as *Hearken, You Who Rule Israel*, this hymn provides a clear orthodox understanding of the incarnation. Rightly so "it is used as the Advent hymn for the Office of the Readings for the octave before Christmas."[102] This hymn describes the status of Christ before the incarnation and the humble beginnings as God in the flesh. Ambrose makes explicit connections to his humanity as well as his deity and upholds the two as a unified whole. "The equal of the eternal Father" has girded "on the trophy of our flesh" and by doing fortifies "the frailty of our body with his enduring strength."[103] Christ was begotten "not by a man's seed" but the Word of God became flesh "by a mystical inbreathing."[104] Because of this miraculous birth, the proper response is to let "every age in wonder fall." Though in humble appearance, Ambrose reminds listeners that Christ is equal to the Father.

A proper understanding of the incarnation is foundational to the Nicene faith and is thus demonstrated in *Hearken*. Only God in the flesh can be the redeemer of the nations. Ambrose elegantly describes the intricacies of God taking on flesh and the profound mystery that is thereby represented. This is communicated in such a way that anyone who could be taught this hymn could likewise learn the mystery of the incarnation in a Nicene-confessing fashion. Ambrose says just enough to make this hymn doctrinally rich and at the same time easily committed to memory. It is easy to see that this hymn would make teachers out of those "who could scarcely be disciples." Tapping into the heart of the incarnation through this hymn allowed Ambrose's parishioners to understand in a basic sense the treasures of such a profound doctrine and thus communicate this through verse.

Hearken answers Arian arguments against the co-equality and co-eternality of Christ. This is not a hymn that a confessing Arian could sing in good conscience. In the poetic construction of illustrating Christ's divinity,

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[102]See http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/VeniRedemptorG.html. Ramsey refers to this hymn as Intende Qui Regis Israel per the first line of the first stanza, but numerous sources refer to this hymn as *Veni, redemptor gentium or Come, Redeemer of the Nations*.

[103]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 172.

[104]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 172.

Ambrose contrasts darkness and light and declares that in the manger a light shines forth and the night "will produce a new light."[105] This light is the divine light of the Son and the hymn proclaims, "May no night destroy it, and may it beam with constant faith."[106] Ambrose desired that his flock would not be overtaken by the darkness of Arian-influenced Christology. The "constant faith" driving Ambrose was the Nicene faith. Echoing Nicaea when the creed declares the Son as "Light of light" and "very God of very God," *Hearken* declares Christ as the "equal of the eternal Father."[107] Thus through the congregational recitation of *Hearken*, parishioners in Milan in the late fourth century echoed and continually proclaimed the truth of Christ declared at Nicaea.

This closing verse sets the record straight regarding the Arian perspective on Christ as a created being. Rather, Christ is the eternal Son who is to be equally adored and glorified with the Father and the Spirit. Mans remarks, "This particular instance proves to be an evidentiary and confessionary example of the Lord's majesty and glory, which St. Ambrose employs to lead the Christian to praise, worship and adoration of Christ, i.e. also a doxological implementation of the biblical material."[108] Though human, he is equal to the Father in regards to deity. Imagine Ambrose's congregation chanting this hymn and the subsequent reaction from Arian sympathizers. The educated and uneducated alike could appropriate this hymn and thereby grasp basic Nicene Christology. If Ambrose's desire was fulfilled, such people would be spiritually strengthened to stand strong against heretical opposition.

VI. MUSICIANS IN UNISON

With a congregation united in song, Ambrose demonstrated that though he was not necessarily a "theological master" he was however a "spiritual one."[109] While Athanasius and others would be considered the conceptual theologians of the era, "Ambrose's contribution … was in the domain of the practical."[110] As demonstrated above, Ambrose had concern for pastoral matters and though perhaps not always in admirable ways (as

[105]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 172.

[106]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 172.

[107]Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 172.

[108]Mans, "Biblical Material in the Hymns of St. Ambrose," 97.

[109]Boniface Ramsey, "Ambrose" in *The First Christian Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 232.

[110]Ramsey, "Ambrose," 232.

demonstrated by his behavior at the Council of Aquileia), he maintained orthodoxy in the midst of conflict. Against an empress and emperor, Ambrose preserved unity within a previously fractured community of faith. A Roman politician by training, he masterfully accomplished the role of pastor and brought to the pastorate the necessary skills for achieving unity and orthodox preeminence in an ecclesial world. Augustine comments regarding the unity of the body in Milan prior to his conversion experience, "It was not long before this that the Church at Milan had begun to seek comfort and spiritual strength in the practice of singing hymns, in which the faithful united fervently with heart and voice."[111] A community once fractured by the dissonant chorus produced by Arius had now become a harmonious voice produced by Ambrose. The committed governor who had inserted himself to subdue an ecclesiastical disagreement had become the diligent pastor who helped solve a pastoral dilemma.

The Trinitarian convictions of Ambrose pour forth from the closing lines of *Iam surgit hora tertia* and *Deus creator omnium*. An explicit confession of the unity of Christ with the Father and an acknowledgment of the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit united the congregation of Milan and dispelled any Arian influenced notions. Williams notes that following the basilica incident of 386 (and the discovery of the remains of the two martyrs Protasius and Gervasius), "Ambrose's episcopate was no longer troubled by Homoian rivals or potentially damaging accusations from politically influential anti-Nicenes."[112] He goes on to mention that the problem of Arianism would only persist within barbarian groups and only challenge the stability of orthodoxy by means of various invasions throughout the fifth-century.[113] Doctrinally, the Christology of the Western church would remain orthodox. The security of the fact was undoubtedly dependent upon the hymns of Ambrose. As Augustine reminds us, such a custom "has been followed in many other places, in fact in almost every church throughout the world."[114]

VII. THE LEGACY OF THE MAESTRO

Ambrose has been remembered mostly for his forays into political and ecclesiastical relationships. He is a bishop who stands between the chasm

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[111] Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.7.

[112] Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 231.

[113] Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 231.

[114] Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.7.

of church and state and subsequently bridges the gap, setting the stage for the medieval church. He lives on as a towering figure who was both a product of his time but also somewhat of a prophet in his posturing and exploits. Moorhead notes:

> Ambrose cannot be seen as simply a figure of the ancient world, for his thinking and activities looked beyond that world. His attitudes to women, the Bible and other texts, the church and the secular state, as well as the authority he could command in his city, in varying degrees all pointed beyond the fourth century and firmly into the middle ages. It is this sense of pointing beyond the world in which he lived that gives Ambrose a lasting fascination.[115]

Though this is undeniably true, the legacy is best demonstrated within the hymnody of Ambrose; each performance being an *aide-mémoire* to his accomplishment and the doctrinal context in which he ministered. The notes of Nicene orthodoxy rise to the heavens and provide congregations with ongoing stimulation in worshiping the Triune God in Spirit and truth. More than a political manipulator or ecclesiastical tactician, Ambrose was a pastor with real pastoral concerns driving his ministry, and this is most evident in his hymnic production.

The hymns of Ambrose were innovative in form and content. They were soon imitated by others and entered the ecclesial milieu following the death of Ambrose. The Ambrosian hymn was thus imitated throughout much of the Western church and her liturgy, as evidenced by the ancient sources.[116] White remarks, "No doubt the subjects of Ambrose's hymns were also intended to be influential, for it is clear that he is concerned to stress orthodox Trinitarian, as opposed to Arian, doctrines, as is particularly obvious in the doctrinal statement at the end of *Deus creator omnium* or *Iam surgit hora tertia* and *Intende qui regis Israel*."[117] The legacy of the maestro includes an initial dedication to theological truthfulness, and a creative way in which that theological truthfulness was communicated. This should be the ongoing paradigm for churches and pastors to the present day.

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[115]Moorhead, *Ambrose*, 218.

[116]Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.7; Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, 41.

[117]Carolinne White, *Early Christian Latin Poets* (London: Routledge, 2000), 46.

RE-VISIONING THE CORPORATE GATHERING: THREE KEYS TO TRANSFORMATIONAL WORSHIP

Joseph R. Crider*

Between 1997 and 2002, the Barna Research Group conducted national surveys on corporate worship among Christian church attenders. One-third of respondents indicated they had never "experienced the presence of God."[1] Even more concerning was "when asked to explain what worship was in their own words, two-thirds had no idea or provided a vague or meaningless explanation that had no apparent connection to worship."[2] Furthermore, when asked what the most important outcome of the corporate gathering should be, nearly a quarter answered that they simply "didn't know," and they had no idea why it was important for them to participate in weekly corporate worship.[3] While twenty years have elapsed since Barna's worship survey, perhaps his research sheds light on a more recent study published by LifeWay Research, which reported that "less than half of Americans say they belong to a house of worship, marking the first time, since Gallup began collecting data in 1937, a majority aren't part of a church, synagogue, or mosque. Religious membership was stable throughout the twentieth century but fell from 70% in 2000 to 47% in 2020."[4] While many factors have contributed to the sharp decline in American church attendance,

*Joseph R. Crider serves as dean of the School of Church Music and Worship, and also professor of church music and worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[1]George Barna, "How Pastors, Worship Leaders, and Christians View Worship," in *A Distant Harmony: The Papers of the Hearn Symposium on Christian Music*, ed. Randall Bradley (Waco, TX: Baylor School of Music, 2002), 4.

[2]Barna, "How Pastors, Worship Leaders," 4.

[3]Barna, "How Pastors, Worship Leaders," 4-5.

[4]Aaron Earls, "22 Vital Stats for Ministry in 2022," LifeWay Research, January 5, 2022, https://research.lifeway.com/2022/01/05/22-vital-stats-for-ministry-in-2022/. Pew research indicates an even greater drop in church attendance. Only 33 percent of US adults attend church regularly. Justin Nortey and Michael Rotolo, "How the Pandemic Has Affected Attendance at US Religious Services," Pew Research Center, March 28, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/03/28/how-the-pandemic-has-affected-attendance-at-u-s-religious services/.

could Barna's survey data showing low expectation and misunderstanding of corporate worship be an unrecognized influence? If there is a connection between the lack of engagement among worshipers twenty years ago and significantly lower church attendance today, in what ways can Southern Baptist and other evangelical pastors and worship ministry leaders begin to effectively reverse declining church attendance trends? Pastors and worship ministry leaders have an opportunity to reframe their congregation's view of worship as they cast a vision that the God of the universe has invited his redeemed to see him, engage with him, respond to him, and become more like his Son.

One of the reasons for the lack of congregational engagement is related to a directly proportional lack of vision casting by church leaders for what Christian worship can be on Sunday mornings. In his influential work, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, Allen P. Ross articulates the following concerning the weekly corporate worship of God's people:

> For worship to be as glorious as it should be, for it to lift people out of their mundane cares and fill them with adoration and praise, for it to be the life-changing and life-defining experience it was designed to be, it must be inspired by a vision so great and so glorious that what we call worship will be transformed from a routine gathering into a transcendent meeting with the living God.[5]

Ross identifies several vital arteries through which the vibrant worship life of congregational engagement flows. First, God's people should be captivated by a glorious vision of weekly corporate worship. Second, God's people need to be reminded that transformation is not only possible in biblically rooted corporate worship; it is *inevitable*. Third, Christian worship is the space between heaven and earth in which believers are called to a transcendent encounter with the triune God, who made worship possible in the first place.

I. CASTING A GLORIOUS VISION FOR THE WEEKLY GATHERING

As believers enter the space in which they interact with each other and the Holy One who called them to worship, how effectively have they

[5]Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 39.

been prompted by ministry leaders to consider what is about to take place during worship? In services that are music-driven, congregants may be encouraged to sing and clap to an energized, upbeat opening song, but what distinguishes that particular activity from a secular concert? In other words, do the ministry leaders who prepare and lead the order of worship consider the essentiality of a Spirit-infused, scripturally saturated call to worship in casting a vision for worship? What congregational prompts are designed to help the congregation awaken to the reality that the act of Christian worship stands in stark contrast to the world from which worshipers have come? In many churches, congregants endure the music as they wait for the only thing they seem to benefit from in the service—the sermon. When pastors sit in the pews reviewing their sermon notes while the congregation sings, no one in the room thinks what they are doing is important; in their eyes, the worship is merely a warm-up for the main element—the sermon.

Ministry leaders who miss the opportunity to cast a vision for what worship is in general (the macro view) and the specific vision for a particular worship service (the micro view) unintentionally contribute to what Barna's research revealed: that nearly a quarter of churchgoers "have no idea what to expect from their participation in the weekly corporate gathering."[6]

In more liturgically-structured Protestant traditions, "gathering" elements such as chimes, invocations, choral calls to worship, organ or instrumental preludes, or an opening element designated as "preparation for worship" are used.[7] While gathering elements can be effective, without the worship leaders attending to the efficacy of the aforementioned elements, and with no consistent articulation as to the preparatory elements' purpose, worship prompts such as chimes can often devolve into meaningless background noise like music on an elevator.

In his book, *What Happens When We Worship*, Jonathan Cruse shares that "God wants from us nothing less than hearts, souls, and minds that are fully enraptured with the wonder of biblical worship from beginning

[6]Barna, "How Pastors, Worship Leaders," 5.

[7]In the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Faith Alive Christian Resources *Worship Sourcebook*, editors provide examples of biblical passages and written prayers encouraging congregants to prepare for worship. An example from the *Worship Sourcebook* follows: "Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name through Christ, our Lord. Amen." *Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Faith Alive Christian Resources (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 46-47.

to end—which is to say, He wants worshipers to be fully enraptured with Him."[8] What elements and practices are embedded in the worship culture of churches that encourage congregants' active engagement, fostering what Cruse calls being "fully enraptured with God"? In a culture captivated by a screen-driven world people hold in their hands, many church attendees' sensitivity and even patience to the genuine reality of God's presence in worship has been dulled. Therefore, a Holy Spirit-infused, Scripture-saturated, thoughtful, intentional welcome that includes a vision for weekly worship should be a top priority for those leading the gathering.

1. *A Vision for Christ's Work in Worship*. Some of the misguided answers to the "What is worship?" question posed by Barna were undoubtedly expressed by sincere, well-intentioned Christians who simply did not know what they did not know. "Worship is singing," or "worship is going to church," describe general activities of worship but fall far short of the essence of understanding biblical worship. Simple, but accurate, oft-repeated reminders to those gathered on Sunday mornings help provide at least a context for their understanding of what worship is and an expectation of Christ's role in worship. Worship pastors and leaders can remind congregants:

- Worship is like a rhythm: God reveals himself to us in Christ through his holy Word, and by faith, we respond.
- In our corporate worship, we gather to become more like the One we worship.
- In our worship, we are reminded of what is really real—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The above phrases, coupled with worship elements that reflect the reality of a divine dialogue taking place between the God of the universe and his redeemed, may help congregants grasp the meaning and purpose of the gathering.

