

A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP
AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN FREE METHODISM

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DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad
and to my loving wife, Dene'

Abstract

A Wesleyan Theology of Worship and Its Development in Free Methodism

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The purpose of this dissertation is to present John Wesley's theology of worship and show how his understanding and practice of worship were changed in the development and growth of Methodism in North America.

This paper will briefly explore John Wesley's work on the subject of worship and that he believed the sacrament of the Lord's Table is the centerpiece for public worship. Through a study of Wesley's sermons, notes, letters, theological addresses and hymns, it will be argued that at the heart of his theology of worship is the Christ event. It was Wesley's desire that a balance of the Word and Table be restored to worship in the Church of England. Wesley's work resulted in a restoration of the Lord's Table to a weekly practice in the Church of England by the end of his life. However, the story takes a different path in Methodism in North America. This paper will look at that journey and how circumstances shaped the theology of worship in Methodism.

This paper will contain three areas of research. The first area of research will give the biblical and theological foundations for worship. Particular attention will be given to the life and ministry of Jesus and the context of the 1st century Church. This section will also provide a theological foundation for the Trinitarian model for worship. The second area of research will develop a Wesleyan theology of worship. Special attention will be given to the works of John Wesley and the Eucharistic hymns of John and Charles

Wesley. The third area of research will provide a look at Wesleyan worship from a liturgical viewpoint. This section will develop Wesley's theology of worship into liturgical movement for public worship.

The goal of this dissertation is to bring to the table a discussion about worship, for the Free Methodist and Wesleyan/Holiness denominations. It will also give the framework for Free Methodism to establish and develop, from a biblical and Wesleyan position, a theology of worship and a book of worship.

Theological Mentor: Robert R. Redman, Jr., Dr. Theol.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of worship has been the passion of many students, pastors, teachers, and scholars throughout the centuries of Christianity. From the very beginning of the Christian Faith, worship has been the centerpiece of the Christian life. A study of the Acts of the Apostles shows clearly the importance the first century believers placed upon worship. Worship was so important to their daily life that they would meet together early for prayer, the Word and the sacrament before their work day began. One also learns from the Acts of the Apostles, that the believers of the first century, which were mainly Jewish, established their corporate worship on the Lord's day. This action would eventually be a major step of distinguishing the Christian faith from Judaism.

Christian worship has its foundation in Judaism, with Temple worship centered upon the sacrificial system and Synagogue worship focusing on the teaching of the scriptures. The earliest expression of Christian worship blends the Temple sacrificial system and the Synagogue services of the teaching of the scriptures. In the liturgy of the 1st century Christian worship service one finds the blending of their Jewish heritage into a Word and Table service. The teachings of the Apostles and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper become the centerpiece of the liturgy of the early Church. Their liturgy became well-established very early under the leadership of the Disciples which gave structure to the four-fold pattern for worship. That structure included the entrance, the teaching of the Word, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and then sending into ministry.

The subject of worship has been studied and discussed from every possible viewpoint. Throughout the many centuries of Christianity, both the clergy and laity have

maintained a vested interest in worship. As the Church grew and developed, theological and doctrinal issues divided the Church. Worship became the center by which many groups within the Christian faith marked their differences. Today, worship is a hotbed of debate among the churches. The style of worship in church is no longer simply an issue emphasizing denominational differences but has reached into almost every denomination in North America. Our generation is in a worship war that runs deep. It began early in modernity with the debates over the traditional verses the contemporary style of worship. By the end of modernity, the issues in worship have become more complex caused by the development of technology, a new generation of music, a new approach to evangelism through the seeker service as well as other cultural and generational issues.

These subjects are not the focus of this dissertation. The style of worship and the music which drives the contemporary movement today and other contemporary developments will not be the center of this research. The focus of research for this paper is a biblical and Wesleyan theology of worship. Every generation and each culture since the time of the Apostles have shaped worship to become relevant to their time and culture. This process is very appropriate to maintain a spiritual depth in worship for the community of faith. However, this process must be guided by biblical principles which will ensure its spiritual integrity into the historical Church and its Apostolic mission.

What does one think when someone talks about the subject of worship? What picture comes to mind? What was the first thing that came to mind, just now? Was it music, preaching, drama, personal needs being met, fellowship with friends, or a myriad other things? For many today, a feeling of frustration grips their thinking due to the many changes they have witnessed in their church on Sunday morning. Their frustration comes from the many stylistic changes to their worship experience. So what is the answer to this problem? It is simple and yet very complicated at the same time.

The simple answer is to develop worship from biblical principles and shape the liturgy so

that it is relevant to our culture. The complicated part is that most believe that their worship style is already biblical and relevant to their culture. It must be understood that style is not a biblical principle rather a generational issue. Now return to the question, what does one think of first when asked about worship? The correct theological answer is God. The Lord God Almighty must be the center of Christian worship. Yet, too often worship is reduced to a humanistic experience where "we" is the focal point. Worship is about God not the worshipper.

Since the Protestant Reformation and the influence of modernity, the Protestant churches of North America have moved away from worship that is God-centered and moved to an experiential model of worship. These two models of worship, God-centered being the Incarnational or Trinitarian Model and the Experiential Model being centered on the sermon, music, needs, and the like - will be explained in chapters to come. The result of this change in worship has had an impact that is far deeper than an issue over style. It has had a profound effect upon the theology of worship for the Protestant Church in North America.

The purpose of this dissertation will be to discuss this important change in the theology of worship during the modern era and to discuss this issue in the context of Methodism and its development in North America. The central issue for this discussion of Methodism will be to present John Wesley's theology of worship and show how his theology and practice of worship was changed during this period of time. This research will explore John Wesley's work on the subject of worship and show that he believed the preaching of the Word and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are to be the central focus of the liturgy for corporate worship on the Lord's Day. A study of Wesley's sermon, notes, letters, theological addresses, and hymns (by both John and Charles Wesley), it will be revealed that the Christ event is at the heart of Wesley's theology of worship. This paper will seek to demonstrate that Wesley believed that on the Lord's day in corporate worship the Word must be preached and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper

must be celebrated in order to fulfill the biblical command for Christian worship. Wesley believed this to be the biblical and tradition heritage given by the Apostolic Church of the first century. It was this tradition, Wesley believed, which laid the foundation for the theology and practice of corporate worship which guided the Church through the first centuries of Christianity. This is the foundation which must be maintained to remain connected to the historical faith in Christianity.

Methodism was a renewal movement under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley during the 18th century in England. During this time, the Church of England had reduced the frequency of the Lord's Supper to a yearly celebration in most local parishes. It was John Wesley's desire and passion to restore the sacrament to a weekly celebration for corporate worship in all the local parishes. His work toward this goal was finally reached by the end of his life, and today throughout the Anglican Church the Lord's Supper is celebrated in corporate worship. Despite Wesley's best effort, the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper in corporate worship within Methodism was not successful. The liturgy for Methodism in North America takes a different path and rejects Wesley's advice concerning this important theological issue.

This dissertation will begin by establishing a theology for ministry and show that the 1st century Church developed its theology of ministry upon the life and mission of Jesus Christ. The biblical foundations for a theology of worship will be discussed from a few key passages which will lay the groundwork for this study. The Old Testament passages will set a foundation that God is clearly the central figure for worship. The New Testament will build upon that foundation and offer a perspective which places the action of God in the work of Christ as the focus through which Christian worship will be centered. From there, one can discuss the models for worship which are in use today in most Protestant churches in North America. The conclusion reached is that a biblical theology of worship will show that the Incarnation or Trinitarian model is the only proper model for corporate worship.

From that vantage point, a Wesleyan theology will be developed. It will be shown that Wesley's theology of worship is in harmony with the Incarnational model. Wesley's work with the renewal movement in the Church of England and the liturgy he gave to the Methodist Church of North America fits the perfectly within the Incarnational model for worship. The last chapter will develop Wesley's theology of worship into liturgical movement for corporate worship with the context of Free Methodism. The liturgies for worship developed in this chapter will take the principles learned from this research and put together several orders of worship which are relevant to our culture and generation.

Another goal for this dissertation is to bring to discussion the theology of worship and how the Methodist and Wesleyan/Holiness denominations have neglected to embrace the teachings and practice of John Wesley on worship. The scope of this research will focus mainly upon the theology of worship and the style of worship within the Wesleyan Holiness traditions and the Free Methodist Church during the middle of the Modern Era. The research area will use the full context of American Methodism, but limit its focus on the holiness and revival movement that had a great impact on the development of worship within Free Methodism.

CHAPTER 1

THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY IN MISSION

The ministry of God's kingdom as defined by the life of our Lord Jesus Christ had a strong beginning through the leadership of the Apostles and the early Church Fathers. The work of the Church and its evangelical ministry were clearly understood as the responsibility of the laity. The place of their service was not in a church building or even in their weekly gathering for corporate worship and fellowship (*koinonia*), but in their world where they lived and worked.

As the centuries passed, the focus of ministry changed radically. The model of the early Church did not survive the changing world. The Church, as an organization became focused on self-preservation and self-glorification rather than on mission. The passion for the mission which was the hallmark of the early Church and its leadership was replaced by a desire to build and maintain an organizational structure which was focused inwardly. The result was devastating to the true work of ministry. The laity ceased in their efforts to minister the Gospel to the world and became supporters of a religious system which relied on a professional clergy to do the "real ministry." Each passing generation and century has continued in this direction with little interest in a return to the early Church model of ministry.

One of the most striking features of modernity is its ever-changing concept of ministry and the role of the Church in modern society. For example, the civic generation with their strong belief in the traditional evangelical style of worship where the sermon and the pastor are the central focus, to the boomer generation that is so self-centered and

places a strong emphasis upon the role of music in worship, has caused the centrality of Christ to be almost completely lost. Then we have the church growth movement with its ever-changing concepts of ministry and now the very popular "seeker service" movement, which is the latest twist on evangelism and outreach. These changes have not given the Church any better leadership to reconnect ministry to the laity and the passion which the early Church had for the mission God had given them. Greg Ogden helps with his insight at this point. He writes,

Historically the church has been entrapped in institutionalism. The institutional church resembles a corporation with the pastor as its head. Locked into a hierarchical structure, the clergy are ensconced at the pinnacle of the pyramid. They are the "experts" in religion. As a separated, elevated class, the clergy have acted as if only they are able to enter the realm of things spiritual. The clergy as a distinct caste have supposedly received a special unction and calling that enable them to have closeness to God unattainable by ordinary church members... Appropriating another image, we can describe the pastor as performing a solo act on the theater stage while the church members are the audience, never fellow actors. Laypeople passively warm a pew and place money in the offering plate to create the context for pastors to perform their ministry.¹

This model for ministry has become so engrained into the tradition of the protestant church, that it is seen as the only way ministry can function. It will take more than a renewal movement to bring about a more biblical model for ministry. It will take a "New Reformation" to bring about the kind of change which will place ministry into the lives of the people of God at all levels of the Church.

In a post modern world, it is the belief of some scholars and theologians, that the Church has a real possibility of returning to the early Church model for ministry. In order for this to occur, it is imperative to develop a biblical theology for ministry in mission where once again the ministry is returned to the people of God. The focus of this

¹Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 19.

paper is an apostolic view of ministry which understands the mission of the Church is for both the clergy and the laity to enter society at all levels to proclaim the good news of Christ and to meet the needs of the people.