2. *A Vision for the Worshiper's Work in Worship*. Concerning the responsibility of the worshiper, Cruse emphasizes that worship is the "greatest work His redeemed people could ever take up in the created world," and

[8]Jonathan Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship?* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020), 3.

that "worship is meaningful—not because of what we do but because of what God is doing in and through us by His Spirit."[9] How often are people reminded at the beginning of worship that the next sixty to seventy-five minutes are the most important, eternally significant minutes that they will have in the ensuing six days? Do the people gathered for worship know, as Cruse emphasizes, that worship is "the greatest work His redeemed people could ever take up in the created world?"[10] What does Cruse mean when he writes, "the greatest work God's people could ever do"? In Frank Senn's capacious volume, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical*, the Lutheran pastor and liturgical scholar clarifies in the following way the complex, unwieldy English word *worship* and the importance of worship being both the "work" of Christ and the work of the people:

> A word that comes closer to incorporating both the divine and the human participation in worship is *leitourgia*. Originally this term came out of the realm of law and politics. It meant a service that was rendered on the people's behalf by a representative; hence it is composed from words for work (*ergon*) and public (*leitos*).... Thus, "leitourgia" describes the high priestly work of Christ as well as the work of the people of God on earth.[11]

A beautiful example of the link between the works of God and the work of response from his people through worship can be found in Psalm 66. God's works are "awe-inspiring," and he wields "great strength" (v 3). Later in verses 6 and 7, God's mighty works are recounted: "He turned the sea into dry land," and he "rules forever by his might." In response to God and his glorious works, the people of God "shout joyfully" and "sing about the glory of his name," and say, "How awe-inspiring are your works!" The psalmist also charges the worshipers to "come and see the wonders of God," and to "bless our God, you peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard." (Ps 66:1-3, 5, 8). There is an intentionality rooted in the worship of the psalmist as he praises God for his mighty acts and then prescribes the active, authentic response from a grateful, awe-filled people. As Don Carson writes in the classic *Worship by the Book*,

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[9]Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship?*, 86, 88.
[10]Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship?*, 86.
[11]Frank Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 34.

> There are far too few choruses and services and sermons that expand our vision of God—his attributes, his works, his character, his words …. [I]f you wish to deepen the worship of the people of God, above all deepen their grasp of his ineffable majesty in his person and in all his works.[12]

Throughout the Bible, God's people respond to God, not to the form or structure of worship, not to the activity of worship itself, not to the musical instruments accompanying the worship of the Psalms, and never to the psalmist encouraging the response: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory because of your faithful love, because of your truth" (Ps 115:1).

II. IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP, TRANSFORMATION IS NOT JUST POSSIBLE, IT IS INEVITABLE

The apostle Paul exploded with praise in the middle of his letter to the church at Rome: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36). Then he followed with this admonition: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be *transformed* by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God" (italics added, Rom 12:1-2). In the festschrift honoring Timothy George, Frank Theilman connects transformation with renewing the mind:

> Paul's use of the expressions "transform" (*metamorphoo*) and "renewal of" the "mind" (*noos*) recall…how believers now "set their minds (*phronousin*) on the things of the Spirit" (Rom 8:5) and are predestined "to be conformed (*symmorphous*) to the image" of God's Son (Rom 8:29).[13]

Conformity to the image of Christ is essentially the litmus test of effective worship. However, do church attenders grasp the reality that

[12] D. A. Carson, "Worship Under the Word," in *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 31.

[13] Frank Thielman, "Worship in the New Testament," in *Worship, Tradition, and Engagement: Essays Honoring Timothy George*, ed. David S. Dockery, James Earl Massey, and Robert Smith Jr., (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 71.

God's desire for his people and purpose for worship is transformation into Christ's image as their minds are renewed through the elements of the gathering? When worship leaders initiate Sunday morning meetings with a Scripture-driven, captivating, compelling vision for what worship is, hearts and minds are *renewed* and God's people are *transformed*.

Unfortunately, many worship leaders have been taught that the effectiveness of a worship service is based primarily on the musical energy they can draw out of their musicians on stage and the people in the pews. Church musicians should indeed strive to produce excellent, un-distracting music and cultivate artistic expressions of musical lines that highlight the texts of biblically rich songs and hymns. There needs to be a growing awareness of the aesthetic atmosphere that fosters a sense of sacred space, both aurally and visually for the worshiper. But music, technology, architecture, artistic interpretation, musicianship, and traditions are limited in their power to transform worshipers if Christ and his Word through the power of the Holy Spirit are not the primary means and the ultimate goal of the gathering. Christ-centered, God-glorifying, Holy Spirit-empowered, biblically saturated worship fosters the ultimate purpose of music in the service—providing the glorious and powerful corporate response to the self-revealing God while people are being transformed into the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

While God is worthy of "all that is within"[14] his people as they worship and adore him, an atmosphere of praise that is mediated by music, technology, or even tradition, has very little life-transforming power. The worship of God's people is acceptable to him through Christ alone. Matthew records Jesus saying, "All things have been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son desires to *reveal* him" (italics added, Matt 11:27). In his Gospel, John also illumines the disclosing nature of Jesus to those who love (worship) him: "The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will *reveal* myself to him" (italics mine, John 14:21). These passages provide a vitally important foundation for those who lead worship: God is self-revealing. He discloses himself to his redeemed. Christ's own disclosure of himself to those who worship him is the ultimate trigger for all worship. There is no need for a ministry leader to conjure up a sense of excitement

[14]Line from Joachim Neander's, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," verse 4.

or badger people to "sing louder" or clap more often. Worship leaders who rely on the reality of God's self-revelation trust in the constant mediation and intercession of Christ (Heb 7:25). They are aware of the presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26) and rely on the power of the Word of God that does not return void (Isa 55:11).

When worship leaders and worshipers judge the effectiveness of the worship based on their emotional temperature elevated by a particular sound or atmosphere, they are actually worshiping worship. The misguided efforts of the leaders to seek a congregation's response through the energy of the music derails the pathway to transformation. Jesus never says, "Have a pep rally in my honor." He does clearly tell his people to "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30). What Jesus asks of worshipers is that they come to him knowing their need of him. As Jesus is both the end and the means of worship, a worship leader that instructs congregants to an activity (singing or clapping) without that action being attached to a purposeful response to the self-revealing God, causes not only a misguided vision for worship, but worse, it triggers the worshiper to judge the efficacy of the worship on their own emotional temperature.

When Jesus is intentionally at the center of worship and congregants respond to his voice through his Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, transformation takes place in the worshipers whose "minds' attention and hearts' affection are riveted on Jesus Christ, the author and perfector of their faith."[15]

III. WORSHIPING GOD IN THE SPACE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Casting a vision for God's people to embrace the mystery of spiritually entering a sacred space between heaven and earth as they gather on Sunday mornings is vital for a fully orbed understanding of Christian worship. A space is not made sacred by architecture or a room's designation as a "worship center" because Jesus liberated worship from a particular location in his discourse with the woman at the well in John 4. While believers

[15]This phrase is often used by students who studied under esteemed Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary worship theologian, Bruce Leafblad, based on the passage from Hebrews 12:2.

ultimately worship everywhere they breathe, evangelicals may be in danger of having lost a sense of sacred space in which spiritual transformation can occur simply because they have not been reminded of who they join and where they are during worship. Again, leaders must cast vision for not only "what" worship is and "how" it should be done, but also "who" it is they unite with as they worship.

IV. JOINING BROTHERS AND SISTERS ACROSS SPACE AND TIME

Because of God's omniscience through space and his omnipresence throughout time, biblically regulated worship has transformational potential when the congregation is more keenly aware that they join with a "heavenly throng."[16] Cruse writes, "When the immense and infinite Holy Spirit fills us we are united to all other Christians, no matter where they are and no matter when they were."[17] Worship is so much bigger than any one person or any single church. Casting a vision for the global and heavenly reality of a congregation, uniting with voices beyond their own, fosters the wonder and mystery of a sacred space. In John the Revelator's vision, the voices in heaven and earth join together in praise to the Lamb: "I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say, 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be to the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!'" (Rev 5:13).

V. WE MEET WITH CHRIST IN HEAVEN

The author of Hebrews sheds specific light on the actual spiritual "place" where worship happens: "We have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that was set up by the Lord and not man" (Heb 8:1-2). As God's people intentionally gather for corporate worship, they are wonderfully and mysteriously connected by the Holy Spirit into a heavenly and sacred space.[18] Weekly worship can be much more meaningful when believers are reminded of their connection to the universal church and the ongoing worship in heaven.

Casting a vision for worship connected spiritually to the global church and the heavenlies is not escapism. While believers live in and come to

[16]From John Rippon's "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," stanza 4.

[17]Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship?*, 77.

[18]Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship?*, 42.

worship from a fallen world, glorious glimpses of heavenly worship (Rev 4 and 5) point faithful congregants to what is yet to come, blessing them with a realistic lens of perspective as they live in the here and now. As Ross so encouragingly exhorts, "When we who are redeemed realize that in praise we are joining companies of angels whose praise transcends all that runs counter to God, then we begin to understand the reality that makes sense out of life."[19]

VI. CONCLUSION

How do ministry leaders prevent the weekly gathering of their faithful from devolving into a mundane, routine meeting? Predictable traditionalism that borders on boring is no less a concern than innovative energy under the banner of excitement.[20] But of any people on the planet, those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb should worship with every fiber of their being. The worship experience on Sunday mornings should be some of the most meaningful, heart-stirring, emotional, challenging, thoughtful, probing, reflective, and transformational moments in the life of a believer. And this can happen when those who gather are encouraged to realize that the God of the universe has invited them to see him, engage with him, respond to him, and become more like his Son. Those who attend this potentially life-transforming meeting need to be stirred with a vision of not only who has called them to worship, but with a vision for their contribution, the sacrificial work of praise. And not only is the offering of praise the most important work the believer will do, but it is transformational in the process. As the faithful gather and worship in spirit and truth, they begin to look more like the One who created them and redeemed them.

When faithful followers of Jesus look more and more like him because they have worshiped him rightly, the world will attack even more vehemently. But the church proclaims the never-ending, never-dulling message of Jesus that she will declare until Christ returns: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). In her worship, the church continues to hear his voice as he declares, "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev 22:7). As churches gather in tandem with the ongoing worship in heaven, they continue to proclaim with the Spirit, "'Come!'" Let

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[19]Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 488.

[20]Carson, "Worship Under the Word," 33.

anyone who hears, say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life as a gift" (Rev 22:17). There is eternally significant vision attached to each of those calls and proclamations. May ministry leaders recapture a glorious vision for the weekly gathering expressed in the text of Robert Robinson's beloved hymn.

> Come, thou Fount of every blessing;
> tune my heart to sing thy grace;
> streams of mercy, never ceasing,
> call for songs of loudest praise.
> Teach me some melodious sonnet,
> sung by flaming tongues above;
> praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
> mount of God's unchanging love![21]

[21] Robert Robinson, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION: AN EXAMINATION OF LEX ORANDI-LEX CREDENDI

Marcus Waldren Brown*

"When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!"[1] The words of this gospel song chorus, written by Eliza E. Hewitt in the nineteenth century[2] give voice to a historic longing by God's children to see his face. Theologian Hans Boersma elaborates on the transformational impact of a believer's gaze into the glory of God's self-revelation, referred to by many as the beatific vision. Boersma writes, "On such an understanding, the body will no longer be … unaffected by the loving gaze of God in Christ. The resulting transformation is suprasensible."[3] While Boersma's conclusions presume the eschatological *telos* of the Christian faith, Christian worship seeks to bring believers into the presence of God in this life—where transformation may also occur. Christian worship roots itself in biblical events where God reveals himself to a person or group of people of his choosing and they respond on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible.[4]

Within corporate worship, God reveals himself to his people, his people respond, and their faithful, Holy Spirit-empowered response to his revelation helps move them toward spiritual transformation. Firstly, I will explore biblical passages in the New Testament that demonstrate this pattern. Secondly, I will examine theological evidence that demonstrates how the

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*Marcus Waldren Brown serves as assistant professor of church music and worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[1]Eliza E. Hewitt, "When We All Get to Heaven," *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 603.

[2]Wesley L. Forbis, ed., *Handbook to the Baptist Hymnal 1991* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay, 1991), 230.

[3]Hans Boersma, *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 429.

[4]David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), 20.

holy dialogue of revelation and response has been expressed by examining a common paradigm found in liturgical theology, *lex orandi – lex credendi*. My analysis will expose how individual and collective responses in worship, empowered by the Holy Spirit, inevitably lead worshipers to undergo spiritual transformation.

I. TRANSFORMATION AND WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Examining Scripture for evidence of the transformation that comes through revelation and response occurring in corporate worship proves challenging because the New Testament never documents a complete corporate worship service. Even without the archive of a complete liturgy, reviewing the apostles' encouragements to worshiping believers demonstrates congruence between worship in the New Testament church and the goals of the *Shema* and the Great Commandment.[5] Apostolic admonitions of worship involving God's revelation and his people's faithful response through the lens of heart, soul, mind, and strength open the door to corporate and individual transformation within the church.

The first event in the New Testament connecting apostolic encouragements aimed toward worship may be found in Acts 2 when Peter addresses the crowds gathered in Jerusalem during the festival of Pentecost. After Peter preached his sermon, many who heard were "cut to the heart" and asked Peter and the other disciples, "Brothers what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."[6] God's revelation to the crowd through Peter's preaching clearly motivated the assembly's response to God's revelation—and for many, their response was a faithful acceptance of the gospel. This New Testament narrative clearly demonstrates the link between the coming of the Holy Spirit, worship through hearing God's preached Word, and obedient responses of the people's hearts, all demonstrating that "outward acts of devotion are worthless without a submitted spirit."[7]

Another example of apostolic teaching on acts of worship involving God's revelation, the church's Spirit-enabled response, and the church's subsequent transformation can be found in 1 Corinthians. Paul's letter to the Corinthian church gives readers a glimpse into how the New Testament

[5]Mark 12:30.

[6]Acts 2:37-38.

[7]Noel Due, *Created for Worship: From Genesis to Revelation to You* (Fern, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., 2005), 95.

church corporately observed the Lord's Table.[8] Paul tells the church in Corinth, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you."[9] Paul shares his personal dialogue of revelation, response, and transformation with the Corinthian church. Paul wants to teach them the sober, reflective, and sacred way Christians should approach the Lord's Table. In turn, Paul knows that when the church responds in the Spirit, faithfully to Christ's revelation in the Table, they will experience a spiritual transformation that will help grow them toward being more like Jesus.

II. LEX ORANDI – LEX CREDENDI

The nature of transformation coming from congregational worship can be best summarized in the Latin phrase, *lex orandi – lex credendi*. Written sometime between 435 and 442, Prosper of Aquitaine's original phrase states, "*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*."[10] The Latin phrase translates to "that the law of praying establishes the law of believing." A commonly used but loose translation of this phrase could be, "The way you worship shapes your faith." Prosper, a student of Augustine, originally wrote this phrase in support of Augustine's fight against Pelagianism. Pelagius's particular brand of heresy came from his belief that humans were born innocent, without the curse of original sin via Adam and Eve.[11]

In 431, meeting in the great city of Ephesus, the third ecumenical council confronted the heresy of Pelagianism by condemning one of its major proponents, Celestius. The Council of Bishops knew how crucial belief in original sin would be in helping Christians understand Jesus's role in redemption. Through his efforts to champion orthodoxy, Prosper promoted awareness of the primary role prayer and worship holds in a believer's expression of faith. In other words, the church's prayer and worship (*orandi*) make its teaching (*credendi*) tangible.[12] Simply stated, the way a church worships not only reflects its beliefs, its worship actually shapes the church's faith and doctrine. In relation to Nicene theology, Alexander Schmemann affirms that faith gives birth to and "shapes" worship, but worship, by fulfilling and expressing faith, also "bears testimony" to faith

[8] Robert Webber, ed., *The Complete Library of Christian Worship. Volume I, The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship* (Nashville: StarSong Publishing Group, 1993), 32.; 1 Cor 11:17-34.