When one begins to think about the theology of ministry in mission, one must first define what is meant by ministry. The context for this paper is Christian ministry, and the foundation for the understanding of Christian ministry is the story of God's saving actions as recorded in the Old and New Testament scriptures. The meaning of ministry is therefore understood as "God's actions in history"² which defines His mission as the redemption of humankind. In response to the grace of God, we enter the world as the ambassadors of His Kingdom to fulfill the mission He has given. The result Anderson says is that "this obedient response to God's ministry becomes our ministry which in turn, serves as a theological exposition of God's nature and purpose."³ At the core of God's nature and purpose is redeeming love for His creation. When that love becomes the foundation of a theology of ministry, focus in mission drives outwardly to the world rather than inwardly.

This paper is going to develop a theology of ministry in mission which is biblical in its foundation and Apostolic in its focus. Therefore this paper will have a secondary emphasis that will show how important it is for the Church have a proper theology of worship not only for its corporate worship experience but also how that relates to the mission of the Church.

²Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1.

³Ibid.

Ministry: A Biblical Foundation

Our culture has become a society of many special interest groups which has changed the American way of life. Society has moved to a more self-absorbed sense of individualism and a loss of community responsibility which was so prevalent in the early life of our culture. This change has had a major impact upon the American Church and how it understands the work of ministry within the Church. This is best seen in the way in which the Church (specifically the Protestant Church) has practiced the ministry of evangelism and outreach. During the Great Awakening, the method of evangelism was the tent revivals, and citywide crusades. In the 1960s, the church turned to bus ministries and mass evangelism. The boomer generation rebelled against many things in society and in the traditions of the Church. They rejected the traditional programs and eventually left the Church. The Church, now lead primarily by boomers, has adopted new methods of ministry which focus on music as a means of attracting new people and a philosophy of developing "seeker sensitive" worship services. The need for new methods is not at issue here but having a ministry model that is biblical. In modernity, the understanding of ministry was based on pragmatical principles for church growth not a biblical theology for ministry in mission. A biblical foundation for the theology of ministry is essential. The central theme of God's is the work of redemption for all humankind. In both the Old and New Testaments one finds the great theological truth of God's redemptive work and the importance of God's people in the mission of His reconciling grace. The central event of the Old Testament was the Exodus. It was through this event that Israel was to understand its purpose as a missionary people of God's redeeming grace to the world. Throughout the Old Testament the hand of God is seen shaping Israel as a mission people

to proclaim His work of redemption. The story of Jonah was a clear reminder to Israel of her purpose to proclaim the mercy of God. Like Jonah, Israel failed to grasp her role in the ministry of God's Kingdom.

What is important for consideration concerning a theology of ministry from the vantage point of the Old Testament is that God called Israel to serve as a ministering people to all the nations of the earth. When they later neglected to accept this responsibility the Lord sent His prophets to remind them to return to the covenant and their call as a servant people. In Isaiah 40-46, the prophet reminds Israel of its calling to be a servant people ministering the love and mercy of the Lord to others. God through Isaiah tells Israel, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6b, New International Version). This certainly defines the role of Israel in the context of the Kingdom of God and their mission in ministry. The scope of their ministry was to all people and nations as explained by the prophet Isaiah:

This is what the LORD says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people." And let not any eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree." For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant-- to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant-- these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Sovereign LORD declares--he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered. (Isaiah 56:1-8)

In this passage a principle of ministry is clearly defined; that the grace and mercy of God is for all humankind. The people of God are to be involved in this servant ministry as a blessing to all nations. Donald Messer writes concerning this passage of scripture:

Chosen by God as recipients of justice and mercy, the Israelites received the command to be the people of God amid others in order that God's grace, mercy, and justice might be made manifest. The prophets encouraged a missionary strategy of presence, Israel to be present as a witness of Yahweh among the nations.⁴

Another aspect of the ministry of God's grace and mercy in the Old Testament which shapes our theology of ministry is the compassion for the human needs of others. We see this understanding throughout the preaching of the prophets and in the pages of the Psalter. In the giving of the Law, the care for widows and orphans is clearly defined. In the prophets, this care is expanded to include the many needs of people in the world. In the Psalter, the call to compassion is included in acts of worship. In an expression of praise in worship, the psalmist declares,

Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds--his name is the LORD--and rejoice before him. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. (Psalm 68:4-8)

The reality of God's mercy and grace is to be lived out in the compassion of His people ministering to the needs of others. This understanding of compassion for the needs of others must be included in our theology of ministry.

The New Testament gives us a foundation to build upon three important theological points concerning the theology of ministry from the Old Testament. The first theological point is that God called all of Israel to be a people of mission. Secondly, that

⁴Donald E. Messer, *A Conspiracy of Goodness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 35.

their mission would include ministry to all peoples and nations; and thirdly, that their ministry would be to proclaim the mercy of God for salvation, and minister to the needs of others.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ completes the work of redemption for mankind. In the Gospel of John it is clearly proclaimed, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17) This is the grace of God, the full work of His atonement for the redemption of mankind. The central event of the New Testament is clearly the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. This event must be the foundation for a proper theology of ministry in mission. The crucifixion became a central principle of absolute necessity for the ministry of the leaders of the first century Church. The New Testament records a clear picture of the Church guided by a theology of ministry as mission, at all levels of its work: in worship, in *koinonia* (fellowship), discipleship making, and evangelism. The ministry of the crucified Christ was not only to the atoning sacrifice for man's redemption, but the means of His grace and mercy in all areas of the ministry of the Church. Our Lord's final command to the Disciples was to continue His work of ministry. At the end of Matthew's Gospel we read,

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The record of the early Church, as found in the Acts of the Apostles, gives us clear evidence that they were a people of mission, following God's call upon their lives.

The mission was to bring the message of redemption to a lost world, while at the same time developing a community of faith which would nurture and care for the redeemed, and provides a place of true worship centered upon the Christ event. The vision and leadership of the disciples moved the ministry of the Church beyond walls of the community of faith to the streets of Jerusalem, the surrounding communities and then to the entire world. This was the dynamic of the 1st century Church which lead it to greatly impact the world for Christ.

The New Testament records for us the theological basis of the ministry of Christ and the development of His ministry through the life of the Church. It is important therefore to gain from the New Testament a perspective that will guide to His truth as we develop our theology of worship, one that is inclusive of mission. As Donald Messer writes; "The Kingdom or Reign of God represents the overriding mission perspective of the New Testament."⁵

Building upon the Old Testament principles as stated earlier, the New Testament completes them and brings a sense of wholeness to the ministry of the Church as it reaches out to the world. The Acts of the Apostles record for us the history of the events following the ascension of Christ and the day of Pentecost. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter gave great leadership to the Church as he stepped into the streets of the city of Jerusalem to proclaim a message of repentance. Thousands were saved and added to the Church. This continued throughout the early days of the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles it speaks about their changed lives, that "they devoted themselves to the Apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts

⁵Donald E. Messer, *A Conspiracy of Goodness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 39.

2:42). In this passage of scripture, the heart of God's means of grace for mankind is seen as well as the significance of the role of the Apostles. This will be discussed in more detail later. It is here that the purpose of the clergy is seen. The teaching and the leadership of the Apostles in worship encouraged and strengthened the people to fulfill their calling in ministry. The whole of the New Testament is the record of the victory of Christ's redeeming grace and the ongoing work of His grace through His Church. As one thinks about the theology of ministry, it is important to be shaped by the scriptures to the centrality of Christ and his mission. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, "There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

As the centuries passed cultures changed and the world grew with its governments becoming more complex. The Church changed as well, leaving its original passion for the mission of God to becoming institutionalized and self absorbed. The ministry of the Church was no longer focused on the call of God given to them by Christ, but a ministry to keep the institution of their church government intact and growing. The Church in every century has seen great change. Some of the changes were for the better and some for the worse. This is a subject for another discussion. One of the changes which did adversely affect the Church was the eroding of the principle of mission. A biblical theology of ministry as mission must be recovered in the life of the Church.

Some believe that in post modernity, a true renewal to the vision of God can be realized for the Church today. In order for this to occur, Greg Ogden writes that one must "rediscover the church as a living organism, the body of Christ; church members

have been called out of the audience to become players on the stage. Everyone has a part in this play. Every believer is a necessary part of the drama that God is producing, the drama of salvation history.”⁶

The place to start that renewal is in corporate worship. Worship that is Christ-centered and where the congregation becomes participants in the action of Worship generates a corporate worship experience is truly Biblical. For it is in worship that all of life flows. Worship is where the body of Christ finds its spiritual strength for the work of ministry. In this pattern of worship, the church is connected with the 1st century church and discovers the heart of the mission of the early believers. They came together in fellowship to worship God through the Word and Table in order to be strengthened for the work of ministry. I believe that those early believers gained much of their spiritual strength to fulfill their call to ministry through their daily and weekly times of worship. This perhaps is what may be missing in many churches today throughout North America.

Ministry in Worship as Defined by the Work of Christ

A proper theology of ministry must include the work of Christ as it relates to the atonement. There are three areas of His ministry that should be considered. The first, is that He became the sacrifice which completed the work of the atonement. Second, that He equipped His disciples for the work of ministry, and third, He sent them into the world to minister to others the grace of God.

⁶Ogden, *The New Reformation*, 1.

Christ Our Sacrifice

The work of the atonement is central to our theology of ministry because it is the foundation of our covenant with God. In Genesis 3:15, God promises a savior who would atone for the sin of mankind. Since sin fractured the relationship between God and man, the work of the atonement is God's answer to man's sin. From the very beginning in creation, Adam and Eve enjoyed an intimate communion with God. Due to their sin, they were "banished from the Garden of Eden" (Genesis 3:23) where they had fellowship with God, and all mankind is now in need of the atonement to restore what was lost by sin. It was God's custom from the beginning to meet daily with Adam and Eve in the Garden at the close of the day. God ministered to Adam and Eve in a personal way. Ray Anderson puts it this way, "This means that God's revelation to humans was originally one of personal Word and gracious presence. This means that God's ministry is primal word of created love and grace for humanity."⁷ Therefore we can understand that at the very core of God is His desire to have a intimate relationship with mankind. The essence of God's ministry is found in the work of the atonement through which everyone has the privilege of gaining access to His very presence. The means of our intimate communion with God is the sacrificial atonement of Christ. Here is where the ministry of God becomes mission. Through His action of mercy to fulfill His promise for reconciliation, God sent his Son to be for us a sacrifice which would atone for all sin. This promise of atonement made in the book of Genesis is fulfilled by Christ as described in the Gospel of John. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). In Jesus Christ, we see the grace of God and His ministry defined as the mission of reconciliation and the context of that action to all generations. This was given in the new covenant which God has established with His Church.

⁷Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 6.

This new covenant, through God's leadership, calls everyone to a life of obedience to His love and grace. God has acted in love to bring His creation the opportunity to have intimate communion with Him. A proper response to the means of God's love and grace will restore our broken relationship with Him. The restored relationship will then produce a response in our living. We become the redeemed, the Church, called, equipped and sent to do the work of ministry in mission. Charles Van Engen, writing on the subject of the purpose of the local church says, "It is important for us to examine the purpose of the church's life in the world, as that is derived from the church's nature as a fellowship of the redeemed"⁸

The sacrifice of Christ is the fulfillment of the atonement, and through it is the means by which we can access the grace and mercy of God for the forgiveness of our sins. We also understand that the atonement of our sins is not the end of the means of God's grace. The full work of the atonement is to restore us to a holy relationship with God through the covenant of grace. Ray Anderson explains, "In covenant language, grace means the recovery of a relationship with the living God, not merely atonement from sin."⁹ The blood sacrifice of the Old and New Covenants represents the giving of life by the one sacrificed in order to give life to the one who is being redeemed. Ray Anderson goes on to say,

Blood is life, the scripture says, and it is life that is poured out not merely as an offering that removes sin, but in order that new life may be created. The atonement is thus grounded in a new, "life giving" relation with God. This life must be "given" in the context of the ex nihilo in order to restore person to God and to their own true humanity. The foundation for the atonement is thus grounded in the creation account itself, for it is out of the "deep sleep" of Adam that human life emerged as relation to God and to others.¹⁰

⁸Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 89.

⁹Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 58.

¹⁰Ibid.

At the heart of God's ministry to humankind was the sacrifice of His Son so that this reconciliation might be made complete. The human condition of alienation from his Creator has been bridged by the ministry of God in Christ. The grace and mercy of the atonement is secured by the covenant established by God through His redeeming action. The depth of God's love is realized in the Christ event, which is celebrated in worship each week by the Church as a response to His love and mercy. The Church celebrates the Christ event as the center of worship because of its life-changing nature. As the Apostle Paul declares, "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (Romans 6:22). The covenant between God and man is a dynamic ministry which becomes a perpetual action of God's grace and mercy when the sacrifice of Christ is central in the life of the worshipping community of faith. Worship is our response to the sacrificial love of God.

In Acts 2:42, the response of the early believers to the message of salvation is seen. Thousands of converts to Christianity were added to the Church daily. Under the leadership of the disciples, the ministry of worship was centered upon the teaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Table, prayer, and fellowship. This pattern became the heart principle for their theology of ministry in worship. Charles Van Engen states that "our vision of mission begins at the center, Jesus Christ, and is bound to the Word of God, proclaimed verbally and represented sacramentally."¹¹ The importance of this understanding cannot be stressed too strongly. The disciples knew that it was from both corporate and private worship that the Church would gain most of its strength to fulfill God's call to mission. Charles Van Engen goes on to say, "Like small waves, the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic community of believers spreads inevitably outward toward the world."¹² The New Covenant when realized in a dynamic relationship between God and His people produces a response that demands our

¹¹Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 101.

¹²Ibid.

obedience to minister to the needs of others.

Christ the Equipper

Jesus begins his public ministry after his baptism in the Jordan river by John the Baptist. Jesus then goes into the desert for a time of prayer and fasting. Returning to Galilee, he made Capernaum his headquarters to begin his preaching ministry. His first act of leadership was to call a group of men to be his disciples. It was the Jewish custom of that day for a Rabbi to gather a small group of men to teach and equip them in the Law. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus put a strong emphasis upon teaching and equipping his followers for the work of God. Jesus' leadership was more than an emotional or even an intellectual appeal to his followers. He wanted to enact a total transformation in the lives of the disciples. The Gospel of Matthew gives us the scene of Jesus calling his first disciples. He records it this way; "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen" (Matthew 4:18). Here it is learned that Jesus called them to follow him. His leadership style was that of mentoring, which meant he would teach his disciples about ministry through example. They would learn both by the traditional methods used by the Rabbis of that day and by watching their Master in ministry. They observed Jesus teaching the multitudes in the countryside, along with the ministry of compassion meeting the many physical needs of the people. They were with him in the Temple as he preached great sermons about the Kingdom of God. For over three years the disciples were being equipped for the work of ministry to which they had been called. Jesus taught them about servant ministry through the great miracles which touched the needs of many, and also by giving them tasks to perform as servants. A great example is seen when Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time. He had been teaching them about the cross and what would take place in Jerusalem in just a short while. As they approached Jerusalem, Jesus involves his disciples in the whole event.

Matthew once again records the event for us. It reads,

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, see, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. (Matthew 21:1-6)

The disciples became personally involved with Jesus in his journey to Calvary. Jesus was not only teaching them about ministry but was equipping them to be involved in servant ministry. Later in the week, Jesus takes them to a deeper level and, once again, shows them by example what servant ministry will be their calling. In the Gospel of John we find this story. John tells it in the following way:

So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" (John 13:4-9)

Servant leadership was very important for Jesus to teach his disciples concerning the ministry which they would soon be involved in. His great criticism of the Jewish leadership of the day was based upon their distance from the people of Israel and their disregard for the spiritual needs of the nation. Jesus shows us that leadership must engage with ordinary people in order to be able to minister to their spiritual needs and equip them for the work of ministry. The failure of that generation of religious leadership was that they misunderstood their role as leaders, to equip Israel to be the servant of God. That mistake has continued even into the life of the Church. The leadership of the Church in recent generations has also failed to equip the laity for the work of ministry. It

is essential that we look again at the example of Christ in this area. The spiritual leadership of the Church today must once again begin to equip the laity to become the servants of God, and minister to the needs of the world. Greg Ogden writing on this subject says: "An equipper's job is to build in people a belief that God has called them to ministry and to help them function in accordance with their identified call and giftedness."¹³ If the Church has any hope of a return to the principles established under the leadership of the Apostles, this model of Christ as equipper must be re-established in the leadership of the Church today.

Christ the Sender

The earthly ministry of Jesus powerfully changed the way the people of God would view their role in the world. In order to discover the role of the Church in our world, one must first look at the role that Jesus developed in his ministry. Shortly after Jesus was driven out of Nazareth, his home town, he went throughout Judea preaching and teaching in the local synagogues. In Luke's Gospel, he records for us what Jesus believed his role to be. Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43). He came to not only preach the good news, but to be the good news. His messages were not simply to bring about a new understanding of Judaism, but to bring eternal life.

Jesus lived out a theology of ministry in mission which moved the inner walls of the Temple and the synagogues to the world where people lived. The story of Zacchaeus and his encounter with Jesus shows us the very heart of the ministry which motivated the Lord. When Jesus told Zacchaeus that he was going to his house for dinner, the crowd was very displeased and complained that the Lord would go to a sinner's home. Jesus responded, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of

¹³Ogden, *The New Reformation*, 98.

Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:9-10).

When Jesus is looked at as the pattern, his message of salvation is seen as well as how his message is delivered. Jesus took his message and went into the world and proclaimed it among the people of need. The example does not end there. Jesus, after equipping his disciples, sent them into the world as well. In each of the synoptic Gospels, examples of Christ are found sending his disciples out into the world to do the work of ministry. In Luke's Gospel, it is recorded this way;

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Luke 10:1-2)

Just prior to sending them on this mission, Jesus had been teaching them about the cost of discipleship. In essence, he told them that to follow him meant to go into the world and minister to the needs of others. Throughout his earthly ministry, from the beginning to the very end, Jesus modeled ministry as mission. He also insisted that his followers would accept this as their call to ministry, one with a focus on mission.

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus gives his last command to the disciples who are recorded in the Gospel's of Matthew and John. In Matthew's Gospel, it is recorded for us "The Great Commission." In this account, Jesus tells the disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Here one sees the scope of his sending, which is all the world. In John's Gospel we see a different aspect of the sending. Here the story of Jesus with the disciples for a final meal together is found. In the midst of this meal, Jesus engages in conversation with Peter:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter

was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

Jesus was speaking to Peter, but the intent was for all the disciples. Ministry was to have a principle of compassion for the needs of people. Their sending was into all the world to preach the good news and to minister to the needs of their world as well. They were to "care for" and "tend to" the needs of others. When we develop a theology of ministry, it must be a mission to care for the needs of others both spiritually, emotionally, physically, and any other need that they may have.

Through the actions of the atonement of Christ, the ministry of God's grace is one of reconciliation for both our spiritual and physical wholeness. The Church must have a theology of ministry which reflects the work of Christ as a ministry of mission to all the world.

Ministry as the Apostolic Work of the Church

The early ministry of the Church is best understood as the work of the people under the leadership of the Apostles. Through the leadership of the Apostles, the believers were taught and sent into the world to do the work of ministry. The Apostles continued the work which Jesus has given them to do by training the laity and involving them in the ministry of the Church. This work included both their corporate worship of God and the ministry to the spiritual and physical needs of others. This Apostolic work of the Church continued throughout the early centuries of Christianity. It was not until the middle ages that this dynamic work of the Church which involved all of God's people began to change. It is the position of this paper, that the work of the Church must be returned to an Apostolic model where the clergy gives spiritual leadership and equips the laity in order for all to be involved in the work and mission of the Church.

In His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke often about the Kingdom of Heaven. In several parables He described what the Kingdom of Heaven would be like. From His

teaching is gained an important insight into the purpose of His Kingdom and the role which the Church is to fulfill in ministry. In one of those parables, Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough" (Matthew 13:33). What Jesus is illustrating here is that He wants the Church to impact the entire world with the Gospel. This can only be accomplished when all believers become trained in ministry and sent from the local congregation into the world as the ambassador's of Christ's Kingdom. This is how the Church, as the community of faith, becomes that "yeast" which Jesus spoke about in the parable. When this occurs, the Church becomes the expression of God's mercy and grace to the lost and needy of the world. This is what Jesus taught His disciples to be, spiritual leaders of the people of God, so that they would become the expression of love and mercy. The mission of the Church is thus understood as the very core of their life and purpose for being. The vision of God for the Church must be lived out in the lives of the believers through which the Gospel will then be given to every generation.

The Church is to be the avenue through which God brings his message of the atonement to our world. Ray Anderson explains it this way, "The Church is formed as the body of Christ in the world and continues to be the mystery of God's presence."¹⁴ This is where the Church's purpose becomes powerful in its effort to meet the needs of others. The message of love and forgiveness is expressed by the Church as the mystery of Christ to everyone. The Apostle Paul explains the work of this mystery to the Church at Colosse. He writes:

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Now I rejoice

¹⁴Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 169.

in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the of God in its fullness--the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. (Colossians 1:21-29)

The Apostle Paul describes the atonement as the work of Christ. His atonement is now a mystery being revealed through the ministry of the Church to reconcile the world to God. Ray Anderson goes on to say,

The Church as the body of Christ now lives between the cross and the return of Christ (*parousia*). The original sacramental relation of God to humanity through Jesus Christ is now represented through the enactment of life of the Church itself...It is in this sense that I suggest that the Church as the body of Christ is a sacrament of forgiveness and healing.¹⁵

The ministry of the body of Christ is sacramental in that it continues the work of the atonement of Jesus to the world. This, then, is the ministry of the mission of the Church and is empowered by the presence of God in His people. It is the powerful presence of God that changes the lives of people into a community of faith and this is sacramental in nature. The Apostle Paul writes of this presence to the Galatians; "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). It is in the sense of Christ's presence that the Apostle Paul finds the power to fulfill God's will for his life. This is his leadership to the early Church, "to live by faith" in Christ for the world.

There is an important question we need to discuss. How is this "mystery" realized in the body of Christ? This is not easily answered, but I would like to suggest one important way this "mystery" becomes real for the community of faith. In the Acts of the

¹⁵Ibid, 169-170.