[9] 1 Cor 11:23.

[10] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 174.

[11] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 225.

[12] Rick Hilgartner, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: The Word of God in the Celebration of the Sacraments," *Catechetical Sunday Newsletter of the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, September 20, 2009).

and becomes its true and adequate expression and norm: *lex orandi est lex credendi*.[13]

1. *Which Came First?* The process of *lex orandi – lex credendi* creates the primary theology of worshiping communities, because, as opposed to the academic study and discourse of theology, worship actually *does* theology.[14] Sometimes evangelical Christians do not agree with *lex orandi – lex credendi*, because they understand worship as something that naturally flows from a believer's faith and doctrine rather than faith and doctrine becoming shaped by practice. Because biblical and historical evidence can be observed for both, Christians should realize that both processes regularly occur in every church. This reality places a high responsibility on those who plan, structure, and lead worship services to fulfill their callings with the greatest intentionality. A reasonable extension of this idea could be expressed as *lex orandi – lex credendi et agendi*: Worship transforms believers because it shapes beliefs and actions.[15]

2. *Historical Evidence and Modern Recognition*. Further demonstrations of ways corporate worship transforms faith can be found in church history. One of these examples may be observed in how certain churches have dealt with what could be considered the most defining action in Christian life: baptism. Baptism has always served as a tangible picture of God's transforming grace provided through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ. In the Patristic age of the early church, evidence for the life transformation of baptismal candidates was formally vouched for by the candidate's God-father or God-mother. These individuals were church representatives who served as the candidate's one-to-one faith mentor through the duration of their pre-baptismal discipleship process; a process that could last up to three years.[16]

Even though baptism was never meant to achieve the "work" of salvation, its status was so revered that it was considered necessary to demonstrate salvation. Evidence for this idea can be observed in the early church writings of Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem in the late fourth century:

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[13]Alexander Schmemann, *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemann* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 39.

[14]Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 48.

[15]Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 88-95.

[16]Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 137-8.

> Great indeed is the Baptism offered you. It is a ransom to captives; the remission of offenses; the death of sin; the regeneration of the soul; the garment of light; the holy seal indissoluble; the chariot to heaven; the luxury of paradise; a procuring of the kingdom; the gift of adoption.[17]

> The bath of Baptism we may not receive twice or thrice; else, it might be said, Though I fail once, I shall go right next time: whereas if thou failest once, there is no setting things right, for there is One Lord, and One Faith, and One Baptism: none but heretics are re-baptized, since their former baptism was not baptism.[18]

In the fifth century, infant mortality was much higher than what modern Westerners now experience. If early Christian worshipers understood that the only path to heaven goes through the waters of baptism, one can understand why the practice of infant baptism gained popularity as an act of worship and initiation into the church. Even though the church father Tertullian strongly cautioned against infant baptism at the turn of the third century,[19] 40-50 years later Hippolytus, another church father, accommodated the practice in his Apostolic Traditions:

> You are to baptize the little ones first. All those who are able to speak for themselves should speak. With regard to those who cannot speak for themselves, their parents, or somebody who belongs to their family should speak.[20]

Two hundred years later, the practice of infant baptism had become so widely practiced in the church that Augustine wrote, "This doctrine is held by the whole church, not instituted by councils, but always retained."[21] At some point in the early history of the church, congregations began the widespread worship practice of baptizing infants without articulating a

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[17]Cyril, St. *Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis of the Five Mystical Catecheses* (London: SPCK, 1960), 16.

[18]Cyril, *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 7.

[19]James F. White, *Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), 149-50.

[20]Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Press, 2001), 21.

[21]Ralph E. Bass, *What About Baptism: A Discussion on the Mode, Candidate and Purpose of Christian Baptism Revised Edition* (Greenville: Living Hope Press, 2010), 45-50.

theological justification for the ritual.

Through worship practice alone, infant baptism had become so accepted, that even Augustine tried to make a theological argument by simply pointing to the pervasiveness of the practice. Based on this historical example, could today's churches have possibly adopted some doctrinally dangerous practices in worship on the basis of felt needs more than on solid theological grounding? Christian worship needs the positive renewal that could be generated by pastors and lay leaders understanding worship's power to transform. As James K. A. Smith writes, "Human beings are 'liturgical animals,' creatures who can't *not* worship and who are fundamentally formed by worship practices. The reason such liturgies are so formative is precisely because it is these liturgies, whether Christian or 'secular,' that shape what we *love*. And we are what we love."[22]

In *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*,[23] Henry Blackaby encourages Christians to pray, asking God to reveal where he is at work. From that point on, as the praying believer becomes aware of God's work, Blackaby instructs that their awareness becomes God's invitation for the believer to join him in his work. Blackaby writes that whenever the praying Christian becomes aware of God's invitation, a crisis usually manifests itself. This crisis must be overcome in order for the person to fruitfully comply with God's invitation. As individual Christians (and by extension, worshiping congregations) successfully navigate cycles of revelation and response, they become transformed by the Holy Spirit—achieving greater depth of discipleship, producing more fruit for the Kingdom.[24]

Dru Johnson edifies Blackaby's concept through his own understanding of the human process of knowing (epistemology). Johnson proposes that "people know only as they listen to trusted authorities, then do what they say in order to see what they are showing."[25] Extending Johnson's understanding of Blackaby's concept, believing and doing become necessarily intertwined with one another.[26] This pairing of ideas produces significant implications for the holy dialogue of revelation and response

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[22]James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 3-4.

[23]Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1990), 4.

[24]Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 21.

[25]Dru Johnson, *Scripture's Knowing: A Companion to Biblical Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 16.

[26]Dru Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual: A Biblical Prolegomenon to Sacramental Theology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 46.

within corporate worship.

Simon Chan also elucidates the transformative benefits of revelation and response within corporate worship. Chan relates that when God reveals himself to the church, the believer's best response always comes through worship because in worship a Christian can actually participate with God.[27] Pastors, philosophers, and theologians across many Christian traditions have recognized the importance of a worshiper's responses given to God in worship as these responses greatly impact the way worshipers learn, know, and become transformed into disciples … or something less.

III. BY WHAT PROCESS?

How can worship shape the faith of the congregation even as believers think and express their worship?[28] In many evangelical churches, the primary way for worshipers to understand their identity as the church comes through the lens of evangelism and the Great Commission. Other churches attempt to simply define the "essence" of the Christian faith through regular teaching and oration, proclaiming their doctrinal beliefs.[29] However, in churches whose worship also employs biblically-structured liturgical action in submission to the Holy Spirit's power and guidance, greater and lasting discipleship formation can be found.

A positive example of utilizing worship and liturgy to help transform the minds and hearts of worshipers may be observed in the corporate confession of creeds. When a congregation speaks either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed as a regular part of worship, believers remind themselves of every fundamental element of their faith. This practice can solidify the stability of a congregation's faithful response, both individually and in community, to God's revelation. This in turn can assist the church's convictions and intent to fulfill the Great Commission.[30]

Many evangelical churches go to significant lengths to use their worship services as a tool for fulfilling the Great Commission. To this end, a consensus exists among many modern churches, holding that congregational worship, as the large group gathering, must be able to attract those

[27]Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 48.

[28]Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Collegeville: A Pueblo Book, 2003), 28.

[29]James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 134.

[30]Dennis Okholm, *Learning Theology through the Church's Worship: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 111.

with little or no understanding of church culture. Many churches and pastors seek to cut out unrelatable worship practices that might inhibit the lost from hearing, understanding, and responding to the gospel. Worship services are crafted so that seeking visitors will not feel pressure to commit to anything and are free to evaluate the faith without being pressured.[31] Sometimes, in the name of evangelism, rather than using the Great Commission as an ontological expression of worship, churches use their corporate worship as a tool to fulfill the Great Commission. These shortcuts can become negative examples of *lex orandi – lex credendi*, having unintended side effects.

E. Byron Anderson believes that as churches seek to capture the attention of the unchurched, there will be a growing tendency to dispose of or hide some of the church's most important worship traditions (Anderson uses the words "liturgical" and "sacramental"). Continuing, Anderson states, "Replacing these traditions are patterns and practices that more readily express the unfaith of the seeker than an invitation to the particular ethical way of God in Jesus Christ."[32] In other words, churches will lead their people to resemble whatever qualities their worship values most. Will corporate worship steer a congregation's transformation toward becoming more like Christ or the surrounding worldly culture?

The Significance of Orandi. What does it mean when a congregation worships God in the holy dialogue of revelation and response? From the descriptions of Christian worship found in the Apologies of Justin Martyr, to the Divine Liturgy of John Chrysostom, to the Reformed liturgies of Calvin, Cranmer, and English Puritans of Middelburg, the *orandi* and content of corporate worship has been recognized as ultimately critical for fostering and shaping a congregations' faith. Significant observations have been made concerning this paradigm of Christian worship.

Gordon Lathrop writes, "Is the Sunday meeting—the liturgy, the worship service—simply the survival of a collection of quaint customs from a more secure and simple time? Or do its symbolic interactions propose to us a realistic pattern for interpreting our world, for containing our actual experiences, and for enabling action and hope?"[33] How does our

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[31]Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 226.

[32]Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 28.

[33]Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 2-3.

worship, "in all its signs and words, say something authentic and reliable about God?"[34] In other words, Lathrop asks if worship services help to clearly present God's revelation. Lathrop's curiosity as to whether worship services provide adequate vehicles for the congregation's response to God's revelation should not fall on deaf ears. Pastors and worship leaders should be concerned that worship services provide opportunities for congregations to respond to God through conscious decisions, deep emotions, new ways of thinking, and specific action.

Geoffrey Wainwright suggests that in order to evaluate a church's ability to facilitate God's revelation and the congregation's response, an assessment of the church's pattern of worship may become necessary. Reflection of a church's worship becomes crucial because worship provides congregations with a "realistic pattern for interpreting the world."[35] In other words, worship not only expresses faith, but it also helps to shape it. Wainwright suggests the "nearest traditional equivalent to the notion of pattern is the notion of sacrament."[36] Amid the vast variance of activities and practices across the globe, the Lord's Supper and baptism are exercised in nearly every Christian tradition. Wainwright postulates that because of their direct connection to Jesus's instruction, these ordinances function with greater importance than all other activities of the church.

Don Saliers agrees with Wainwright: "The continuing worship of God in the assembly *is* a form of theology. In fact, it is 'primary theology.'"[37] Saliers speaks of how God's revelation and our response in worship, over time, transforms our perception, our knowledge, and our feeling. "The true ethos of Christian liturgy is that web of grace through word, sacrament, and song, through eating and drinking together, and being remembered by God, whereby God's saving power in the flesh transforms and transmutes all human pathos. … God sees in our life patterns what we cannot yet see."[38] Authentic worship, when bound with the fuel of the Holy Spirit and cast in the cycle of revelation and response, transforms Christians so that their desires become the desires God has for them. This type of transformational worship dialogue with God allowed David to write in

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[34]Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 2-3.

[35]Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 70.

[36]Wainwright, *Doxology*, 70.

[37]Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 15.

[38]Sailers, *Worship as Theology*, 15.

Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

Theologian David Peterson also articulates his understanding of the transformative power revelation and response has in worship by developing Paul's "Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly."[39] As Peterson describes worship in the ancient world, he points out one way that Hebrew worship was always different than other pagan religions. A common worship pattern for pagan religions "was to know where the presence of a god could be found and to know the names of the gods so that they could be approached, and communion established with them."[40] This example presents a good comparison between pagan expectations of worship and the faith of ancient Israel. For Israel, the "one and only Creator Lord of the universe had made himself known to the forefathers of Israel at particular times and places. In so doing, he initiated a relationship."[41]

Peterson connotes that another significant difference between the way pagan gods were believed to reveal themselves and the way Yahweh reveals himself can be demonstrated in the nature of the revelation itself. Peterson writes, "In the case of most pagan gods, the extent of the revelation normally manifested itself in some display of power. Yahweh, on the other hand, most often reveals himself by communicating his word."[42] Occurrences of God revealing himself in this way to his people can be found throughout scripture with individuals like Abraham, Hagar, Jacob, Gideon, and the list continues.[43] The fact that Yahweh still reveals himself most often through his word provides a rich connection between the transformation resulting from corporate worship and biblical examples of supernatural transformation.

IV. BY WHAT POWER?

Planners and leaders of Christian worship understandably tend to focus on the aspects of corporate gatherings that we can control, such as selecting songs, prayers, and Scripture readings. However crucial the *orandi* of worship, the true transformation established through holy dialogues between God and his people must be facilitated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 16 records how Jesus told his disciples of the Helper, the Holy

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[39]Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 197; Col 3:16; cf. Eph 5:19-20.

[40]Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 24.

[41]Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 25.

[42]Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 25.

[43]Gen 12:1; Gen 21:14-20; Gen 28:12-15; Judg 7:1-7.

Spirit, who would come and what his role would be: "He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."[44] This explanation appears to be a straightforward indication of the Spirit's role in calling people to salvation in Christ. However, Jesus's words likely hold more application than may be comprehended on first reading. Jesus continued in verse 13: "He will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."[45]

Concerning the breadth of the Spirit's work, nineteenth-century theologian J. C. Ryle wrote, "The common, superficial explanation, that our Lord only meant that the work of the Spirit in saving individual believers is to convince them of their own sins, of Christ's righteousness, and of the certainty of judgment at last, will hardly satisfy thinking minds."[46]

Michael A. G. Haykin expands on Ryle's ideas *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality*: "In a sense, it is he (Holy Spirit) who stands at the threshold of the Christian life, for only he can enable us to embrace Christ as Saviour and Lord— 'no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3)."[47] Haykin broadens our understanding of the Spirit's work beyond the salvation event to transformation occurring in corporate worship when he writes, "It is the Spirit who enables believers, from various racial, social and religious backgrounds, to find true unity in Christ and together worship God (Eph. 2:18) In fact, without the Spirit, worship and the glorification of Jesus Christ cannot take place (Phil. 3:3). And it is the Spirit who is the true Guarantor of orthodoxy (2 Tim. 1:14)."[48] Haykin clearly demonstrates through Scripture how corporate worship provides a primary venue for displaying the church's Spirit-enabled unity and response to Christ.

British Baptist William Brock completes the connection between the Holy Spirit's enabling power and congregational worship's efficacy towards transformation when he writes:

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[44]John 16:8.

[45]John 16:13-14

[46]J. C. Ryle, *John Volume 3: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (East Peoria, IL: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2020), 105-6.