Apostles we learned that at the center of the life of the Church was their corporate worship. Their worship was centered upon the Christ event with a balance on the teaching of the Word and the Sacrament of the Table of the Lord. The answer to our third question is complex, but I believe that a central part of the answer is found within corporate worship which is Christ centered. Ray Anderson's insight is helpful here. He writes; "The Church as the body of Christ is the sacrament of forgiveness and healing as the members share mutually in their common struggle and break the power of sin by mutual confession"¹⁶ This can only occur within the community of faith in worship. At the Table of the Lord, we find our greatest access to the forgiveness and grace of God. The early believers gained great spiritual strength as they gathered weekly for corporate worship. They met in prayer to receive the Word and the Sacrament of the Lord's Table in order to enter into the mystery of Christ's presence. It is through this kind of worship experience that the believers received the grace and power to do the work of ministry. Charles Van Engen explains,

God's grace drops us into the pond of the world to create ever-widening ripples. Our vision of mission begins at the center, Jesus Christ, and is bound to the Word of God, proclaimed verbally and represented sacramentally. Like small waves, the faith of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic community of believers spreads inevitably outward to the world.¹⁷

Worship is therefore, a crucial, if not the most important aspect, to the sacramental nature of the Church, where the "mystery" of Christ is revealed to the community of faith. It is the position of this paper that worship must be Christ-centered, meaning that it must be the incarnational model (this will be discussed in more detail later). When worship is Christ-centered, it brings glory to God and connects the community of faith with the presence of God. Richard Neuhaus writes of this mystery. He says, "The Christian mystery is the presence of Christ among his people, the reality of

¹⁶Ibid., 172.

¹⁷Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 101.

the Kingdom's presence because the King is present where two or three are gathered in his name."¹⁸ Christ becomes the light that reveals God's presence in worship as the community of faith celebrates His work upon the cross for our sins. The atonement then becomes realized in both a personal and corporate way.

This kind of worship is powerful and life changing. It is not centered around "me" and what I want but centers on God and His will. True worship is spiritual, yet in much of the American culture today, it has become humanistic and self-centered. Historical worship, that is Christ-centered has come to be called irrelevant and does not meet the needs of the worshipper. So it has been replaced with a new model which centers upon persons and their individual needs. What a mistake! The true reality concerning human need is that it is spiritual and can only be cared for by God's grace. The best way to access that grace is in the community of faith in worship. As Richard Neuhaus says, "In prayer, in intercession, in the water of baptism, and the bread and wine of Eucharist, in lifting our hearts in praise, we are dealing with the most real of worlds."¹⁹ This is the place where the worshipper will find God's forgiveness and grace.

The importance of biblical and historical worship will be developed in the next part of this paper. It will also show how John and Charles Wesley based their theology of worship on the Christ centered event.

¹⁸Richard John Neuhaus, Freedom for Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 137.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 147.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR WORSHIP

The most important activity of any congregation is their corporate act of worship. To glorify and praise God through worship is essential to the spiritual nature of the Church. Throughout the history of God's people in both the Old and New Testament times, His people have given expressions of praise in corporate worship as an act of thanksgiving for all the blessings the Lord has given. The psalmist expresses it well when he wrote;

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. (Psalm 95:1-7)

What great words of wisdom as the Church gathers for worship. These verses of scripture will certainly influence our theology of worship and our practice of worship as we develop a Wesleyan theology of worship to guide our liturgy for worship. This psalm gives us a rich heritage through we can see the theology of worship in the Old Testament. This Psalm is the *Venite* in the Book of Common Prayer. In the opening verse of this Psalm we are given an invitation to come to worship. The psalmist says, "O Come," which in the Latin means *Venite*. *Venite* is an invitation and in this context an invitation to come into the very presence of God. To place this Psalm in the context of temple worship we can gain a better understanding of its importance. The temple mount

covered a large area in the city of Jerusalem. Everyone that wanted to enter the temple mount had to ascend a large flight of steps leading upward through a gate in the wall. Upon entering through the gate, worshippers found themselves in the court of the Gentiles. All were welcome in this space, but to go beyond was the court only for Jewish women and then the court of Israel for Jewish men. Before entering the Temple itself there was the porch and then the Temple where the holy place and the holy of holies where only the priests could enter, each stepping a little closer to God's presence. In Temple worship, as explained in this Psalm, Israel is invited to come in a procession of ascent with each step getting closer to the very presence of God. In Temple worship, we recognize that there were many barriers to the presence of God, but when Christ became our sacrifice all those barriers were broken down. The "O Come," in the *Venite* is given to everyone in the New Covenant.

This Psalm also teaches us about an important characteristic of worship. We are invited to worship the Lord in "song with thanksgiving." Old Testament theology of worship teaches us an important lesson concerning the atmosphere for corporate worship. The psalmist uses several key words to describe the attitude of a true worshipper. The worshipper is to enter worship with a mindset of praise and thanksgiving for all the Lord has done. Music and praise are two of the expressions that the worshipper can use to express joy for the grace and mercy of God. Then the psalmist tells the worshipper he must "bow down." The worshipper is reminded that in worship God is the focus and the attitude should be humble and reverent. In the culture of that day, to "bow down" before someone was a sign of humility and surrender to that person's authority or position. It is with this attitude that the worshipper honors the sovereignty of God.

What is Worship?

The answer to the question, "What is worship?" is not too difficult when placed in the context of the corporate expression of praise for God that is described by the psalmist

in the passage cited earlier. It becomes more difficult when through the centuries each generation and the changing cultures attempt to make worship relevant to their experience of God. It has been difficult for God's people from generation to generation to find those timeless biblical principles which guide worship regardless of the cultural setting.

The liturgies of worship have changed through the centuries, from the geographical, the cultural and the ideological spectrums. There has been serious debate and even Church splits over the theology of worship and the practice of its liturgy. Today, culture is no different. The conflict over the style of worship has now been taken to a higher level. There are now the development of congregations, even within established denominations, for the purpose of the celebration of a single ideology of; age groups, musical style, evangelism, and a multitude of other reasons. This section of the paper is not going to attempt an analysis of these issues. This chapter will discover the biblical principles for a theology of worship. The first step is to discover some of the main principles given in the Old and New Testament of what it means to worship God. The next step is to discuss which model of worship best fits our theology of worship.

We now turn to the biblical foundations from which we can build a biblical theology of worship. It is the purpose of this section of the paper to develop a theology of worship which is biblically sound and is within a Wesleyan framework. This means we must move away from the Experimentalist Model and the "revivalist" style of worship to a model that is centered upon God. This is called the Incarnation or Trinitarian model¹ (the models for worship will be discussed in the next chapter). As this model guides worship, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit become the focus for worship rather than the preacher in the Experientialist Model. The Incarnational model provides a structure for worship which gives the worshiper a greater sense of God's

¹ James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community & the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 25-30.

mighty action in human history and reminds us of His grace in the work of the atonement.

In defining the term worship, Ralph Martin helps with an important insight. He writes; "Worship is the dramatic celebration of God in his supreme worth in such manner that his 'worthiness' becomes the norm and inspiration of human living therefore understanding worship in the way we have suggested delivers us from the tyranny of subjectivism...the chief aim of worship is God himself"² As Ralph Martin suggests if corporate worship removes the action of God in the atonement and His greatness as the central focus and replaces it with a humanistic focus, there the worship experience will become so subjective that it will become empty of any spiritual strength. Worship would cease to be a spiritual encounter with the Lord God Almighty and become a humanistic approach to spirituality. True spiritual worship must be God-centered. This truth is lived out in the Old Covenant through Jewish worship. Their worship was developed around the Jewish calendar of events celebrating through fast and feasts the actions of God. Their yearly celebration of the Passover, in remembrance of how God delivered their people from slavery, was the centerpiece of their calendar. Their Temple worship brought to life the atonement of God's forgiveness for Israel as a nation in covenant with the God of Abraham. This is how the Jewish people expressed true spirituality in worship. Their worship was a spiritual connection to the action of God in His atoning grace by a celebration in a sacrificial act which glorified the Lord their God.

When Jesus came and established the New Covenant, building upon Old Testament worship, he took worship to a deeper level. Jesus establishes an important principle for us in a conversation with a Samaritan woman. John's gospel says:

Sir, the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jesus claim that the place where we

²Ralph Martin, *The Worship of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 4-5.

must worship is Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem's. You Samaritans worship what you do not know, we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and now has come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshiper the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John: 19-24)

In this passage, Jesus offers insight that is most crucial concerning worship. True worship is to be directed toward God. In the New Covenant, Jesus places at the heart of Christian worship the command to worship God "in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) This truth is concerning the work of the atonement in which He would become the sacrifice. Corporate worship must be centered around the action of God through His grace in the atonement. The theology of worship must begin with this understanding as our foundational principle upon which our practice of worship is developed. This teaching by Jesus concerning worship should be viewed as a divine principle and not a cultural event. As Wesley comments on this passage, "The true worshipers shall worship The Father - not here or there only, but at all times and in all places."³ Jesus speaks to this woman's lack of understanding of true spiritual worship. He takes the opportunity to teach her the principle of worship which would be established through the New Covenant. The New Covenant would provide atonement for all humankind and worship would no longer be centered in Jerusalem and the temple but would be a spiritual enterprise for all cities and its power would flow from Calvary.

The Old Testament Meaning

Christian worship has its roots in Judaism and the Old Testament helps us find some of the principles necessary as a foundation for our theology of worship. There are several important lessons from the Old Testament which are essential for our biblical

³ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 4 vols.; (Salem, MA: Schmul Publishers, 1976), 4: 222.

theology of worship.

First, it is in the pages of the Torah that we discover the God of our worship. We learn that he is the creator and sovereign Lord of all the earth. In the book of Exodus, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments by which Israel is to be in covenant with the Lord. In these verses we learn an important concept of worship. We read;

and God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God. (Exodus 20:1-5a)

Here it is discovered from the Torah the expectation which God demands from his people, as a worshipping community. It is very clear from this passage that God is placing Himself in the highest priority of Israel's religious life. He is the one who brought them out of slavery and made a covenant with them to be their God, and they would be His people. They are to worship Him only. There is only one focus for their worship; and that is God. Wesley comments on this passage,

The first commandment is concerning the object of our worship, Jehovah, and him only, "thou shalt have no other gods before me" - the Egyptians and other neighboring nations, had many gods, creatures of their own fancy. This law was prefixed because of that transgression; and Jehovah being the God of Israel, they must entirely cleave to him, and no other, either of their own invention or borrowed from their neighbors. The sin against this commandment, which we are most in danger of, is giving that glory to any creature which is due to God only.⁴

It is clear that worship demands our highest attention and deepest commitment to the Lord our God. Morgenthaler says it this way, "How important is worship to God? Throughout both Old and New Testaments worship is clearly the most important thing God's people can do. It is their first and ultimate calling."⁵ God is the one who is to be

⁴Wesley, *Explanatory Notes* 4 vols., 1: 264.

⁵Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 38.

worshipped, not liturgy, not the preacher or the proclamation. The focus should not be on ourselves, our needs or whatever we can gain from worship. Worship is not about us, but about God.

The second insight from the Old Testament that gives us helps is a word study of the phrase "bow down." A close look at this Hebrew word and how it is used provides us with an understanding of the nature and the purpose of worship. We find in the Old Testament the most important word for worship is *shachah*. The primary meaning is to bend or bow down. It implies an action of humility, submission, and adoration. Wilson comments on the meaning of *shachah* by saying it is for one "to bow down, to bow down before God, to worship, to pay adoration."⁶ This concept of worship can be seen throughout The Old Testament and in many Psalms of the Psalter. The Psalter calls the worshipper again and again to come before the Lord and bow down in worship to bring words of praise and adoration unto the Lord. The final Psalm in the Psalter speaks of praising God and gives it like a grand finality and says, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD" (Psalm 150:1).

In Psalm 150, there is a phrase that will help us as we look at our final lesson from The Old Testament. It reads; "Praise him for his mighty deeds" (Psalm 150:2a). Worship is not simply the demand of a jealous god, but it is to be the expression of adoration and praise for all that the Lord our God had done and will do according to the covenant he has given. Robert Webber discusses this concept in some detail. He writes:

At the heart of the relationship between God and Israel expressed in the public meeting at Mount Sinai was the Covenant. The Covenant was an agreement or treaty between God and his people Israel. Frequently, the terms of this relationship were expressed in shortened form in a brief formula, such as, "I will be their God, and they will be my people" [see Jeremiah 31:33;cf. Genesis 17:7; Leviticus 26:12 ; Deuteronomy 29: 10-13 ; Ezekiel 37: 27]. God then set forth the terms of the agreement - The Ten Commandments and other stipulations of the Book of the Covenant...

⁶William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981), 490.

The covenant was sealed by an act of sacrificial worship in which all the people participated... In this way the covenantal nature of worship was laid down in the establishments of the covenant itself. Through worship, Israel was to maintain its identity as the people of God, for it was in worship that Israel continually recalled and celebrated its relationship to their God.⁷

The significance of worship, as Robert Webber points out is the spiritual connecting point between the people of God and God Himself. In worship, the covenant is empowered into the life of the Church and gives a spiritual strength for God's people to do the work of ministry. This short look at the Old Testament was for the single purpose of gaining a proper foundation for our understanding of worship. That proper foundation is an understanding that worship is to center upon God and His action in the atonement. An exhaustive study of the Old Testament on the subject is beyond the scope of this paper, but this brief look has given us the primary focus for our research.

The New Testament Meaning

This principle of remembrance and sacrifice will have a profound effect upon worship under the New Covenant for the first century church. Webber goes on to say, "Biblical worship is rooted in an event, established in a covenant, and characterized by the centrality of God's and the ratification of the covenant by a sacrifice."⁸ Under the Old Covenant the idea of sacrifice begins very early after the Fall. One reads in the book of Genesis; "Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Able and his offering"(Genesis 4:4). The idea of sacrifice becomes important for God's people when dealing with the idea of the forgiveness of sin and to remain in the covenant relationship which God had established. From Adam's offspring

⁷ Robert Webber, *Worship Old & New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 22-23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

to Abraham and his descendants the sacrifice was central to worship. The history of salvation from Genesis 3:15 to the Gospel of John 3:16, the concept of sacrifice becomes the central focus which keeps worship God centered. We read on in Webber's insights:

In the sacrifices of the tabernacle God gave the Israelites acts that symbolized their approach to God. A fundamental sign of relationship with God was expressed in the sacrifices of the tabernacle and in the very setting of time, space, and ritual in which these sacrifices were accomplished. A central feature of the entire sacrificial system was the notion of atonement, expressed particularly in the sacrifices on the day of atonement...Just as the concept of the of the sacrifice was central to the worship of Israel, so the concept of sacrifice is central to the worship of the church. Hebrews clearly sets forth the sacrificial nature of the work of Jesus Christ [see especially chap. 9]. Jesus Christ is the new propitiation (Rom. 3:25). He stands between God and the covenant people. His sacrifice is for them. He is their covering, their atonement⁹

For worship under the new covenant the worshipper's act of sacrifice is participation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who became for all the blood atonement. In the book of Hebrews it says; "For this reason Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise eternal inheritance - now that he died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Hebrews 9:15). The new covenant which Christ established was based on a new sacrifice which was provided by the sacrifice of his life for the work of the atonement. The means for that sacrifice to be administered to God's people would also change and take a different approach. It would be realized through the sacrament of the Eucharist celebration in public worship by God's people. The 1st century church was instructed in worship by the teaching found in the Didache. "On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure."¹⁰

This passage teaches a very important New Testament understanding of the purpose of worship. The Old Covenant was inadequate to bring sinful man as a clean and

⁹ Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 25.

¹⁰ Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 157.

pure vessel into the presence of God where he could offer intimate spiritual worship. With the sacrifice of Christ, one can enter into God's presence clean and pure from sin. The question that must be asked then, 'How can we appropriate his sacrifice for our sins?' The early Christians discovered, as the Didache taught, it was by the sacrament which Christ himself blessed and gave to the church.

Through the celebration of the Eucharist, the Christian is able to make a living encounter with the Lord who died and rose again, to join the offering of himself and his life to that of Christ, who enfolds it in his own and presents it to his father. Through this encounter and through his reception of Christ in Holy Communion, he is able to enter into and share in the paschal mystery of Christ.¹¹

This is in part what Jesus meant when he spoke to the Samaritan woman about worship. He said, "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). The New Testament word for 'know' is 'oidajuev' and for both the Old and New Testament it carries the same theological meaning. It is to "be intimately acquainted with,"¹² to have deep knowledge or relationship with someone. A deeper study in John's Gospel of this idea of knowledge in worship reveals an important understanding that the sacrifice of Christ is the means by which intimacy would occur. Seesemann writes; "This knowledge is not abstract. It is a knowledge of the goal and purpose of his mission, and according to John's gospel 8:55 it takes concrete shape in his obedience to the Word and commandment of his father. His union with God explains his knowledge of the divine plan of salvation which is fulfilled in his mission, and especially in his death."¹³ Jesus became the sacrifice by which the new covenant would remain effective for all who would believe. The early church celebrated this historical event as the centerpiece of their weekly worship. The issue that

¹¹ Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarhold, *The Study of Liturgy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 26.

¹² William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 558.

¹³ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Fredrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament* 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1967.), 5: 118.

is important for discussion is to understand the spiritual significance of Eucharist worship. From the Wesleyan perspective it is the nature of Eucharist worship which is so important. It is here that the worshipper experiences the ordinary means of God's grace.

Wesley writes:

The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins, and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: his gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection. Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with who, the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service.¹⁴

It is also important to point out that through Eucharist worship the worshipper *koinonia* experiences the deepest intimacy with God. Perfection for Wesley was the pure love of God which leads a person to the deepest spiritual relationship between God and Man. It is worship where one can best express that love and intimacy with God. Wesley answers the question of worship this way:

God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Yea and this is enough: we ought to employ the whole strength of our mind therein. But then I would ask, what is it to worship God, a spirit and in truth? Why it is to worship him with our spirit; to worship him in that manner which none but spirits are capable of. It is to love him, to delight in him, to desire him, with our heart and mind, and soul, and strength.¹⁵

The point is that the practice of worship must be at the spiritual level where God is primary and everything else is in its proper place. As Tim Keller says, "Worship is pulling our affections off our idols and putting them on God."¹⁶ We discover through the New Testament those essential principles which are needed for a theology of worship which will shape our practice of worship. The New Testament reveals that worshipping

¹⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* 15 vols. (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 7:148.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5: 305-306.

¹⁶ Tim Keller, "Worship," *Leadership* .vol.15 no.2 (1994): 16-23.

communally must always be God-centered and proclaim the sacrifice of Christ through the celebration of the Eucharist. As White says,

What Christ has done in the past is again given to the worshiper to experience and appropriate in the present time. It is a way of living with the Lord. The Church presents what Christ has done through the worshipping congregation's re-enactment of these events. The worshiper can re-experience then for his or her own salvation.¹⁷

It also speaks of the importance of *Kerygma*. *Kerygma* is biblical preaching and is given to the church as essential for worship, because it is the message of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. Paul writes to the Church at Corinth; "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). *Kerygma* is translated in the New Testament as both preaching and/or message. *Kerygma* should not be understood as the act of preaching. It is the message that is proclaimed by God's preacher, the message of the cross and this is what the New Testament means by *kerygma*. Friedrich explains it this way, "At the heart of the New Testament *kerygma* stands the lordship of God. Preaching is not a lecture on the nature of God's kingdom. It is a proclamation, the declaration of an event."¹⁸ Friedrich goes on to say that preaching in The New Testament was the proclamation of the historical events of the life of Christ; his death, resurrection and ascension. He goes on to say, "The reality of the resurrection constitutes the fullness of the early Christian *kerygma*. This is a fact which cannot be apprehended like other historical events. It has to be continually proclaimed afresh."¹⁹ The *kerygma*, the preaching of the gospel, became a central focal point in worship which made it as important for the early Christians as the Eucharist.

¹⁷James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 21.

¹⁸Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 3: 710.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 3: 711.

Therefore the Eucharist and the *kerygma* became the heart of worship for the early church around which the people responded to the sacrifice of Christ and his Word delivered. As Chichton writes:

Because it is God who always takes the initiative, Christian worship is best discussed in terms of response. In worship we respond to God and this is true of the whole of liturgy, whether it be praise, thanksgiving, supplication, or repentance, whether it be Eucharist or baptism, or liturgical prayer or the celebration of the church's year. If this is so, ownership must be seen in the context of saving history which is the record of the divine initiative.²⁰

It is the actions of God by which we are given the opportunity of salvation and through worship man responds to God for his acts of mercy. We respond to the Word of God as it is preached by acts of obedience through prayer and confession, both in the practice of corporate and private worship. Through the celebration of the Eucharist we respond to Jesus in obedience to his command and we respond to him at a deep spiritual level in a personal way. As Webber writes; "Worship is a dramatic enactment of the relationship that we have with God a relationship that stems from historical events."²¹ It is through true, spiritual worship, the engaging our Christian heritage in worship, that we will find that special avenue into the very presence of God. In all of human history there has been the deep philosophical question about the purpose of life and why we exist. From the very beginning, mankind has expressed itself in worship trying to find meaning and purpose. As Martin says, "The chief aim of worship is God himself."²² In order for worship to have its intended purpose fulfilled, it cannot be void of its historical heritage or a relevant meaning for today. Wainwright gives an interesting insight. He writes;

Worship is, in fact, a thread that is always being woven into the church's historical tapestry. At any given period and place, the liturgy must be seen together with doctrine, evangelism, and holiness of life as composing the present and local image of the church. The details and style of that picture

²⁰Jones, Wainwright, Yarhold, *The Study of Liturgy*, 9.

²¹Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 73.

²²Martin, *The Worship of God*, 5.

will vary with time and space.²³

This is an important aspect to our theology of worship. It is here that our worship will become relevant to each generation. Worship must first consider God and the teachings of scripture, and second, how worship can be expressed by any given generation.

Peterson helps us with the first part. He writes;

There is an important theological context to be considered. We need to ask what role God plays in the engagement or relationship which is true and acceptable worship. At one level we must discover from his own self-revelation in scripture what pleases him. We cannot simply determine for ourselves what is honoring to him.²⁴

We must fulfill this basic principle which is foundational from Genesis and the teaching of the Ten Commandments to the example of Jesus our Christ which constantly lived to honor his heavenly father. It is only then that the expression of our worship can be truly relevant and have spiritual meaning. Worship must be "contemporary" in the sense that each generation of Christians need to find that precious presence of the Almighty as they worship him in Corporate Celebration. The very life of the body of Christ flows from its worship. It must be dynamic and meaningful to both God and his people. Since worship is the essential activity by which the church will engage with God, we must have a clear understanding what worship is.

As we conclude our discussion on the theology of worship, let us remember that the focus of worship is God himself. Let us also remember that worship is to be dynamic and relevant for the people of God. This is accomplished when God remains the central focus as we come together for the purpose of glorifying him. William Greathouse wrote that "We do not go to worship for what we can get, but rather what we can give, to give glory to God, to honor him, magnify and bless his name... We do not worship to be entertained or even educated, but we engage in no activity more fulfilling or edifying, or

²³Jones, Wainwright, Yarnhold, *The Study of Liturgy*, 548.

²⁴David Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 19.

more thrilling, than that of true worship."²⁵ For in worship our covenant with God becomes realized in a fresh and relevant way. There is no other means through which His grace and His presence is conveyed than in corporate worship which is God-centered.