[47]Michael A. G. Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2007), xix.

[48]Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near*, xix.

> Unaided by the Spirit of truth, you cannot comprehend the things which are of God because they are spiritually discerned. The prayer, the psalmody, the argument, the appeal, the Scriptures, the ordinances, are not grace – they are only the means of grace, the mere vehicles through which the God of all grace sends down the communications of his love. Rely then, implicitly and consciously … upon God.[49]

Brock was concerned that Baptist worshipers were becoming too reliant upon their praxis while failing to recognize and cultivate their attachment to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Brock's admonition clearly points his fellow Baptists to the efficacy of *lex orandi – lex credendi* when it is pursued in the power of the Holy Spirit. Brock's words remain relevant.

V. CONCLUSION

I have supported my thesis that within corporate worship, God reveals himself to his people, his people respond, and their faithful, Holy Spirit-empowered response to his revelation helps move them toward spiritual transformation. I have explored biblical passages demonstrating ways God revealed himself to his people and how that revelation and the people's faithful responses transformed worshipers' lives through their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Through my examination of *lex orandi – lex credendi*, I have exposed how individual and collective responses to God in worship inevitably lead to human transformation. By exploring *lex orandi – lex credendi*, I have also demonstrated the ways humans respond to God in worship can both display what they believe about God and simultaneously shape (or transform) that very faith. Most importantly, I have established how responses to God's revelation in worship should never occur simply for the sake of habit or social norms.

As Daniel I. Block writes, "[H]aving experienced the grace of Christ in salvation does not mean that we may be casual about worship or that our cultic [worship] expressions are automatically acceptable to God."[50] When a church's worship practices orient themselves towards hearing and responding to God's revelation, congregations place themselves more fully in the river of God's grace, opening a congregation to the Holy Spirit

[49] William Brock, *The Behaviour Becoming the House of God* (Norwich: Norfolk and Norwich Association of Baptist Churches, 1845), 23.

[50] Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 78.

and his power to transform them — more completely resembling their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Theologian Geoffrey Wainwright saliently expresses this sentiment:

> For the Christian community, meaning is in the making: life is oriented toward God's ultimate purpose, and history-making is the way to the attainment of that purpose for both individuals and humanity as a whole; the most characteristic Christian rituals are therefore predominantly transformative in character, actions that signify divine grace coming to begin and continue the shaping of active recipients into the people God is calling them to become.[51]

Believers in Christ should expect transformation to occur in congregational worship. As "all of our activities in worship are to be done in anticipation of the fulfillment of the promises in the ages to come,"[52] so everything undertaken in corporate worship should be pursued in mind of our ultimate transformation in the eschaton.

[51] Wainwright. *Doxology*, 121.

[52] Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 510.

SILENCING THE CONGREGATION: THE IMPACT OF MUSICAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES ON CONGREGATIONAL SINGING IN AMERICAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Nathan Burggraff*

In recent years there have been numerous blogs written about the decline of participation in church congregational singing. Several recurring reasons have been cited in the discussion of this congregational "silence." One reason cited is that songs are often unfamiliar to congregants, especially with the rise of projecting song lyrics: "In short order we went from 250 songs everyone knows to 250,000+ songs nobody knows. Songs get switched out so frequently that it's impossible to learn them. People can't sing songs they've never heard. And with no musical notes to follow, how is a person supposed to pick up the tune?"[1] Tel Martin, director of music at Princeton Theological Seminary, states:

> Where I have observed a diligence in church music leaders to explore an expanding repertoire, I also detect that many of these songs are not settling very deeply into the souls of our congregations. Whereas I was taught to disdain the congregation that only knew their "forty favorites," I find myself more and more wishing that congregations might thoroughly know and sing forty songs.[2]

Another reason given is that songs are often sung too high or too low by

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*Nathan Burggraff serves as associate professor of music theory at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[1]David Murrow, "Why Men Have Stopped Singing in Church," *Patheos* (blog), May 8, 2013, accessed September 17, 2018, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/churchformen/2013/05/why-men-have-stopped-singing-in-church/#ixzz333UCdhRZ.

[2]Tel Martin, "They Just Don't Sing Like They Used To: Why Congregational Singing Has Fallen on Hard Times," *Reformed Worship* (blog), June 2007, accessed September 17, 2018, https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2007/they-just-dont-sing-they-used.

the worship team for the "average" congregant: "Some [songs] are simply not suited for everyone to sing. People may like a particular hymn. But, if the rhythm, the arrangement, the melody and the register are not suited to the average person, they will not sing it."[3] A third reason given is that the volume from the stage is so loud that congregants are unable to hear each other, which leads to nonparticipation: "The musicians' volume is cranked up so high that congregants can't hear their own voices, or the voices of those around them, even if they would sing."[4] A fourth reason frequently cited is that congregants feel like they are not expected to sing due to the professional nature of the worship band: "We are a culture that is *sung to*. Most of this music is produced professionally through a series of edits that in essence artificially removes all 'imperfection.' The net result of being immersed in all this 'perfect' music is that we feel ashamed of our imperfection. And this shame leads many to silence."[5]

So how did we get to this point of congregational "silence" instead of active participation in singing in the church? While blogs about the decline of congregational participation provide anecdotal observations, most do not explore beyond current symptoms in the church. As this article will address, the reasons cited above are actually outcomes of several broader factors in American culture and music that have occurred over the past five decades. These factors include (1) a cultural decline in communal singing in general, (2) a self-awareness of the non-singer in a culture of musical professionalism, and (3) musical changes to contemporary worship songs that hinder communal singing. While church music leaders cannot avoid the ramifications of the first two factors, a better understanding of recent musical changes in contemporary worship songs regarding harmony, rhythm, and melodic range can help music leaders present songs that will foster communal singing.

I. THE BIBLICAL MANDATE TO SING

Keith and Kristyn Getty's book *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* explains both the importance of and practical

[3]Arthur Serratelli, "Why Some People Don't Sing in Church," personal blog, June 14, 2012, accessed March 5, 2018, https://bishopserratelli.rcdop.org/news/why-some-people-dont-sing. Serratelli's discussion is aimed at singing in the Catholic church, but these same issues are equally seen in evangelical churches in America.

[4]Thom Schultz, "Why They Don't Sing on Sunday Anymore," *Holy Soup* (blog), May 21, 2014, accessed September 17, 2018, https://holysoup.com/why-they-dont-sing-on-sunday-anymore.

[5]Martin, "They Just Don't Sing," 2007.

application of congregational singing in church worship. The opening chapters of the book present reasons why Christians should sing. First, human beings are *created to sing*. As they state,

> Your ability to sing is fearfully and wonderfully made. Around the twelve-week mark, the vocal cords of a baby growing in the womb are in place and have been shown to work long before the baby is born. We may sound different, but each of us has the same vocal apparatus—breath flowing up from our lungs, vibrating through vocal cords in our throat, and pushing sound out through the articulators of our mouths, tongues, and lips. Singing is not merely a happy by-product of God's real intent of making us creatures who can speak. It is something we're designed to be able to do.[6]

Second, Christians are *commanded to sing*. There are more than 400 references in Scripture to singing, as well as direct commands to sing. Psalm 149:1 provides one such command: "Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints." However, God's command to sing gives no indication that worshipers are required to sing *skillfully*. For instance, Psalm 71:23 mentions simply to sing for joy: "My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you." In other words, the command to sing is given to all people regardless of skill level.

Third, Christians should feel *compelled to sing*. As the Gettys note,

> It goes against the grain of how God created our humanity for us to keep from praising all that is praiseworthy, to keep quiet about what we are pleased with. Since God is most worthy of our praise, above all other people—we will respond not only by knowing we should praise Him, but by feeling we cannot help but praise Him, for it is our joy to do so, as well as our duty.[7]

Singing allows people to express that joy with their singing voice, but it also aids in their thoughts toward God. Ruth King Goddard explains,

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[6]Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 2.

[7]Getty, *Sing*!, 25.

"Singing practices in evangelical Christianity should be rooted in a biblical foundation because the whole-being nature of the singing voice enables enhanced internalization and expression of the Word of God in our lives …. As we internalize truth through song, we allow those words to settle in our memory, and shape the way we think and live."[8]

II. CULTURAL CHANGES AND THE DECLINE OF COMMUNAL SINGING

Since Scripture commands Christians to sing, and as Christians we should feel compelled to sing, then what better place to sing about God than in church? Unfortunately, in recent decades there have been shifts in culture and in music that have created barriers to active participation of congregational singing in the church. One barrier to congregational participation in singing is the fact that communal singing is rarely seen in culture anymore. Karen Loew, in her 2012 article in *The Atlantic* titled "How Communal Singing Disappeared from American Life," observes:

> Adults in America don't sing communally. Children routinely sing together in their schools and activities, and even infants have sing-alongs galore to attend. But past the age of maturity, at grown-up commemorations, celebrations, and gatherings, this most essential human yawp of feeling … usually goes missing.[9]

She mentions several reasons why this activity has become almost non-existent in contemporary culture (note, this is not a discussion of church singing, but communal singing in general):

1. We are insecure about our voices.
2. We don't know the words.
3. We resent being forced into an activity together.
4. We feel uncool.
5. The person who dares to begin a song risks having no one join

[8]Ruth King Goddard, "Who Gets to Sing in the Kingdom?" in *Congregational Music-Making and Community in a Mediated Age*, edited by Anna E. Nekola and Tom Wagner (New York: Routledge, 2016), 78.

[9]Karen Loew, "How Communal Singing Disappeared from American Life," *The Atlantic*, March 28, 2012, accessed September 15, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/03/how-communal-singing-disappeared-from-american-life/255094.

him/her.

6. The elevation of the *American Idol* model and the demotion of the casual crooner.[10]

While all of these reasons have a correlation to congregational singing in church, the insecurity of an individual regarding his/her voice coupled with the elevation of the American Idol model have significant ramifications for church singing. Kimberley MacNeil's 2013 blog about why people are not singing in church discusses these two issues:

> See, not all that long ago, people grew up singing out loud, in public; it was part of life. But when school budgets started getting cut, the Arts Department was the first to go. The music foundation went away. In addition, as Christian music expanded in influence, it took on a more "professional" edge and became more performance oriented. Bottom line: singing was now for the musically gifted. If I ask someone in today's world, "Do you sing?" they almost instantly say, "only in the shower." …. So now, here we are. Though we have a culture that loves music and has easy access to it, today's music is mostly about *listening* to other people sing. So, the idea that when people come to church once a week and are expected to sing out loud in front of both family and strangers—well—they are looking for ways to get out of that! After all, they have never done that in their life![11]

While there is a cultural decline in communal singing in general, a second barrier to congregational participation in singing is the rise of vocal professionalism in the church like that in secular culture. Ruth King Goddard argues that the reason there is a decline in congregational singing has less to do with new styles and settings that mimic the rock concert environment, or the belief that people are stubborn and refuse to sing. Rather, it has more to do with the demise of what she calls the "personal participatory singing voice"[12] in congregational worship, caused

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[10]Loew, "Communal Singing."

[11]Kimberley MacNeil, "Why Aren't People Singing?" *Ministry Matters* (blog), April 22, 2013, accessed September 18, 2018. https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3843/why-arent-people-singing.

[12]Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 71.

by commercial aural media. She asserts that the root cause of non-singing is a "media-driven technological aural fantasy sound-ideal."[13]

With the rise of singing professionalism through shows like *American Idol* and *The Voice*, the role of the personal singing voice has been devalued. Goddard's research data from interviews over the past 25 years indicates a common perception of a "deeply ingrained, often unconscious intolerance of imperfection in singing."[14] Because society is so attuned to professional-sounding music, whether from the radio or on television, intolerance for mediocre singing turns into critique. This negative critique creates an innate sense of self-consciousness and shyness to singing in public, especially when compared to the perfected singing sounds in culture often crafted through autotune and other voice-enhancing effects.[15] As Goddard acutely observes,

> Much singing shutdown is triggered by the pervasive audio immersion of what I call a "fantasy sound ideal." Increasingly, fewer people have had the opportunity to audiate because there is little recreational and relational singing in the home. Instead, we are immersed in studio-recorded singing performances that do not produce the same effect. The flood of technologically produced professional music media has supplanted the live human voice in our surroundings of home, work, and car. We are no longer surrounded with sounds of real people singing in real time and place. Instead, we are immersed in sounds produced and crafted to eliminate any imperfection, and executed by elite performers who hone their craft. This technologically driven sound immersion is a major cause of the gradually increasingly insecure ear and the acute awareness that one's personal voice is not even close to measuring up to the sounds in

[13]Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 71.

[14]Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 73.

[15]Goddard probes deeper into the reason behind an individual's sense of self-consciousness of his/her voice: "Why is there such a deep emotional sense of fear and shame related to singing for so many? The singing voice is deeply and intimately connected to our sense of self. It is the only aspect of our being where our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual selves are united in one exceptionally personal action. When we sing, we project sustained sound beyond our selves, exposing our deeply personal essence. Rejection of one's voice feels like rejection of one's very being." Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 75–76.

which we have become submerged.[16]

The problem is exacerbated by assuming we need to emulate this sound-ideal, which is a fantasy and creates a false and unattainable standard for anyone attempting to sing. Unfortunately, this musical shutdown when comparing one's untrained voice with the ever-present fantasy sound-ideal happens even at church:

> If a church is seeing transformed lives of those who did not grow up in a singing environment, there are two expectations in tension with each other. First, that people should join in congregational song, and second, that all singing should live up to that fantasy sound-ideal. That tension excludes the insecure singer from joining in song they are encouraged to enter. Professional standards for singing, along with the fantasy sound-ideal and the weak cultural tonal ear have produced congregations of worship spectators, rather than participants.[17]

While musical excellence is something to strive for in church music ministry, there is a tendency to create such a professional sound on stage that offers little opportunity for congregants to add their own voice to the mix: "Increased professionalism and prominence given to the music ministry may work against congregational participation …. So professional, at times, is the music that people are more inclined to take it as a performance to be heard and applauded when finished."[18]

III. MUSICAL CHANGES TO CONGREGATIONAL SONGS

The aforementioned cultural shifts in recent decades provide insight into the declining participation of individuals in communal singing. However, these cultural barriers alone are not creating congregational silence instead of active participation in singing. A third barrier, and arguably the one

[16]Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 76.

[17]Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 77–78.

[18]Serratelli, "Why Some People Don't Sing." Thom Schultz echoes this same sentiment: "It seems it's paramount for church music to be more professional than participatory. The people in the pews know they pale in comparison to the loud voices at the microphones. Quality is worshipped. So the worshippers balk at defiling the quality with their crude crooning. It's better to just fake it with a little lip syncing." Schultz, "Why They Don't Sing."

that has the most direct impact on church singing in recent decades, is the use of songs that musically *hinder* participation in singing.

Congregational songs in many American evangelical churches today are quite different from congregational songs sung fifty years ago. While this is a fairly obvious observation, something less obvious is precisely *what* is different musically between traditional hymnody of previous generations and contemporary worship songs. While a few notable studies have focused on musical aspects in contemporary congregational songs,[19] to date there is not a published study that analyzes and tracks precise musical changes in a large corpus of congregational songs over time, from traditional hymnody to current worship songs.