In summation, the principle discovered from this study of the biblical foundation for a theology of worship will be of significant importance. The study of both the Old Testament and the New Testament has been very brief but extremely important because of the particular passages we have studied. The principles we have gained from this study will be the foundation from which we will be able to understand the development of worship throughout the centuries of Christianity. In order to develop a biblical theology of worship, we must be guided by this foundation and avoid the pitfalls of generational and cultural thinking found in modernity. This will be discussed with in the next chapter.

The key principle found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is critical to this task. It is this: that corporate worship is a celebration of the action of God on behalf of humankind through the atonement. The liturgy of worship is the retelling and the reenactment of the atonement through which the worshipper comes into the very presence of God. In the Old Covenant that atonement was through the sacrificial system provided in Temple worship. Jewish worship centered upon God's saving action which brought them out of slavery and into the Promised Land. The critical understanding in Jewish worship allowed each generation through "remembrance" in the Passover meal to connect to the original deliverance. In Temple and Synagogue worship we find a very important connecting point for worship in the New Covenant. The sacrificial system of Temple worship and the teaching of scriptures in the Synagogue become the framework for the liturgy of the Christian worship. From this the early Christians developed their pattern for worship and by the end of the 1st century; all of Christianity followed this

²⁵ William Greathouse, "The Present Crisis in our Worship," *The Preachers Magazine*, vol. 65 no. 2, 6.

form of worship.

The theology of the New Testament offers the atonement through the sacrifice of Christ and in worship we gain that very presence of God through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This is the principle which must be carried into the theology of worship today. The liturgy for Christian worship must begin here.

CHAPTER 3

THE MODELS FOR WORSHIP

The Church today faces many challenges. Cultural and generational needs are a powerful influence on the ministry of the Church. Corporate worship, its style and practice, is of the highest concern because it is the central event in the Church's life. The liturgy for corporate worship, from the early days of Christianity, has been a work in progress. By the end of the 4th century, John Chrysostom helped to establish a liturgy that guided the Church through the centuries. His work is called "The Divine Liturgy." He developed his liturgy using the teachings of worship from the Acts of the Apostles, The Didache, and the early traditions of the Church, led by the Apostolic Fathers. Most of the liturgies today, especially the Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran have been influenced by John Chrysostom's work. There have been many changes to the liturgy for worship over the centuries with the influence of many cultural and generational adaptations. Most of the changes during the last century, in North America have been cultural and generational in nature. The changes were made, not based on biblical or historical research, but on the trends of the day. The change that perhaps affected worship more than any other development in Christian history began as a result of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation began by asking some serious questions about the theological nature of salvation and the role of the Church as it relates to man's redemption. As the Reformation gained momentum, very little would be left untouched by its probing questions. The theology and practice of worship is examined as well. By the time of the Reformation, Roman Catholicism had almost eliminated the preaching of

God's Word during corporate worship. The Reformers placed a strong emphasis upon preaching and made it the centerpiece in Protestant worship. The Reformation attempted to correct what they saw as an error by Roman Catholicism, which began a theological shift in corporate worship from a focus on the Christ event and the sacrament of the Lord's Table to a sermon centered worship experience. The Church in our post modern world continues to struggle with this concern. This issue is so sensitive that the Church is still polarized by the subject. There is the great tension between those who practice high church liturgy and the sacramental life over against those who believe in low-church worship with its emphasis on preaching and freedom of expression. There is the conflict over corporate worship being traditional with its love for the hymn book against those wanting contemporary worship who desire a musical style more reflective of modern times. The Church growth movement added another dimension to the conflict, with its emphasis on growth. Church growth was guided by strategies that even touched and changed the liturgies of worship to appeal to the unchurched. Now entering into the next century, the list continues to grow and the theology of worship is deeply affected. With all of these issues, there seems to be little consideration for a biblical understanding of worship and a historical appreciation of our heritage in worship which connects us to the Church throughout Christian history.

The many issues connected to worship and the discussions on style of worship are important, but they are not a central issue for this paper. The worship wars are more cultural and generational in nature rather than theological in scope. The critical question for discussion regards the focus of our worship? Since the Protestant Reformation through the modern era, the center of worship has moved to a humanistic view with an experiential focus. The remainder of this chapter will briefly describe the three major theological models for worship. These models will help our understanding and give us a larger framework for a proper theology of worship. The result of this study will show that the proper focus of worship is God. The Trinitarian or Incarnational Model,

celebrating the Christ event, is the best way for the Church to express its worship of God. Let us now look at the three models for worship.

The Unitarian Model

It has been discussed already that within the Protestant Church there are many styles of worship. The question that each of the models must answer is how should humankind worship God? The Unitarian model is very humanistic in its approach to worship. Worship is all about what the worshipper does: going to church, singing, praying, giving, and praising God. James B. Torrance says of this model, "Worship is what we do before God."¹ Worship is more about the worshiper and his or her action than about God and His action of grace. Torrance goes on to say, "In Theological language, this means that the only priesthood is our priesthood, the only offering our offering, the only intercession our intercessions."² This model does not express its faith in the Son of God as our mediator for salvation. This is explained in a diagram given by Robert Redman (see in the Appendix).

This model is considered to be liberal and not within the evangelical camp due to its humanistic focus. It does not have a Christological view of salvation and has a weak position regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. As the model shows, God the Father has the same relationship to every person as he had with Jesus and the Apostle Paul. What this model teaches is that at the center of worship is our response to God, our actions not God's. This model must be completely rejected for a sound theology of worship.

The Experiential Model

The Experiential Model became fully developed and widely used during the

¹James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community & the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 20.

²Ibid.

modern era. This model has its roots in the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation brought about great reform to the Church and opened the way for many changes of Church doctrine and expression of faith. The theology of worship was not left untouched by the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformers were trying to correct the theological issues of salvation and faith which had become polluted during the medieval period. Their approach was through scholastic thought which birthed a fundamental approach to scripture. Robert Webber explains,

The Reformation (1500-1750) was preceded by a new philosophy, nominalism. Nominalism insisted that truth is not found in an objective institution but in the mind. This philosophy weakened medieval Roman Catholic institutionalism and resulted in an emphasis on the individual and his or her mind. The Bible became the object of study that could now be interpreted by individuals who were in conflict with previous institutional understandings. This Scripture-driven approach to Christianity fueled the Protestant faith. It also accounts for the rise of denominationalism.³

The Protestant Reformation placed such an emphasis upon personal faith that, in time, accountability to the community of faith was weakened and the theological view of corporate salvation became meaningless. With the new emphasis on *sola scriptura* and added to that the new philosophy of individualism, the authority of interpretation was displaced from the body of believers and placed in the hands of individuals. This approach to faith eventually affects the theology of worship as well. By placing a strong emphasis on the individual, God will be replaced as the central focus of worship. God is no longer the focus of worship; rather the individual experience becomes the center. Robert Webber goes on to say,

The primary problem we evangelicals have inherited from the Enlightenment is its emphasis on the foundational nature of scripture. The church has from its very beginning confessed that Jesus Christ is the foundation of faith: "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.3:11). This foundation of

³Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 15.

Christianity is the incarnation of God into our humanity to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves: Defeat the powers of evil and restore the creation in the new heavens and the new earth. It was during the Enlightenment that the foundation of the Christian faith shifted from the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ to the centrality of the Bible. Theology shifted from trust in Christ to trust in the Book. Therefore, the first question we must address as evangelicals in a postmodern world is this: Do we believe in a book or a person?⁴

Robert Webber gives us a great summation of the result of the Reformation upon the theology of worship. His question is one to be answered to develop a biblical theology of worship. The Experientialist Model, by its practice has placed its faith in a book, through the sermon. It is the belief of this model that through the preaching of the Word the worshipper would come to an experience of God through repentance at an altar of prayer. The means of God's grace does not come through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper but through a response to the preaching of the Word.

The critical question must be asked. Is this the correct approach to God's presence in worship? Robert Webber would argue against this position because it places too high an emphasis upon the sermon and subsequently upon the preacher. His approach, as is the Acts of the Apostles, is for a balanced view of the Word and Table in worship.

The Reformation opened an avenue for which most of the new denominations used to change the historical liturgy of worship from a Christ-centered celebration to a sermon-centered worship service. By the time of the Modern era, most of the Protestant denominations have completely changed their liturgy for worship to reflect their own theological views. Many denominations took up the banner for "free worship" which deleted all creeds, written prayers, liturgical readings, and the Christian calendar. The reading of Scripture was reduced to the passage which the preacher used as his or her text for the sermon. In the Experiential Model, the sermon becomes the center of the worship experience. During the Great Awakening in North America, the Experiential Model was used in the revivalist movement which swept the country. By the end of the Great

⁴Ibid., 45.

Awakening, churches all across North America had become energized by camp meeting preaching and the experience of revival. The center of worship for a large number of denominations not only became the sermon, but the preacher.

James B. Torrance explains the Experientialist Model in a diagram (see in the Appendix A). In essence he explains that the work of Christ is experienced by the community of faith through the *Kerygma* (in preaching) and then the proper response to the grace of God is faith in repentance.⁵ In this model, we gain God's grace as the result of our response, in a crisis moment, to the preaching of a sermon for the purpose of our repentance at an altar of prayer. The center of worship in this model is God revealed through preaching and then the sinner responding by faith through repentance. In an explanation of this model, James B. Torrance writes; "The event of the cross, through the event of preaching [the *Kerygma*] gives rise to the event of faith."⁶

This model has several theological problems. There are two which impact the thinking for this paper. First, that the sermon and the preacher become the center of focus in worship, and second, the means of grace is no longer centered on the Christ event. The worshipper becomes focused on the blessings of God's grace rather than on God himself. In order to have a Christ-centered worship experience it is imperative to use the Incarnational or Trinitarian Model.

The Incarnational Model

The corporate worship of the Early Church was Christ-centered. From the earliest days of the Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the liturgy was consistently Christological. The Incarnational Model places the Trinity as the focal point and the Christ event at the center of worship. Torrance once again explains this Model by a diagram (see Appendix A). He teaches that God the Father comes to humankind through

⁵Torrance, *Worship, Community & the Triune God of Grace*, 26-28.

⁶*Ibid.*, 27.

Jesus the Son of God who is the mediator of grace. The worshipper participates in that grace, which is the work of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷ In this view of worship, the worshipper brings honor and glory to God by a participation in the work of Christ, through his death, resurrection and ascension.

In this Model, the focus of worship is not the experience of God's grace but God Himself. The first principle in worship is God and then comes the proper response which will open an entrance into His presence. The only way into God's presence is through the sacrifice of Christ. The worshipper participates in His sacrifice as we celebrate the Christ event in worship. In God's presence there is always forgiveness, grace and mercy.

James B. Torrance, speaking to this, says,

The good news is that God comes to us in Jesus to stand for us and bring to fulfillment his purposes of worship and communion. Jesus comes to be the priest of creation to do for us, men and women, what we failed to do, to offer to the Father the worship and the praise we failed to offer, to glorify God by a life of perfect love and obedience, to be the one true servant of the Lord. In him and through him we are renewed by the Spirit in the image of God and in the worship of God in a life of shared communion.⁸

As James B. Torrance explains, God has acted in His wholeness, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to offer us entrance into His presence to worship Him and receive the means of grace. The worship God calls us to is truly Trinitarian. In his work on the Trinitarian Model, James B. Torrance writes:

The second view of worship is that it is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father. It means participating in union with Christ, in what he has done for us once and for all, in his self-offering to the Father, in his life on the cross. It also means participating in what he is continuing to do for us in the presence of the Father and in his mission from the Father to the world... This view is Trinitarian and incarnational. It takes seriously the New Testament teaching about the sole priesthood and headship of Christ, his self-offering for us to the Father and our life in union with Christ through the Spirit,

⁷Redman, Lecture from "Theology and Ministry of Worship," 15 April 1996.