The following research study, representing a corpus analysis of 474 songs currently sung in American evangelical churches, helps to pinpoint musical changes that have occurred in congregational songs over time in order to assess how these changes have impacted communal singing in the church. The content of the song corpus is based on ranked lists from Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), PraiseCharts, and Hal Leonard.[20] The musical analysis focuses on aspects of harmony, including the number of chords and chord inversions used, harmonic progressions used, and the final cadence for each song; rhythm, including the number of melodic beat displacements for each song; and melody, including the original printed key (from Song Select) and the vocal range of the melodic line for each song, as well as the tessitura for select songs.[21]

[19]See Robert Woods and Brian Walrath, eds., *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise & Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007); Daniel Thornton, "Exploring the Contemporary Congregational Song Genre: Texts, Practices, Industry" (PhD diss., Macquarie University, 2015); Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017); and Samuel Ng, "Musical Eschatology in Contemporary Christian Worship Songs," in *Music Theory Online*, vol. 28.4.5, 2022.

[20]The main corpus, made up of 374 songs, is a combination of CCLI's semi-annual Top 25 song lists from 1989–2020, CCLI's 100 Most Popular Public Domain Songs (from June 2016–2019), PraiseCharts Top 100 Worship Songs of All Time (from 2018), Hal Leonard's "The Best Praise & Worship Songs Ever" (2004), and Hal Leonard's "More of the Best Praise & Worship Songs Ever" (2018). Two additional corpuses were created from CCLI's Top 50 "Gettys" Songs and CCLI's Top 50 "Sovereign Grace" songs, since both groups are scarcely represented in the other ranked lists, but are sung in many churches in America.

[21]The musical elements of harmony, rhythm, and melody are considered primary musical parameters in tonal music. In his discussion of the degree of closure at the end of a work, theorist Leonard Meyer states, "Clearly some parameters are more important shaping forces than others. In tonal music, for instance, melody, rhythm, and harmony are on the whole more important than timbre, dynamics, and register." Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 88. While there are other musical aspects that have changed over time, they would be considered musical performance aspects as opposed to primary

While the following discussion will be more technical in nature, the findings help shed light on very real changes that have significant impact on congregational participation in singing.

The songs in the main corpus (374 songs) were compiled into five time periods to reflect music changes over time: (1) songs written prior to 1970, (2) songs written from 1970-1989, (3) songs written from 1990-1999, (4) songs written from 2000-2009, and (5) songs written from 2010-2019. The main corpus consists of songs that have gained popularity within evangelical churches and/or industry outlets. Additional mini corpus studies were conducted on the top 50 songs by the Gettys and the top 50 songs by Sovereign Grace, based on popularity in CCLI data, in order to compare their music to the main corpus song data.

1. *Musical Analysis: Harmony*. The first musical consideration in the corpus study was harmony. The analysis included a tabulation of the number of nonrecurring chords used in a song, as well as the number of nonrecurring chordal inversions. There are several interesting results from the harmonic chord analysis, with the results shown in Figures 1 and 2. (These and succeeding figures are collected at the end of this article beginning on page 112.) First, the number of nonrecurring chords in a song, as well as the number of chordal inversions used in a song, significantly decreases overall in songs written after 1990. Songs prior to 1990 have a concentrated number of songs using at least two chordal inversions, and between three to eight nonrecurring chords. Songs written after 1990, however, shift toward more root positions only, and the number of nonrecurring chords in each song are concentrated around four to five chords. In fact, in the songs written since 2010, over 90 percent use two chordal inversions or less, with more than 30 percent of the songs using only root-position chords. This overwhelming use of root position chords in contemporary worship songs in recent decades follows similar trends seen in rock music, based on findings from the corpus analysis of rock harmony in DeClercq/Temperley 2011.[22] The results for both the Gettys and Sovereign Grace songs tend to track in the middle between traditional hymnody and contemporary worship songs, with the Gettys leaning more toward the results of songs prior to 1970 and Sovereign Grace leaning

elements of the music itself.

[22]Trevor Declerq and David Temperley, "A Corpus Analysis of Rock Harmony," in *Popular Music*, vol. 30/I, 2011, 47–70.

more toward the results of songs after 1990.

Second, the choice of chords used in songs vary significantly over the last fifty years, as shown in Figure 3. The majority of songs written prior to 1990 use at least one secondary dominant chord. The use of secondary dominant chords shows a more complex harmonic structure than simply using diatonic chords (chords within the established key). The use of secondary dominants decreases in songs in the 1990s, and dramatically decreases after 2000, with only 3 percent of songs after 2010 using a secondary dominant chord. Also, the use of the vi7 chord and, to a lesser extent, the IV7 chord (not shown in the chart) increases significantly in songs written after 1970. Prior to 1970, songs utilized the vi and IV almost exclusively as a triad, following common practice tonality. The increased use of vi7 and IV7 (along with ii7 and iii7) in songs after 1970 is perhaps an influence of jazz harmony in recent decades. Another striking change is that the use of the V7 chord abruptly drops in songs written after 1990. The loss of the chordal seventh tendency tone weakens the cadential motion toward the tonic (I) chord, or the tonic substitute (vi) chord. By removing the chordal seventh of the dominant, the resolution to the subdominant (IV) chord becomes a viable option, based on the single tendency tone in the dominant triad. This progression, V-IV, while a rarity in common-practice tonality and hymnody, is used frequently in recent songs, both sacred and secular.[23]

In addition to analyzing individual chords, specific harmonic progressions were also analyzed, with results shown in Figure 4. The most prominent change that has occurred between songs prior to 1970 and songs particularly after 2000 is the decrease of the traditional dominant-tonic progression and the increase of the subdominant-tonic progression. In fact, the use of the vi-IV-I progression is particularly intriguing, as it occurs in less than 4 percent of songs prior to 1970, but is in a majority of songs after 2010. Also, the use of V-IV retrogression, which occurs in only one song prior to 1970, is used in the majority of songs after 2000. Both the Gettys and Sovereign Grace songs tend to use more contemporary harmonic progressions, which makes sense as they are aiming to provide modern-sounding music.

Lastly, the final harmonic cadence was analyzed in order to assess song endings, with results shown in Figure 5. As is evident in the results, the

[23]For example, DeClercq and Temperley, "A Corpus Analysis of Rock Harmony," discusses the prevalence of the V-IV-I progression in rock harmony, 47–48 and 60–62.

use of a dominant-tonic ending, whether using V or V7, decreases steadily after 1970 with a more dramatic decrease in songs after 2000. In contrast, the use of a final IV-I (plagal motion) increases steadily in songs after 1990. Most notably, however, is the use of a final cadence that ends away from tonic. This motion is not seen in a single song prior to 1990, which follows traditional tonality's overwhelming use of tonic endings. However, after 2000, more than a third of the songs in the corpus end away from tonic. While the majority of these songs end on a IV chord, there are numerous songs that end with a V or Vsus, or even ii or vi chord. While it is beyond the scope of this article to fully unpack the ramifications to these findings, the previous analysis demonstrates significant changes that have occurred to the harmonic language of congregational songs in recent decades, mirroring the harmonic changes that have occurred in American secular music.

2. *Musical Analysis: Rhythm*. The second consideration in the corpus study was rhythm, particularly melodic rhythm. While harmonic changes do not necessarily have a negative impact on congregational participation in singing, the melodic rhythm of a song has a major impact on a group's ability to sing together. The purpose of this analysis was to determine the complexity of a melody's rhythm, based on the use of beat displacements. Displacing the beat can occur in two ways, as shown in Example 1: (1) front-beat displacement, in which the melodic note comes in earlier than anticipated, or (2) back-beat displacement, in which the melodic note comes in later than anticipated. These displacements occur at the eighth-note or sixteenth-note, creating a total of four displacement types. The higher the number of beat displacements used in a melodic line, along with increased use of types of beat displacements, the more complex and unpredictable the melodic rhythm. This creates increased difficulty for communal singing, especially without printed sheet music from which to read.

Figure 6 presents some of the findings from the melodic rhythm analysis, based on a tabulation of the number of beat displacements in a melody line as well as the number of types of beat displacements used. There are several major shifts in the complexity of melodic rhythm, particularly after 1990, as indicated in these findings. First, the percentage of songs that utilize beat displacement has grown significantly since 1990. This can be seen in the first three rows in the figure. As the numbers show, prior to 1970 less than 7 percent of songs have an instance of any sort of beat

displacement in the melodic rhythm, and not a single song utilizes both types. Since 1990 however, almost 9 out of 10 songs utilize eighth-note displacements, and over half utilize both types of displacements.

Second, there is a dramatic increase not only in songs that use beat displacements but also in the number of instances of beat displacements used in a song. The fourth row in Figure 6 shows the percentage of songs that use more than ten beat displacements throughout the melody. Not a single song in the corpus prior to 1970 utilizes more than ten. In contrast, starting in the 1990s at least 8 out of 10 songs utilized more than ten beat displacements. The Gettys songs follow similar statistics to traditional hymnody while the Sovereign Grace songs align more closely with the contemporary congregational songs.

Third, there is also a dramatic increase in the use of multiple types of beat displacements after 1970, and particularly the use of three or more types of beat displacements after 2000. When only one type of beat displacement is used, it is generally the front-beat eighth-note displacement. This type of beat displacement is generally easier for a group of people to sing together after hearing it. However, when a song utilizes at least three types of beat displacements, at least one of the sixteenth-note displacements types is being used. This type of displacement is generally harder for a group of people to sing together. While songs prior to 1970 rarely utilize the sixteenth-note beat displacement, more than a quarter of songs after 2000, and almost a third of songs after 2010, use three or four types of beat displacements.

Figure 7 shows the number of melodic beat displacements used in each song and trendlines to show changes over time. There is a dramatic increase in the number of beat displacements in songs after 1990. Interestingly, the average use of eighth-note displacements and total displacements decreases around 2010, while the average use of sixteenth-note displacements increases steadily and actually becomes more utilized than the eighth-note displacement around 2015. However, in general, songs after 2000 use an average of at least 25 beat displacements per song, whereas songs prior to 1990 use an average of less than five, showing a striking change toward rhythmic complexity in the majority of melody lines in recent congregational songs. This increased complexity in the melodic rhythm corresponds to the more oral, improvisatory tradition of music making in recent decades as opposed to a written-out music tradition.[24]

[24]The change from a more written music tradition to an oral, improvisatory tradition is seen in

3. *Musical Analysis: Melody*. The third analytical consideration in the corpus study was melody; specifically, the melodic range of each song in the original printed key and the tessitura in select songs. The melodic range includes the highest and lowest notes sung in the melody. Based on the vocal ranges given in the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music* voice categories, shown in Figure 8, a strict voice range overlap in which all voice types should be able to sing comfortably is C4-C5 (one octave) using octave equivalence. A more flexible voice range overlap would increase each limit by a tone to Bb3-D5.[25] This gives a voice range overlap of an octave plus a third (sixteen semitones). Figure 9 shows the vocal range of each song on a graph in chronological order. Prior to 1990, almost 90 percent of melodies were within the voice range overlap. After 2000, there is a dramatic shift both upward and downward in melodic lines, such that over half of the songs written after 2000 have melodies that include notes higher than the voice range overlap, reaching E5, F#5, and even G5, particularly in the last decade.

The dramatic shifts in range, on both the low and high extremes, has to do with songs being written for solo artists with specific voice types. As those songs make their way into the church for use as congregational songs, the original key may not work well for communal singing. To be fair, songs can be transposed in order to provide a more comfortable vocal range for songs and indeed that is the case with some songs, as represented in Figure 10. However, even using transposition almost a third of the songs written after the year 2000 have melodies that are larger than the voice range overlap, and more than 10 percent of songs that are at least three semitones beyond the overlap.[26] Interestingly, the most common vocal range for songs up to 2010 was an octave (12 semitones), whereas the most common vocal range in songs after 2010 is 17 semitones. Due to the larger range, these songs have less options for key areas in order to maintain the voice range overlap for the majority of the song.

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secular musical culture: "Most pop [music] today is driven less by what the composer writes down than the performance taking raw materials and fashioning it into an individually charismatic performance…. New pop is spoken music, old pop was much more written down." John McWhorter, *Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care* (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2003), 209–10.

[25] The flexible voice range overlap (Bb3–D5 octave equivalent) would assume a high limit based on "alto" high note and a low limit based on "tenor" low note, down one semitone (any flat-key area will have Bb instead of B-natural).

[26] If the range of a melody is 16 half-steps or lower, then that song can be transposed to a key that will allow the melody to lie within the voice range overlap.

Although many songs can be transposed to fit within the voice range overlap, worship leaders may tend to still sing the song in the original key. As guitars increasingly have become the dominant instrument in worship bands, the key areas have changed to reflect guitar-led instrumentation, particularly the keys of the open strings on the guitar (G, D, A, E, B). As Figure 11 shows, prior to 1970 the majority of songs were written in flat-key areas which work well for orchestral instrumentation. After 1990, however, two-thirds of the songs in the corpus are written in sharp-key areas with more than 30 percent of the songs in keys with at least three sharps (A, E, B, F#). It is these keys specifically which are responsible for driving the melodic vocal range higher. Most melodies go up to the 5th scale degree in a key or to the octave. In the keys of A and E, that high note would be E. In the case of B and F#, that high note would be F#. In other words, the guitar-led instrumentation has caused more songwriters to write in keys well-suited for guitarists, which in turn often causes melody lines to be shifted higher than the voice-range overlap.[27]

While the previous data looks at the overall vocal range in each song, Figure 12 takes a detailed look at the tessitura in select songs. A visual inspection of a song's melodic line (i.e., lead sheet) will provide a quick overview of recurring notes and can give a general idea of a song's tessitura. A more precise identification of a song's tessitura involves tabulating the amount of time each individual pitch is sung and adding those values together. Since this process of tabulating each pitch duration can be painstakingly arduous, this process was not completed for every song in the main corpus. Rather, representative corpi of 45 songs were chosen to show differences between public domain songs (traditional hymnody in the corpus) and contemporary congregational songs.[28] In looking at the percentages for each pitch in the combined lists, the public domain songs have a clear center of pitches around G4-A4. Conversely, the contemporary congregational songs written after 2010 have a more evenly distributed tessitura, with especially higher percentages from pitches D5-F5. This tessitura shift greatly affects certain voice types from being able to sing a melodic line at pitch and hinders participation in singing.

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[27]Those same key areas are quite difficult for orchestra instruments, particularly instruments of transposition. For instance, a song performed in the key of B has 5 sharps, and for Bb clarinets, the key signature has 7 sharps. If you transpose that song down a half step to Bb, there are now 2 flats in the key, and for Bb clarinets, there are no sharps or flats. This is something not often thought about by worship leaders but has a big impact on instrumentalists if using an orchestra.

[28]The contemporary songs were selected from the 25 Top CCLI song list from June 2019, with 20 of those songs written after 2010.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in the corpus research, many songs that are considered popular for congregational singing today are not necessarily songs that work well for communal singing. As harmony has been simplified, melodic rhythm has become increasingly more complex. Without printed sheet music, the increasingly complexity to melodic rhythm challenges communal participation in singing. Furthermore, the vocal range and tessitura of many contemporary congregational songs have expanded and shifted higher, moving beyond the voice range overlap and creating increased difficulty in certain voice types to actively participate. Coupled with the fact that our culture in general is not a singing culture, these musical changes create a recipe for congregational silence instead of robust participation.

While some of the findings may be intuitive to music leaders, the purpose of the corpus study is to offer clarity and precision to the discussion of declining congregational singing by providing objective data from several hundred songs currently sung in American evangelical churches. With this research, it is hoped that church music leaders will recognize and understand the musical changes that have affected songs in recent decades, and that they will use this knowledge when selecting songs for congregational singing.

With current technology, there is easy access to an overwhelming number of songs from which to choose. It can be difficult at times to decide what to sing. Of utmost importance, however, is to choose songs that allow our congregation to actively participate in corporate worship through singing while avoiding songs that are a hindrance musically and theologically.[29] This is vital to producing communal singing and will aid in what Thomas Turino refers to as a participatory musical performance: "a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinction, only participants and potential participants … the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people."[30] If this truly is the goal of congregational singing, then that means certain sacrifices may need to be made by the music leader(s) in order to promote active participation by the congregants. As Goddard states, "Musical leadership must submit to the non-musicians to better help them participate in the life-giving words

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[29]For a lyrical study on the same corpus, see Nathan Burggraff, "'I Wanna Talk About Me': Analyzing the Balance of Focus between God and Man in Congregational Songs of the American Evangelical Church," *Artistic Theologian* 9 (2021): 19–41.

[30]Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26.

of worship."[31] The musical and cultural barriers that have increasingly silenced congregational participation in singing are very real; recognizing those barriers and working to overcome them are crucial to fostering an active singing congregation.

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
2	0.7						
3	15.7	6.7	4.0	1.6	4.8		
4	22.9	10.0	28.0	50.0	48.4	26.0	12.0
5	21.4	15.0	26.0	32.8	40.3	36.0	48.0
6	12.9	25.0	28.0	9.4	6.5	26.0	24.0
7	12.1	23.3	2.0	4.7		6.0	10.0
8	9.3	11.7	4.0	1.6		6.0	2.0
9	1.4	3.3	6.0				4.0
10	2.9	1.7	2.0				
11	0.7	3.3					
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 1: Tabulation of Nonrecurring Chords Used

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
0	2.1	10.0	12.0	21.9	32.2	4.0	20.0
1	2.9	10.0	28.0	39.1	33.9	12.0	30.0
2	12.9	15.0	28.0	18.8	27.4	16.0	22.0
3	25.7	21.7	10.0	7.8	3.2	26.0	18.0
4	13.6	18.3	12.0	9.4	3.2	24.0	4.0
5	15.7	8.3	2.0	3.1		14.0	2.0
6	11.4	8.3	4.0			2.0	4.0
7	6.4	5.0	2.0			2.0	
8	5.7	1.7	2.0				
9	1.4	1.7					
10	1.4						
11	0.7						
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 2: Tabulation of Nonrecurring Chordal Inversions Used

[31] Goddard, "Sing in the Kingdom?" 79–80.

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
ii	52.9	88.3	68.0	43.8	43.5	70.0	82.0
iii	15.7	40.0	24.0	6.3	9.7	22.0	36.0
IV	98.6	95.0	100	100	100	98.0	100
V	100	100	98.0	100	95.2	100	98.0
V7	89.3	76.7	22.0	6.3	3.2	42.0	10.0
vi	45.0	80.0	86.0	93.8	96.8	92.0	94.0
vi7	1.4	40.0	40.0	46.9	54.8	50.0	34.0
Sec. Dom.	57.9	51.7	22.0	7.8	3.2	16.0	20.0
IV/5	2.1	55.0	36.0	3.1		34.0	12.0
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 3: Specific Harmonies Used

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
PD-V-I	76.4	96.7	86.0	46.9	40.3	86.0	76.0
PD-V	77.1	96.7	88.0	60.9	58.1	94.0	86.0
V-I	99.3	98.3	94.0	73.4	67.7	96.0	92.0
V-vi	22.1	28.3	56.0	54.7	62.9	56.0	68.0
V-IV	0.7	25.0	48.0	65.6	67.7	50.0	72.0
IV-I	65.0	43.3	66.0	84.4	91.9	76.0	88.0
vi-IV-I	3.6	1.7	14.0	35.9	54.8	16.0	44.0
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 4: Specific Harmonic Progressions Used
(PD = PreDominant Chord ii or IV)

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
V7-I	82.1	56.7	12.0			24.0	6.0
V-I	15.7	26.7	50.0	26.6	25.8	44.0	58.0
V(7)-I	97.9	83.3	62.0	26.6	25.8	68.0	64.0
IV/5-I		11.7	16.0	1.6		10.0	
IV-I	1.4	1.7	14.0	28.1	32.3	6.0	26.0
Not I			6.0	37.5	40.3	12.0	8.0
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 5: Final Harmonic Cadence Used

(Traditional rhythm of Amazing Grace)

A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the
sound, That saved a ___ wretch like me!

(Recomposed rhythm of Amazing Grace with various beat displacements)

A - maz - ing ___ grace! how sweet ___ the ___ sound,
___ that ___ saved a ___ wretch like me! ___

1. 8th note front-beat
2. 8th note back-beat
3. 16th note front-beat
4. 16th note back-beat

Example 1: Beat Displacement Types in "Amazing Grace"

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
8th	5.0	43.4	90.0	92.2	82.3	22.0	70.0
16th	1.4	18.3	54.0	71.9	83.9	6.0	42.0
Both		13.3	50.0	67.2	69.4		32.0
> 10		16.7	80.0	93.8	82.3	2.0	60.0
0 Types	93.6	51.7	6.0	3.1	3.2	72.0	20.0
1+ Types	6.4	48.3	94.0	96.9	96.8	28.0	80.0
2+ Types		15.0	52.0	75.0	74.2		36.0
3+ Types		3.3	8.0	25.0	30.6		4.0
4 Types			2.0	7.8	4.8		
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 6: The Use of Beat Displacements in Melodic Lines

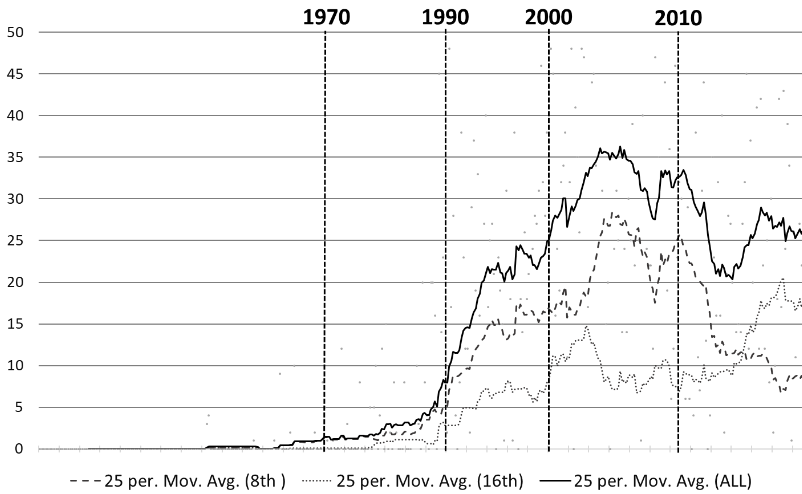

Figure 7: Number of Melodic Beat Displacements in Songs of the Main Corpus

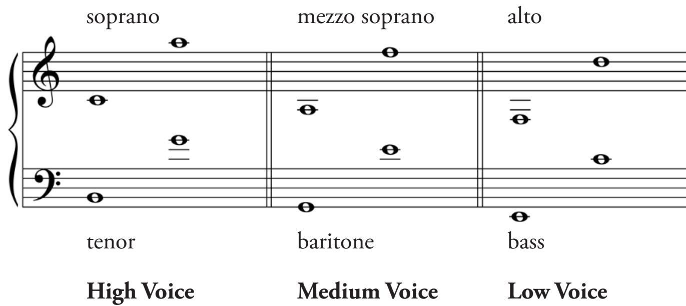

Figure 8: Vocal Ranges According to the New Harvard Dictionary of Music

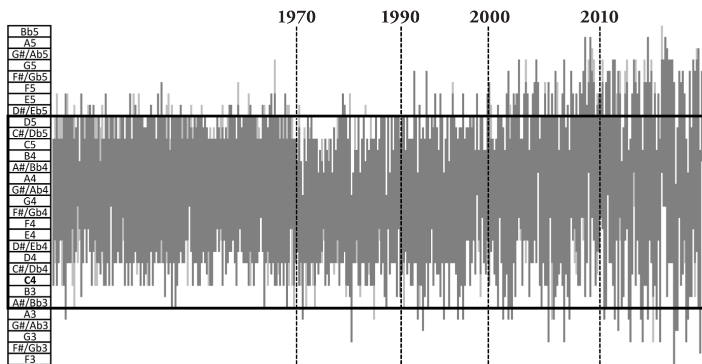

Figure 9: Vocal Range of Melodies (Original Key) in the Main Corpus
(The light gray denotes a pitch used only once in a song.)

Voice Range Overlap

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
24				1.6	3.2		
23							
22				4.7	4.8		
21				1.6	1.6		
20							
19	0.7		2.0	1.6	4.8	2.0	2.0
18							
17	0.7		4.0	7.8	25.8	22.0	14.0
16	3.6		6.0	9.4	11.3	8.0	12.0
15	1.4	5.0	4.0	1.6	3.2	18.0	18.0
14	13.6	8.3	8.0	14.1	12.9	32.0	14.0
13	4.3	5.0	12.0	10.9	1.6		10.0
12	41.4	28.3	32.0	28.1	19.4	14.0	20.0
11	0.7	1.7	2.0			2.0	2.0
10	11.4	15.0	14.0	4.7	6.5		6.0
9	10.7	16.7	8.0	3.1	3.2	2.0	2.0
8	5.0	8.3	6.0	6.3			
7	5.0	10.0	2.0	4.7	1.6		
6	0.7						
5	0.7						
4		1.7					
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 10: Vocal Range of Melodic Line in Semitones
(12 semitones = 1 octave)

	<1970	1970-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	Gettys	Sov. Grace
Gb				1.6			
Db	4.3				6.5	2.0	4.0
Ab	14.3	3.3		4.7	1.6		
Eb/c	8.6	10.0	2.0	1.6	3.2	6.0	2.0
Bb/g	8.6	10.0	6.0	9.4	11.3	6.0	2.0
F	20.7	16.7	12.0	6.3	1.6	4.0	
C	9.3	18.3	8.0	14.1	16.1	24.0	12.0
G/e	23.6	10.0	24.0	12.5	12.9	2.0	26.0
D	9.3	26.7	18.0	17.2	16.1	40.0	20.0
A	1.4	3.3	10.0	9.4	9.7	12.0	20.0
E		1.7	20.0	9.4	3.2	4.0	12.0
B				14.1	14.5		2.0
F#					3.2		
% of:	140 songs	60 songs	50 songs	64 songs	62 songs	50 songs	50 songs

Figure 11: Original Printed Key (based on Song Select)

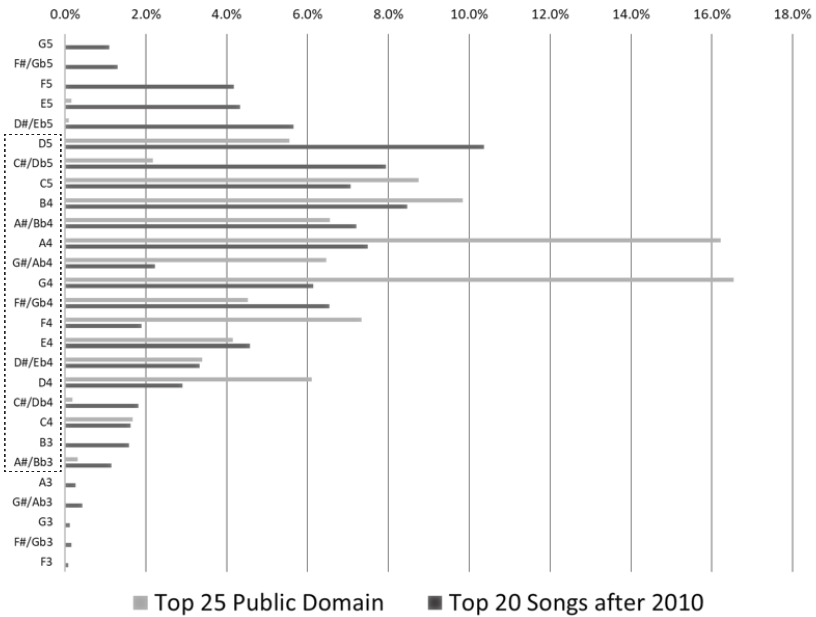

Figure 12: Average Tessitura Pitches in Select Songs from the Main Corpus
(Voice range overlap shown in the dotted box)

BOOK REVIEWS

***From the Manger to the Throne: A Theology of Luke.* By Benjamin L. Gladd. New Testament Theology. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022, 207 pp., $24.99.**

Benjamin L. Gladd is professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary. He is editor of the Essential Studies in Biblical Theology series. *From the Manger to the Throne* is one of a proposed 20-volume series of concise books focusing on the main theological teachings of each NT book or series of books. They examine what the NT writer "says about God and his relations to the world on their own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus" (11).

It is unusual to examine the theology of Luke without including Acts since Luke is the first of a two-volume work. Yet, Crossway opted for this series to examine them separately. Gladd admits that focusing only on Luke is "cutting against the grain" (14) of how scholars typically examine the books together. However, he does mention Acts many times in the present volume (e.g., 34, 50, 79).

Old Testament Background

Gladd rightly focuses on the importance of Luke's citations and allusions to the OT in describing significant times in Jesus's ministry (20). After giving an overview of the major events in Jesus's earthly life (19-37), Gladd devotes a chapter each to seven theological themes in Luke. He demonstrates one should interpret the OT just as Luke and other NT writers did because their primary teaching source was Jesus (37). This minority scholarly opinion is as refreshing as it is sensible. Gladd describes an OT quotation like "the tip of an iceberg" (105) in which the visible portion is obvious but the broader context of the quotation that lies beneath is important and easy to miss. So, Gladd guides the reader in examining the depths.

New Pathways

This book is especially interesting and thought-provoking when Gladd finds scriptural relations that he says other scholars “fail to connect” (146). For instance, he explores the impact of the meaning of “Son of Man” in Luke’s allusions to Daniel 7:13-14 in Luke 4:6 (rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, 151), 9:26-27 (Peter’s confession, 154), 22:69 (Jesus’s response to the Sanhedrin, 160), and Acts 1:8 (Jesus’s ascension instruction, 161). Gladd says Luke connects the disciples’ obstinacy on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 with allusions to Isaiah 6:9-10 (113-15). However, other times Gladd’s connections fall short. In tying a second exodus theme with Jesus’s Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:27) and the journey to Emmaus (24:13-35), the connections of the two journeys are tenuous and the descriptions of the first one as “unbelief and confusion” (121) and the second one as “belief and enlightenment” (121) are too generalized.