⁸Torrance, *Worship, Community & the Triune God of Grace*, 14.

with a vision of the Church as the body of Christ.⁹

What the Experiential Model fails to understand is that worship which centers upon anything other than God, cannot enter into His presence and the result is that His grace and mercy will not be experienced. Worship must be Incarnational, meaning God-centered as Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, with a liturgy that is Sacramental. James B. Torrance explains that:

Worship is fundamentally sacramental, but in a way which enshrines the gospel of grace-that God our Father, in the gift of his Son and the gift of the Spirit, gives us what he demands-the worship of our hearts and minds. He lifts us up out of ourselves to participate in the very life and communion of the Godhead, that life of communion for which we were created. This is the heart of our theology of the Eucharist, of Holy Communion. So we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into the community, the one body of Christ, which confesses faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which worships the Father through the Son in the Spirit. We are baptized into a life of communion. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the grammar of this participatory understanding of worship and prayer.¹⁰

This understanding is Biblical and has its roots deep into the history of the Early Church. In order to recover what was the theology of worship of the holy catholic Church, a return to the Incarnational Model is critical. Worship is not about whom we are and our personal needs, but about God. Worship is not about a sermon which teaches us of Jesus, but God of whom our high priest leads us to. James B. Torrance gives of a closing thought on this subject. He writes:

The real agent in worship, in a New Testament understanding, is Jesus Christ who leads us in our praises and prayers, "the one true Minister of the sanctuary" (Hebrews 8:1, 2). He is the High Priest who, by his one offering of himself for us on the cross, now leads us into the Holy of Holies; the holy presence of the Father in holy communion...the Trinitarian view sees the Lord's Supper as the supreme expression of all worship.¹¹

Here is the most significant difference between the Experiential Model and the

⁹Ibid., 21-22.

¹⁰Ibid., 22.

¹¹Ibid., 23.

Incarnational Model. The Experiential Model seeks the presence of God and the means of grace through the preaching of the Word. The Trinitarian Model seeks the presence of God by coming to Him through Incarnational worship which celebrates the Christ event through the sacrament of the Lord's Table and the preaching of God's Word. The question need to be answered: what do we mean that the Incarnational model is centered upon the Christ event?

The Christ Event

Jesus Christ has been the central focus of worship from the very first gathering for worship by the Church. Christian worship has maintained a God-centered focus through the Christ event by celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Table, the teaching and preaching of the Word, through the lectionary readings and the celebration of the Christian calendar. The importance of the lectionary readings is that they center around the Gospels lessons which teaches us about the life and ministry of Christ.

In Modernity, the worship service became an experiment for the church growth movement to find the best means to grow the church in size. Using the Experiential Model, the central focus of worship changed from the sermon, to special events, to music and to whatever trend seemed to come along. This kind of worship is very humanistic and makes it very difficult for the worshipper to gain entrance into God's presence. Sally Morgenthaler gives us insight to this understanding. She writes:

True worship is easy to talk about but difficult to come by in the self-made world of church success. Too often we worship our methodologies while feigning devotion to God. And when we do this, our pride and self-reliance belie humanism more secular and infinitely more grotesque than anything we abhor in the world. In the midst of the present evangelical worship void, we need to be asking ourselves these questions: Can we who have become so self-reliant submit all that we are, all that we know, and all that we can accomplish to God's will?¹²

¹²Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 36.

Morgenthaler clearly defines the real problem of the Experiential Model and how modern thinking has exploited that weakness. Self-centered culture is easily drawn to an experiential worship service that is humanistic in nature. In this worship experience, needs are magnified and the will of God is pushed aside, if not erased all together. So the answer to her question is that one cannot bridge past the worship void in the Experiential Model and find God's will in order to fulfill His call.

True worship does not enable our self-centeredness but brings us to a place of thankful praise for God's work of grace through which we become obedient to His will for our lives. True worship is Christ-centered. Robert Webber states,

In both the Old and New Testament, God's purpose in revealing himself, in redeeming, and in bringing a people into existence was to create a worshiping community to be a sign of his redeeming work...In the New Testament, the author of Hebrews takes great pains to compare Christ with the Old Testament regulation of worship. Here we see that the Old Testament forms of worship find their fulfillment in the death, resurrection, and coming again of Christ. We read that Christ "appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). This means that worship in the New Testament era, even as worship in the Old Testament, harkens back to the event at which God did a magnificent work for his people. It is always connected with the specific event of Christ through which God revealed himself, established redemption for the world, and called into being his new people, the Church.¹³

Christian worship must have a biblical foundation which centers upon the mighty acts of God for the redemption of humankind. It is only in this kind of worship that the worshiper can experience the means of God's grace. It is through an incarnational worship experience that the worshiper will be able to connect in living faith to the event of redemption two thousand years ago.

When the worshiper understands and experiences the means of grace in corporate worship, it is then they can see how God gives birth to and shapes the life of

¹³Robert Webber, *Worship is a Verb* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000), 29-30.

the Church to fulfill His will. Through the church's expression of praise in worship; the singing, reading and proclaiming of God's redeeming story in scripture, the sacraments of baptism and the continual coming to the Lord's Table, God calls, equips, and sends the Church into the world to do the work of ministry. Corporate worship continually enriches the lives and hearts of the redeemed with the identity of the triune God. It is through this kind of worship that God is honored and through which the community of faith is connected throughout Christian history. James B. Torrance gives us a deeper understanding when he said,

Christian worship is, therefore, our participation through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father, in his vicarious life of worship and intercession. It is our response to our Father for all that he has done for us in Christ. It is our self-offering in body, mind and spirit, in response to the one true offering made for us in Christ, our response of gratitude to God's grace, our sharing by grace in the heavenly intercession of Christ. Therefore, anything we say about worship - the forms of worship, its practice and procedure - must be said in light of the gospel of grace. We must ask ourselves whether our forms of worship convey the gospel. Are they an appropriate response to the gospel? Do they help people apprehend the worship and ministry of Christ as he draws us by the Spirit into a life of shared communion, or do they hinder? Do they make the real presence of Christ transparent in worship, or do they obscure it?¹⁴

These questions that he raises are very crucial to the theology and practice of worship. The trend in modernity by theologians and pastors has been to avoid these questions due to the pressures of humanistic society. The whole issue of "worship and ministry of Christ" was set aside for a more self-serving approach to worship. The issue of the means of grace and the real presence of Christ will be more developed in later chapters concerning the Eucharist.

A serious issue to be raised at this point is the significance of the Sacrament in worship. The Protestant Reformation opened a theological door, concerning salvation, faith and worship which caused many ramifications that perhaps have not been fully

¹⁴Torrance, *Worship Community & the Triune God of Grace*, 15.

understood. One fundamental change that did occur which radically altered the theology of worship was the place of the Sacrament of the Lord's Table within worship. The revivalist movement which swept through Protestantism removed the Lord's Table and replaced it with the "sacrament of the sermon." The result of this change is far more reaching than many understand. It impacts the theology of the means of grace and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The sermon becomes the focal point in worship and weakens the historical liturgy of the mystery of God's presence. In a sound theology of worship, one must revisit this change. In speaking to this subject, Robert Webber writes:

Biblical worship is rooted in an event that is to be lived, not proven. The purpose of worship is not to prove the Christ it celebrates, but to bring the worshiper so in tune with God's reconciliation through Christ that his death and resurrection become a lived experience. And telling and acting out the living, dying, and rising of Christ through celebration in worship makes the event real in the here and now. In Christian worship we are merely asked to believe in Jesus Christ, but to live, die, and be resurrected again with him. Life is not an intellectual construct, but a journey of death and rebirth. When our life story is brought up into the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, it then gains meaning and purpose.¹⁵

Worship, as Robert Webber explains, is not some emotional or intellectual exercise for a religious fix but a means by which the worshiper connects to the living God in an intimate and powerful way. In worship, one is able to connect with the events of the atonement through which forgiveness, grace and mercy are given and received. It is, therefore, absolutely important that our liturgy be Christ-centered. What is to be understood by being Christ centered is that worship is formed around the full work of the atonement in the sacrifice of Christ. The four-fold pattern, with the scripture lessons, the preaching of the Word, and the sacrament of the Lord's Table, all reconnect the worshiper to the events of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Through this, the Church then becomes empowered to fulfill the work that God has called us to do.

¹⁵Webber, *Worship is a Verb*, 25.

There are some conclusions from this chapter which can assist in the development of a theology of worship. The Unitarian model is rejected due to its humanistic approach to worship. This model has other theological problems as well. It also has a weak position on the doctrine of the Trinity and denies the work of the atonement through the sacrifice of Christ. Adolf Harnack, one of the major theologians behind the Unitarian model, believes that there is no need for a mediator between humankind and God. The worshiper gains direct access into the presence of God with no assistance by Jesus Christ as a mediator. The work of the Holy Spirit is unnecessary because God has direct contact during worship. This position is clearly outside orthodox theology. Therefore, this model has nothing to offer us for the development of a theology of worship.

The Experiential model is a contemporary approach to worship which has its roots deep in modernity. This model does not deny the work of the atonement through the sacrifice of Christ or the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity like the previous model. The theological error of this model is its weakness concerning the biblical teachings on the means of grace and how critical it is that the means of grace take central role in corporate worship. In essence, this model teaches that the sacrifice of Christ is necessary for salvation, but it is through the avenue of preaching (as a sacrament) that a person by faith receives God's grace. This significance of the sacrament of the Lord's Table is reduced to a memorial void of any grace. The Experiential model developed and made its inroads in the Church during the modern era which promoted a philosophy of individualism. It emphasized the individual needs and an emotional experience which shaped the worship experience toward needs and wants rather than on God. This model has had a great influence on many churches and denominations today which has shaped their theology of worship to become man-focused. The result is that worship services, mission, and the programs of the Church are guided by a principle that is man centered which is a critical error. This has an impact on corporate worship which reduces what should be a divine encounter to a human emotional experience. This model has nothing

to offer in a positive way to our theology of worship. It does however, have much to offer by way of what to guard against.

The Trinitarian or Incarnational model, which is centered in the Christ event, is the one model we must use to develop a theology and practice of worship. The scriptures make it clear that all humankind, in obedience to our creator, are to bow down and worship Him! The psalmist says,

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. (Psalm 95:1-7)

This psalm provides us a tremendous summation of the Old Testament's attitude concerning corporate worship. God the creator is the focus of worship and the worshiper is to enter with praise and an attitude of deep reverence. The writer to the Hebrews, building upon the richness of the Old Testament, teaches the focus of Christian worship.

He writes:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful Word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

We now have Jesus Christ, who revealed the love of God and proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven is near, is himself to be the center of Christian worship. How can the worshiper offer up this glorious praise? It is by the continuous outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we are able to worship the Lord our God. It is through the power of the Spirit that the Church is able to continually encounter God in Christ in the Word and the

Sacrament of the Lord's Table. The only model that can provide the foundation for this to occur is the Trinitarian or Incarnational model. This model offers us the framework to build a biblical theology of worship which can guide corporate worship that is God centered. From this model, one learns that God first comes, offering humankind salvation and gives the opportunity and gift of worship. The worshipper then worships God as a response to His action in the atonement. The liturgical form which can best express the Trinitarian or Incarnational model is through the four-fold pattern of worship.