Helpful Applications

At the end of each chapter, Gladd makes applications of Lukan theology to the modern Christian. For instance, one ought to understand the present humiliation of Christians in light of Jesus’s humiliation and then exaltation (59). The church is continuing to live out God’s story today (97). Christians must trust God’s promises, just as Jesus did (143). However, the chapter conclusions and applications are short. One wishes Gladd devoted more space to these sections.

Ways to Improve

First, at times Gladd “finds” more than what is in the Lukan text. For instance, he may be reading more into Jesus’s three temptations (Luke 4:1-13) than Luke sets forth. Jesus was victorious over Satan’s three temptations, but Gladd says this was the decisive victory over Satan (72, 160). Second, Gladd is sometimes unclear. For instance, who the antichrist is and how he inspires false teachers before he is physically present (157) is a conundrum that Gladd mentions but does not adequately explain. He claims the fourth beast in Daniel 7:14 is both Satan and theocratic Israel (166) but does not explain this seeming contradiction. Third, there are ten helpful tables in the book that compare texts, but additional tables would be beneficial, such as in chapter 6 on the Son of Man.

Conclusion

This reviewer recommends this book as a useful short theology of

Luke. It successfully demonstrates how Luke's quotations and allusions to the OT are an important part of Luke's message. Gladd's book is a helpful volume that accomplishes the purpose of the Crossway series to be an accessible and concise scholarly resource for "students, preachers, and interested laypeople" (11) that is also useful as a textbook "in college and seminary exegesis classes" (12). This book is well written, engaging, and thought provoking.

James R. Wicker
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

Jesus the Purifier: John's Gospel and the Fourth Quest for the Historical Jesus. **By Craig L. Blomberg. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023, 394 pp., $49.99.**

Craig L. Blomberg is distinguished professor emeritus of New Testament at Denver Seminary. The author of numerous books, he has distinguished himself in Johannine studies with *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (2011) and *Jesus and the Gospels* (3rd ed., 2022).

Three Quests or Not?

The first five chapters (58 percent) of *Jesus the Purifier* is an excellent overview of almost 250 years of the quests for the historical Jesus: scholarly attempts to find what is historical in the Synoptic Gospels, often ignoring the Fourth Gospel. Although most scholars classify them as three quests, Blomberg effectively argues they could be viewed as "three phases of one quest" (xviii). Part of his argument shows the "no quest" period followed by a "new quest" (the second quest) was an interrupted period of scholarly productivity (43-46).

The Fourth Gospel: Now Ready for Prime Time

The sixth chapter covers research on the Fourth Gospel in the last sixty years, and Blomberg demonstrates the usual lack of interest in the Fourth Gospel by most scholars involved in the quests for the historical Jesus (180). He seeks to correct that lacuna in the current beginning of the fourth quest. As an example of what ought to be done, he inspects the motif of Jesus and purity.

Jesus the Purifier

The remainder of the book is an examination of material in the Fourth Gospel dealing with Jesus the purifier (xix). He seeks to make a good case for the authenticity of this material; thus, helping to encourage scholars involved in the "fledgling fourth quest" (xviii) for the historical Jesus to give parity to the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptic Gospels (220-21).

Strengths

Blomberg is an excellent scholar and an effective writer. His research is well written, very organized, and thoroughly documented. Here are some strengths of the book in order of importance. First, Blomberg gives an innovative approach in chapters 7-9 of how to incorporate the Fourth Gospel in the fourth quest by using the criterion of "cutting against the grain" (227-30). Second, his proposal of an underlying motif of Jesus the purifier in the Fourth Gospel is creative and provides a good model for affirming historical accuracy in the Fourth Gospel (223-332). Third, he lists and explains fourteen differences in John's Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels that point to the historical trustworthiness of all four Gospels despite their differences. Fourth, he gives good correctives and additions to the typical categories of the first three quests (9-19, 43-46). Fifth, his evaluation of the Jesus Seminar is on target, including his colorful critique (123-25). Sixth, his touches of humor are welcome when, for example, he uses many clever heading titles, such as "A Webb of Key Events: Taking Us Bock to Jesus the Messiah" (153), a pun involving Darrell Bock and Robert Webb's book *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus* (2009). "Jesus in a Funk" (125) headlines the section describing the bizarre picture of Jesus by Robert Funk in *Honest to Jesus* (1996). Seventh, Blomberg gives helpful applications to the current church from his Johannine study (380-82) while admitting this is an area he needs to grow in as well (xxi).

Minor Issues

Here are some minor issues/questions this writer has about this excellent book. First, although Blomberg used a tried-and-true criterion for the authenticity of material in the Fourth Gospel, one wishes he developed new criteria or interacted with new ones, such as the ones developed by Paul Anderson (208). Second, an appendix of terms would be helpful. For instance, a student may wish to see where Blomberg describes source, form, and redaction criticisms. For instance,

this reader does not recall him specifically defining source criticism, although he did describe the period of its use (2-9; see 34, 50). Third, it seems preferable to say a person can let Jesus be Lord of his or her life rather than "make him Lord" (80), since He is Lord regardless of what anyone else does. Fourth, this reviewer is uncomfortable with the thought of John putting words in Jesus's mouth that he never actually said but implicitly claimed (380); rather, Jesus actually said the words. Fifth, it seems better to consider John the Baptist's baptism as preparatory rather than equivalent to believer's baptism (249, 340).

Conclusion

Those who, such as Blomberg and this reviewer, accept the accuracy of the historical details in the four Gospels might be inclined to ignore the quests for the historical Jesus. However, this disregard would be a mistake, and biblically conservative voices such as that of Blomberg are invaluable in this ongoing scholarly endeavor. *Jesus the Purifier* is helpful for students and scholars in its case for parity of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptic Gospels in the fourth quest for the historical Jesus.

James R. Wicker
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

***Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit.* By Matthew Barrett. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021, 364 pp., $20.99.**

Since the original 2016 flare up within evangelical circles over whether the Son is subordinate to the Father in their ad intra relations, what began as primarily an online debate has shifted to publication form. Within this context, Matthew Barrett's recent Simply Trinity seeks to reorient contemporaries to the Great Tradition's formulation of pro-Nicene theology while demonstrating that social trinitarian "revivals" in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are distortions that move away from orthodoxy. Specifically, what makes Barrett's work provocative is the indictment that certain evangelicals have unwittingly drifted into social trinitarianism through their advocacy of complementarianism, specifically in the Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS) doctrines of Wayne Grudem and Bruce Ware.

Methodologically, Barrett returns to the Church Fathers, comparing

their formulations against modern social trinitarianism, and then returns to Scripture (38-39). As the title suggests, Barrett's purpose is that "the real Trinity stands up. It is time the church comes face-to-face with the God who is *simply Trinity*. Unadulterated. Uncorrupted. Unmanipulated. I have written this book to wake us up…" (32). Through analogy to the 1990s Dream Team, Barrett assembles his own team representative of the "greats of the Great Tradition" to bolster his argument: Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, Augustine of Hippo, the Cappadocian Fathers, Anselm of Canterbury, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, Francis Turretin, John Owen, and John Gill (33–35).

"Part 1: How Did we Drift Away?" returns to the Arian controversy that led to the Trinitarian Nicene formulation and later clarification at Constantinople in 381. Barrett stresses that the fathers affirmed *homoousion* because of the prior commitment to eternal generation, making Jesus a Son by nature in eternity, not by grace temporally after the Father (49-52). Moreover, if what binds each mode of subsistence is the one simple divine essence, what distinguishes each person from each other are *only* eternal relations of origin: unbegotten, eternally begotten, and spiration (57–61). The God of the Christian Faith is *Simply Trinity*.

In comparison to the Great Tradition, Barrett claims that beginning with Rahner's axiom, Trinity and society became intertwined in the twentieth century. "Rahner's Rule gave modern theologians the opportunity to rethink everything, and most importantly, to close the gap between Creature and creature… G*od is as God does… God becomes Trinity when he acts like one in history*" (77). With this gap closed, the Trinity has since been used as a paradigm for socialist communities (Jürgen Moltmann), for church and society (Miroslav Volf), as liberation program (Leonardo Boff), as well as to support complementarian theology (Grudem and Ware) (77–93). This so-called revival is in fact a departure which distorts the Triune God into becoming a means for other ends instead of being an end in himself (92).

"Part 2: How Do we Find Our Way Home?" begins with a critique of Rahner, arguing that the immanent cannot be conflated into the economic, but rather God's *opera ad extra* reveals the *opera ad intra*, yet not entirely (118-119). Failing to get the order right (moving from God's transcendence to the Son's incarnate mission) inappropriately projects aspects of economy onto immanency (123). Concerning the divine

essence, the doctrine of divine simplicity is required to affirm that all that is in God is present in each divine person, protecting from modalism, tritheism, social trinitarianism as well as Arianism (137, 145–54). Chapters 6-7 argue for the doctrine of eternal generation through reliance on John Gill and certain biblical evidence (the names "Father" and "Son," *monogenēs* as "only-begotten" in John 1:4, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9, and images that point to the Son as Radiance, Image, Wisdom, and Ancient of Days).

With this groundwork laid, the reader must wait until chapter 8 for a full-throated assessment of EFS. Several charges are laid: (1) "EFSers" have radicalized their position further by recently affirming eternal generation, and yet "embedding subordination deeper within the eternal, immanent identity of God…" (225); (2) EFS is novel and should be categorized alongside other social trinitarian models; (3) EFS flirts with tritheism, Sabellianism and subordinationism; (4) EFS makes the initiative for the incarnation pointless, since the Son must obey out of necessity, not grace (249); and (5) finally, EFS prioritizes worship to the Father over the Son (257–59).

The remaining chapters explain how the Spirit's eternal spiration corresponds to his economic work of being sent by the Father and the Son as breath, gift, and love (Ch. 9). Moreover, the one Divine Lord works inseparably in his work of creation, salvation, and adoption according to each person's divine appropriation (Ch. 10).

On the one hand, *Simply Trinity* is challenging to classify as either a popular or academic level work. While its subject material is clearly abstract in its ontological focus, Barrett's usage of the 1990s Dream Team, *A Christmas Carol*, life in California, and the Delorean from *Back to the Future* attempt to bring the discussion down to earth to engage the popular level reader (also through blurbs, charts, and a helpful glossary to orient oneself to technical terminology).

On the other hand, perhaps a work that defies categorization, but which enters into the depths of the current Trinitarian debate while remaining accessible is exactly what modern evangelicals need, especially pastors, leaders, and scholars whose complementarianism has been impacted by EFS. These readers need to be confronted with how such an anti-Nicene approach distorts the Trinity for the sake of gender relations and has come dangerously close to several heresies, undermined the grace of the incarnation by making the Divine Son's

condescension necessary, and prioritized the glory of the Father over and against that of the Son and the Spirit. Barrett accomplishes this confrontation precisely in chapter 8, which is worth the price of the book.

As a gentle critique, this reviewer will seek elsewhere for a more thorough argument in favor of the *filioque* (Latin "and the Son." Augustine's doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit was thereby inserted later into the Western version of the Nicene Creed). After spending considerable time arguing against reading the economic back onto the immanent Trinity inappropriately, Barrett builds his case for the *filioque* not on texts that obviously speak of *ad intra relations* but only on those that speak of the economy of sending (266–72). This is not to deny the *filioque*, but to observe that the exegetical foundation in this case is not as strong. In the divide between East and West, perhaps it would be better to affirm with scholars like Malcolm Yarnell that the Spirit proceeds *from* the Father and *through* the Son.[1] Nevertheless, the clarity of Barrett's presentation of the Great Tradition's Pro-Nicene Trinitarianism in contradistinction to modern social Trinitarianism in all its forms is a much-needed confrontation for modern evangelicalism.

Aaron Garza
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

***A Handbook of Theology: Theology for the People of God.* Edited by Daniel L. Akin, David S. Dockery, and Nathan A. Finn. Brentwood, TN: B&H, 2023, xi+634 pp., $49.99.**

A Handbook of Theology is an introductory work on theology from an evangelical (primarily Southern Baptist) view. It is primarily written for the Bible college or seminary student's introductory theology courses. It is also beneficial for the pastor, church leader, or lay Christian needing to consult a solid overview of theology.

The editors chose some of the top theologians in their fields to contribute to the volume. Examples include Malcolm Yarnell's essay on "The Trinity," Craig Blaising's contribution to "Last Things," and

[1]Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *Who is the Holy Spirit? Biblical Insights into His Divine Person* (Nashville: B&H, 2019), 89.

Jeffery Bingham's overview of "Patristic Theology." The work is divided into six parts. Part 1 covers "Theological Foundations," including topics such as "God's Existence," "Revelation," The Role of Tradition," and "Faith and Experience." Part 2 surveys the various "Types of Theology," including biblical, historical, philosophic, systematic, and historical theology. Part 3 is a historical tour through "Theology, History, and Geography," covering the eras of "Patristic Theology" through "Modern Theology" and concluding with "Global Theology." Part 4 is a survey of the major "Christian Doctrines," including "The Trinity," "The Person (and work) of Christ," "Justification," and "The Church." Part 5 elaborates on "Theology and the Christian Life," with topics including "Church Membership," "Spiritual Formation and Discipleship," and "Theology for Evangelism and Missions." Part 6 tackles important issues in "Theology in Culture," including "Religious Liberty," "Racial Reconciliation," and "Marriage and Sexuality."

A Handbook of Theology offers a wealth of strengths. Each essay is concise and understandable for the lay Christian yet doctrinally solid from an evangelical and Southern Baptist view. Each scholar brings the best of their field knowledge to the table in their contributions. The work does not limit itself to being an overview of systematic theology, but in a similar manner to previous theological handbooks (such as *Moody Handbook of Theology*), the work includes discussions on other major types of theology and other useful theological discussions to introduce readers to the vast field of theology. The work also tackles current issues affecting the church such as a biblical understanding of marriage and sexuality (presented in both its own chapter and in the chapter on "Humanity") and the sanctity of human life. The work presents readers with both a solid academic foundation in understanding theology and showing readers how theological belief affects one's understanding of practical and current issues.

Introductory courses on theology should include *A Handbook of Theology* as one of the required textbooks for students to read and consult. It will be most useful in introductory systematic theology and Bible doctrine courses, although some of the essays will also be useful for introductory courses in other theological fields. The work is also useful for the busy pastor or church leader who needs a solid yet concise survey on theology. It should also be used in a church Sunday School or small group Bible study to train church members in a firm foundation

of studying theology and Bible doctrines. If there is any "weakness" with the work, it is only that the reader would want to read more on each theological topic than what is presented in each essay, although each chapter ends with a "For Additional Study" section and additional articles one can consult to further research each theological topic.

Daniel Akin, David Dockery, and Nathan Finn, along with the contributors to this volume, have provided in *A Handbook of Theology* a work that will serve the church for years. Readers will be blessed with theological riches from this concise yet informative text.

Nathaniel Parker
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

Natural Theology: Geerhardus Vos. **Translated by Albert Gootjes. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022, 184pp., $25.00.**

In recent years discussions concerning natural theology have become vogue in Reformed circles of the Christian academy. Protestant proponents of natural theology have undertaken a staunch effort aimed at substantiating their use of natural theology through citing Reformed theologians of renowned. Such an undertaking links these well-known Reformed theologians to the theological method employed by Thomas Aquinas. Their intentions are to legitimize and normalize the use of natural theology within the Reformed tradition.

The treatise reviewed here seeks to assist that effort by submitting a collection of translated class notes from Geerhardus Vos's lectures on natural theology as evidence. Vos is not only one of the patron saints of Reformed dogma but also a connoisseur of biblical theology, and if it can be demonstrated such a grandiose figure in the Reformed world appropriated Thomistic methods then everyone else should obviously do the same. Divided into two parts, the present treatise first introduces the reader to natural theology, then its history in the Reformed tradition, and finally presents notes from Vos's class on natural theology.

Part one contains an introduction authored by J. V. Fesko. The introduction is divided into three sections. The first includes a history of natural theology in the Reformed tradition. Fesko offers a helpful distinction between "natural revelation" and "natural theology"; the

former includes data made available by God's creative activity, the latter anticipates the collection, interpretation, and systemization of that data. Fesko attempts to establish a lineage of natural theology traversing Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas into the Reformed tradition through John Calvin. Fesko then attempts to explain the state of natural theology in the Reformed tradition during the nineteenth century. The Thomistic tradition was employed by Herman Bavinck, setting the stage for the theological milieu in which Vos abided. The final section of the introduction familiarizes the reader with Vos the man and his notes, divulging his sources, methods, and backgrounds.

Part two offers the notes themselves, which were delivered in the catechetical form of question and answer. The notes are divided into three sections, including a prolegomenon, a discourse on various systems of religion, and a brief dialogue on the immortality of the soul. Of these, natural theology is dealt with in the prolegomenon. Vos deals with natural theology in this section because, based on the structure of the notes, natural theology is the starting point of an apologetic for the existence of the Christian God presented in Scripture. For Vos natural theology serves the purpose of leaving unbelievers without an excuse for their rejection of the Christian God (see question 12). Vos in no way apprehends natural theology as used by Aquinas and does not believe such a use is consistent with Reformed thought (see question 25).

The editors reimagine Vos as a Thomistic natural theologian despite his primary contributions elsewhere, especially in biblical theology. Moreover, "natural theology" perennially evades a universally agreed upon objective definition. Some, like Anselm, reckon faith as necessarily *a priori* for theology, while others, like Aquinas, assign a certain priority to human reasoning. Vos is clearly in the former category, and any fair reading of the notes afforded here seems to demonstrate as much. These previously unpublished lecture notes, while full of helpful information, remain sparse and simply do not establish Vos as a Thomistic natural theologian.

Jason Weir
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

***40 Questions About Arminianism*. By J. Matthew Pinson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022, 395pp., $27.99.**

Framing the whole book regarding Arminianism, Matthew Pinson, president of Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee, consciously demarcates the border in "the spirit of catholicity" in the evangelical landscape, away from liberal theology (13-14). Pinson unfolds the confessional differences between Arminianism and Calvinism, boosting the evangelical commitment to orthodoxy and the spirit of catholicity.

The book consists of five parts: (1) historical questions in comparing and contrasting the basic doctrines of Arminianism and Calvinism; (2) penal substitutionary atonement and the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification; (3) free will and irresistible grace; (4) unconditional or conditional election and the relationship between faith and regeneration; and (5) perseverance and apostasy. Calling himself a Reformed Arminian who belongs to a minority even in the Arminian community, Pinson explains that the identity of Reformed Arminianism stems from Jacobus Arminius. Arminius "was a confessionally Reformed minister to his dying day" and "publicly affirmed the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism" (13). Pinson believes "these documents [Belgic and Heidelberg] open us up to everything that is beautiful about confessional Reformed theology, because they were written before Reformed theology was 'tightened up,' before it morphed from a theology of sovereignty" (60).

Pinson in part two clarifies that Arminius's doctrines of penal substitutionary atonement and the imputation of Christ's righteousness were in line with Reformed theology (87, 106). This indicates that not all Arminians agree with the Reformed Arminians who are with Calvinists on *what it means to be in a state of grace* (41, 55). Throughout parts three and four, however, Pinson shows how the Reformed Arminians, like all Arminians, are different from the Calvinists regarding *how one comes to be in a state of grace* (83).

Pinson corrects, in part three, an assumption that Arminians believe that "some sort of natural free will or ability to respond to the gospel without special grace from the Holy Spirit." These ideas were asserted by Pelagians and semi-Pelagians (140). Rather, Pinson contends Arminius and the confessional Arminian denominations have insisted

that man's will cannot desire God "without the interposition of special divine grace" (149). Arminians believe God's grace reaches out to everyone, not just to particular persons of humanity (175). This concept of divine grace can be resisted by people. It is because "Scripture throughout paints a picture of a personal God who has created personal beings who think, feel, and make authentic choices. Grace is a personal dynamic between two personal beings, not a cause-and-effect relationship between a personal being and a physical object" (215).

Pinson deals also with a typical doctrine of Calvinism, i.e., unconditional election. With some biblical examples for the doctrine of unconditional election, e.g., Ephesians 1:4-11, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:6-23, Pinson interprets those passages in relation to eternal salvation from the point of the gospel; namely, not in a legal mindset but in an evangelical perspective that "is conditioned on one's faith in Jesus the Messiah" (245, 272). Ultimately, Pinson says, "God's election of individuals for eternal salvation was in consideration of the merit of Christ apprehended by faith" (254). Arminianism's idea of conditional election of individuals affects the relation of faith to regeneration. Pinson says, "The New Testament yields the idea that repentance and faith (conversion) results in the new birth (regeneration): One becomes a 'born-again Christian' only as a result of repentance and faith" (294).

Both Arminianism and Calvinism seek to base their soteriology on biblical evidence. Respecting the economy of man's salvation, within Christian orthodoxy one may sharpen his or her soteriological understanding through cross-denominational dialogue with those from a different persuasion. Pinson, from the Arminian perspective, fairly explains what historical Reformed Arminianism has believed. He has successfully delineated the doctrinal justification for the tradition derived from Jacobus Arminius. This book is a must read for those who seek to rightly understand and helpfully interact with Arminianism.

Wang Yong Lee
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

Teaching for Spiritual Formation: A Patristic Approach to Christian Education in a Convulsed Age. **By Kyle R. Hughes. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022, 198pp., $27.00.**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many industries were forced to adjust and revise their methods and models. From a heavier emphasis on remote work, to the further integration of AI technology, to entire new commercial enterprises formed altogether, much has changed since 2020. One of the industries most impacted by the pandemic has been education. Early solutions included a massive shift to online delivery, as well as the increase of homeschool and non-traditional models. While some of these developments have positive effects, the notion of effective pedagogy is constantly being reworked in our modern day. This raises the question of whether looking forward is always the best solution to education. What about ancient wisdom to address modern pedagogical needs? *Teaching for Spiritual Formation: A Patristic Approach to Christian Education in a Convulsed Age* is a practical work of retrieval, applying ancient wisdom for more effective discipleship and Christian education. In seven chapters highlighting different Christian thinkers of early centuries, Kyle Hughes offers readers time-honored methods for Christian educators. Hughes does more than read ancient texts, he reads them in conversation with modern educational philosophy alongside his own pedagogical observations. Thus, it is both a work of close reading and research as well as personal conviction. What comes across in these pages is more than a blueprint or static model, but a summons to consider the multi-faceted and ancient task of Christian education for the good of the soul and the good of the world.

Chapter 1 provides introductory observations on the state of Christian education, establishing the direction of the remaining chapters. Hughes recognizes that our current age is fraught with temptations towards pragmatism, utilitarianism, and hedonism. True Christian education should address these and other prevailing philosophies from God's revelation in Scripture and the church's tradition of theological reflection. Christian educators are called to help students become certain people, not simply prepare for certain tasks. A call to vocation apart from a call to virtue is antithetical to classical Christian pedagogy. Chapter 2 builds on this summons by enlarging our vision of

the teaching vocation, with particular attention to Gregory the Great and his legacy of contemplative spirituality. Drawing from his *Pastoral Rule*, Hughes demonstrates how Christian educators act as shepherds, directing the soul of students out of the overflow of our own life with God. The spiritual and emotional health of educators directly impacts their work in the classroom. Christian administrators must also concern themselves with the spiritual health of their faculty. Hughes argues that biblical meditation and contemplation are just as important (if not more so) for faculty development as a continuing education module.

Chapter 3 moves towards exploring the identity of students in Christian education environments. For this purpose, Hughes turns to John Chrysostom and relates the idea of training athletes for Christ. This includes the ministry of "counter formation" whereby educators are tasked with addressing prevailing cultural concerns as they impact the mind and hearts of students. Through Chrysostom, Hughes advocates for educators "[providing] opportunities to train the 'muscles' of their [students'] souls" (p. 45). The teaching vocation is one akin to an athletic trainer. This means Christian educators advocate for what is good and discourage what is damaging to a student's soul. Christian educators are ministers of virtue formation, even if the content is mathematics or science. This also means that educators submit to the same standards, modeling what receiving correction means with grace and humility. Chrysostom was also concerned with the role of the senses in spiritual formation, and Hughes adapts this to show how different pedagogical approaches are necessary to aid all kinds of students. This also means that Christian education is a team approach, utilizing the gifts and abilities of all educators and administrators to bring about meaningful intellectual and character development.

Hughes dedicates the next several chapters to the content and methods of teaching gleaned from different Patristic voices. Chapter 4 explores the understanding of virtue from Basil of Caesarea, which Hughes argues encompasses the main content of our teaching. Christian educators are tasked with promoting and inculcating Christian virtue, whether teaching Scripture, British literature, or chemistry. Hughes asserts that "the role of the teacher is to provide such opportunities by which students can practice the virtuous life, such that choosing virtue becomes the default course of action for the student" (84). This may require a complete reimagining of curriculum to meet

this goal, a goal that Basil advances (90-91). Chapters 5 and 6 speak to methodology in Christian education, with attention to Benedict of Nursia and Cyril of Jerusalem. Both thinkers provide reflection on the formative practices and the structured approach necessary to give Christian education the proper trellis for student development. Christian educators ought to be concerned with holiness and should not be wary of time-tested methods of catechesis to reinforce ideas and promote spiritual activity. Hughes helpfully navigates the value of both asceticism and catechism for the sake of building healthy disciples of Christ in Christian education, whether in schools or churches.

Christian education has a unique opportunity to offer the world an anchor amidst prevailing waves of doubt and spiritual chaos. Parochial schools, classical Christian schools, Christian liberal arts colleges, and seminaries for training ministers of the gospel ought to be places of virtue formation just as much as intellectual and practical development. Hughes and his ability to elucidate Patristic voices offers readers the perspective needed to recover Christian education as formation in the intellect as well as the heart. While this work is written especially for institutions of Christian education, Hughes offers wider application for any church ministry involved in education and discipleship. Hughes presents a translatable paradigm for ministers and pastors in the local church, as well as leaders in parachurch ministries. Though his insights come from his experience leading in K-12 Christian classical education, these insights have challenged and encouraged me in my own ministry to undergraduates and seminarians. The treasures of biblical wisdom from the Church Fathers should not be neglected for modern methods but should be recovered for timeless results.

Coleman M. Ford
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

Christianity and Modern Medicine: Foundations for Bioethics. **By Mark Wesley Foreman and Lindsay C. Leonard. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022, 384 pp., $29.99.**

This book is co-authored by former philosophy professor at Liberty University, Mark W. Foreman, and his daughter, Lindsay C. Leonard,

assistant attorney general for the Commonwealth of Virginia. It updates a previous book, *Christianity and Bioethics: Confronting Clinical Issues* (Joplin: College Press, 1999). In 23 years, more bioethical issues have risen, so this update includes approximately 100 more pages.

The first of ten chapters, "Modern Medicine in a Moral Fog," introduces the current state of medical ethics. The authors offer a Christian appraisal and propose a pluralism of three ethical theories—consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics—to form a God-honoring Christian perspective for addressing each ethical problem. In chapter 2, "Principles of Bioethics," they start with Beauchamp and Childress's four principles: respect for autonomy, beneficence, justice, and non-maleficence. These principles are *prima facie* but may be superseded by stronger obligations. This chapter concludes with a manifesto covering God as Creator and Redeemer, the dignity of humanity and sanctity of life, individuals in community, freedom and finitude, suffering, and medicine and healing. These manifest truths trump secular moral justifications.

Chapters 3 to 10 are devoted to special issues: abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, physician assisted suicide, procreational ethics, genetic ethics, treatment clinical ethics, and research clinical ethics. In each area, the authors tell a real-life story first, then provide moral arguments for both sides, present the legal cases, and summarize their position. Chapter 3 concerns abortion and concludes that personhood begins at the moment of conception. Abortion is, therefore, the killing of a person. Next come two chapters concerning infanticide and euthanasia. The authors argue against active euthanasia since human life is given by God, thus overriding the autonomy principle. Chapter 6 discusses physician assisted suicide and, upon evaluating the evidence, concludes Christians should reject it. The next chapter is about procreational ethics, while chapter 8 covers genetic ethics. The authors argue the goal of medicine is to cure, not to kill a person. The goal of genetic intervention should therefore be to cure, not to enhance.

The last two chapters relate to ordinary clinical practice and clinical trials in advancing the treatment of diseases. In chapter 9, the authors discuss the doctor-patient relationship and emphasize that doctors should fully inform patients of disease and treatment. Doctors should not exhibit paternalism or practice deception but maintain confidentiality. The last chapter, concerning ethics in clinical trials, is weak.

This reviewer was a statistician who worked in the Cancer Treatment Evaluation Program of the National Cancer Institute. It must be noted that randomized controlled clinical trial is the gold standard in establishing treatment efficacy, rather than random clinical trial (RCT; 357). A placebo is only used when there is no current effective treatment, so a new treatment is tested against a placebo. Once there is a good treatment for a disease, the new treatment is tested against a current standard treatment, never a placebo. All clinical trials supported by NIH grants must satisfy very stringent ethical requirements. For instance, during the recent COVID-19 vaccine trial, a statistical procedure stopped the clinical trial early when the new vaccine showed strong evidence of being effective. In a footnote (358), the authors describe a "three-armed" trial, but their definition is incorrect and lacks citation. The authors claim the majority of RCTs are nontherapeutic (360), but that contradicts this reviewer's experience in cancer clinical trials.

Overall, this book is a good handbook for guiding Christians to deal with biomedical ethical issues. It provides Christian perspectives on many issues and is highly recommended as a reading for a course in biomedical ethics. It does not include a subject index or bibliography.

T. Timothy Chen
Truth (Baptist) Theological Seminary
Arcadia, CA