The Four-Fold Pattern of Worship

The basic pattern which should shape our liturgy for corporate worship is the Book of Acts chapter two. This model was the pattern for worship in the early believer of the New Testament. Earlier in this paper the theology of the four-fold pattern for worship was discussed. This four-fold pattern will now guide the development of the liturgies for worship in Free Methodism. The four-fold pattern contains: The Entrance, The Word, The Table, and The Sending.

The Entrance

The people come together in the name of the Lord our God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There may be greetings, Psalms, singing, prayers of invocation or the Collect, praise and the exchange of the Peace.

The Word

The proclamation of the Word is the first portion of the foundation for worship which is experienced through the lectionary readings and the teaching or preaching of the scriptures. There may be in response to the readings, the singing of the Psalms, an anthem, spiritual songs, or a hymn. Responses to the teaching or preaching of the scriptures may include; prayers of confession (both personal and corporate), the

Sacraments, acts of commitment, anointing with holy oil, prayers and affirmations of faith which should include the creeds of the Church.

The Table

The sacrament of the Lord's Table is the second foundation of worship which celebrates the reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ. This Sacrament as the means of grace is for the gathered people of God in corporate worship to experience anew the atonement of Christ.

The Sending

The gathered people of God are now sent into the world to minister to the needs of others with the Apostolic blessing or in a responsive blessing. The four-fold pattern of worship has its roots in scripture, early Church tradition and our Methodist heritage. This pattern when used in conjunction with the Trinitarian Model provides the best expression of a biblical and theological understanding of corporate worship. The four- fold pattern of Entrance, the Word, the Table, and the Sending is the best structure for corporate worship in order to provide a proper environment for the adoration and praise of God.

Webber explains it this way,

The four fold pattern of worship is characterized by a narrative quality because it is taking us someplace [the throne room of God's kingdom] where a rehearsal of our relationship to God is expressed through the Word and the response of Thanksgiving. Having been touched by God, we are sent forth into the world to love and serve the Lord. This four fold pattern is the biblical and historical structure of worship that most effectively communicates the content of worship.¹⁶

It is in this kind of worship that we are able to enter into the very presence of God and connect with His atoning grace and the Christ event with the Church historical.

¹⁶ Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 21.

This pattern for worship allows for cultural relevance and can provide a means for the various styles of generational tastes while at the same time have a biblical and theological foundation for Trinitarian worship. Corporate worship brings the worshipper into the very presence of God, into His holy of holies. This kind of worship centers upon the Trinitarian Model and celebrates the Christ event. Worship must be centered upon God and His action of grace through the atonement, not on the self centeredness of the worshipper which is the focus of the Experiential Model. At the heart of biblical worship is a balance of the Word and the Table which places the incarnate Christ at the center of the worship experience. Worship that is deeply rooted in scripture and the heritage of the early Church tradition will be centered upon God and give a balance to the means of grace in its liturgy. Worship must emphasize both the spoken word through the reading and teaching of scripture, and the embodied Word of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Table. This should not be considered as another style of worship such as; traditional verses contemporary or liturgical verses free. Corporate worship which is based upon the Trinitarian Model and has a balance of the Word and the Table is the only model that can effectively provide an environment in which the worshipper can truly enter into the presence of God and receive His grace. It is here that the worshipper can move beyond any cultural form or generational style of worship and move into a deeper spiritual relationship with God. Let us now look a little deeper at the four-fold pattern.

The first action of the four-fold pattern is the Entrance. In the Entrance, the people gather in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is a physical and spiritual gathering of the people as a community of faith. They come together from all over the community as a sort of procession into the house of God. Webber says,

Worship always begins with an ascent into the presence of God. The shape of the ascent in Christian worship follows the Old Testament pattern of the entrance into Jerusalem, expressed in the Psalms of ascent. Consequently, the nature of the Gathering is shaped by an upward movement as God's earthly people travel toward the heavenly throne, the place of eternal worship, the domain of the kingdom, the glory of God's presence.¹⁷

In Temple worship, the worshippers began with a procession that ascended to the Temple mount. They were, as the psalmist proclaimed, ascending into the presence of God. So in Christian worship, the ascent has become part of the Entrance as the people of God gather to enter the house of God. Corporate worship begins with the gathering and provides opportunity for the people to greet each other in the name of the Lord. The Entrance has two parts. The first part is the informal gathering of the people, and the second are the liturgical acts to begin worship.

In the informal gathering the people gather and greet each other, socialize and talk about the event of the previous week. As they gather, some feel the need to share in much conversation, while others desire a time of quiet meditation before worship begins. It is important that the diverse needs of the people are cared for. It is also important that the Church grounds and foyer provide a proper atmosphere for the Entrance. This will assist in setting the tone for a proper entrance into the house of God. The second part of the Entrance consists of the liturgical acts which begin corporate worship. These acts are usually the greetings, opening hymn or song of praise, the invocation or Collect, acts of praise and the sharing of the Peace. The greeting consists of the first words spoken as the call to the congregation that corporate worship is now to begin. The greeting can take on many forms from words given by the pastor, a responsive greeting, or a choir singing.

¹⁷ Ibid., 50-51

The greeting should always be in the name of the Trinity in some form. The greeting may reflect the season of the Christian Year or simply the theme of a single service. The opening hymn or song of praise is an expression of praise to God by the congregation as a means of honor and respect for His attributes. It is important that the congregation gives a proper voice of praise to God during the Entrance. The Invocation or Collect can serve two functions. It can be the final act in the Entrance and provide a summation of thought, a prayer of adoration, or it can be a corporate prayer of confession. It can also function as the opening prayer or the prayer of illumination for the proclamation of the Word. The acts of praise can be placed anywhere in the Entrance as a means to provide a richer experience for the congregational participation. The Entrance is the traditional place for the *Kyrie Eleison*. The congregation may sing a spiritual song of praise or a Psalm for an alternative. The choir or an ensemble group may sing an anthem or a liturgical dance may be given. The acts of praise are not limited to these but may include the many talents of a local congregation. The creativity of this act of worship is only limited by the resources of the congregation. The acts of praise can be simple or elaborate. The sharing of the Peace is traditionally later in the service but could be incorporated in the call to worship. There is in the Entrance a natural place for the sharing of the Peace during the greeting time or a portion of acts of praise. The Entrance should be relevant to the setting of the congregation. For many, the Entrance will be very informal having a simple greeting or a call to worship by the pastor. Others will have a more elaborate Entrance that is in balance with the other sections of worship. The length or complexity of the Entrance is not critical but the theological purpose is vital to its place in corporate worship. The Entrance has an important function to fulfill for it sets

the tone for the rest of the worship experience.

The proclamation of the Word is the first of the central parts of worship. The primary purpose for the proclamation of the Word is to open the Scriptures to the congregation and lead them into the heart of Christ. The reading of Scripture in worship is a fresh word of God for the people of God. We understand the proclamation of the Word to be a means of grace through which the worshipper may experience the very presence of Christ. It is a powerful moment when the reader concludes the reading by saying, “The Word of the Lord.” This Word rings out as a reminder that God has just spoken and the congregations responds with a shout, “Thanks be to God.” Our focus is not on the words themselves but on the living God who redeems our lives. This is expressed in the prayer for illumination, “Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, may we hear with joy what you say to us today.”¹⁸ This prayer is a call to the worshipper to listen for God’s voice to them as the Scriptures are proclaimed. This would include all the readings which are included in the worship service. There is a critical point we must understand about the proclamation of the Word as a means of grace. The Word is the living Word of God for our lives in the present. The Word also connects the believer to the eternal grace of God, past, present, and future. One author explains it this way,

In hearing the Scriptures read, the Christian community recalls the corporate memories that make it one. We are baptized into these memories; they become our possession and give us our identity as Christians. They are received every time we join with the community in worship and scripture is read. The reading of scripture is a form of *anamnesis* – that is, of remembering, recalling, experiencing anew the reality

¹⁸ Neil M. Alexander, ed., *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 34.

of God's mighty acts in sacred history.¹⁹

The proclamation of the Word includes both the reading of the Scriptures and the teaching or the preaching of the Scriptures. The emphasis should be on the action of God in the Christ event and the grace that comes through the proclamation. The Word is the risen Christ, proclaiming the good news that the atonement through the sacrifice of Christ is present among us today. Therefore, the significance of the teaching or preaching of the Word is that it provides the worshipper with an avenue to hear the voice of God and to respond to His grace.

There are other ways to communicate the Word of God to the congregation. The use of Scripture songs, responsive readings, litanies, and prayers can speak as the Word of God. The visual arts can also speak the Word through the use of banners, paraments, stained glass and other symbols of the faith. The Word becomes relevant as it impacts the lives of the people of God and moves them to respond to His grace at the altar of Christ.

The Table is the second centerpiece of corporate worship. The understanding that the sacrament of the Lord's Table is a celebration of the embodied Word binds the Word and the Table together as the centerpiece of Christian worship. The recognition that the Lord's Table is essential to worship identifies the gathered congregation to the historical community of faith. This moves far beyond the issues of Protestant theology which speaks of the Lord's Table as only a "memorial" and has no real grace to offer. In worship where the Word and the Table is the centerpiece, there is a theological conviction that the most important aspect of worship is the celebration of grace of God in

¹⁹ Hoyt L. Hickman, Don E. Saliers, Laurence Hull Stookey, James F. White, *The New Handbook of the Christian Year* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 41.

the atonement of Christ. In this we believe that the Eucharist is a means of God's saving grace. There is the reality in which the worshippers receive the grace of God as they respond to the Word by coming to the altar of Christ to receive the Eucharist. This theological understanding moves us beyond the "memorial" position and affirms that in partaking of the sacrament there is a real encounter with the Christ. The result is a true thankfulness by the worshipper and the community of faith. This understanding of the Lord's Table as the Eucharist is the thanksgiving or praise which is the proper response to the grace of God. If we take this seriously, our response to the Lord's Table will be one of thankfulness with a sense of expectation that spiritual strength will be given to do the will of God. As a corporate act of worship, the Lord's Table becomes a means of God's grace for the people of God so that we then become His ambassadors to the world.

The restoration of a weekly celebration of the Eucharist was at the heart of Wesley's theology of worship. He challenged the Church of England to restore the celebration of the Lord's Supper to public worship. Wesley understood the significance the Eucharist provided to the worship service which could not be gained in any other means. The Eucharist is essential for the celebration, praise and thanksgiving to God for His works in creation, and in redemption. There was during Wesley's day a weak understanding and practice of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and its place in public worship. He saw within Roman Catholicism a serious mistake in their Eucharistic theology. In the Roman Catholic liturgy the laity was not allowed to receive the cup during the Eucharist. He was as deeply disturbed by the lack of understanding by his own Church which only provided the sacrament of the Lord's Supper a few times each year to the laity. When he preached his sermon on "Constant Communion" at Oxford

University, it was for the purpose of moving the leadership of the Church toward a more frequent use of the Eucharist in public worship.

Therefore from our historical past, we have a call from the Father of Methodism to restore to our corporate worship the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. This action would cause a strong negative response by many within the Wesleyan Holiness and Free Methodist tradition. Their argument would be that to frequent use of the Lord's Supper would weaken its meaning and make it to common place. This argument shows their thinking to be from a memorial position of the Eucharist. In the memorial position which believes the Eucharist to lack in any means of grace, the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper could become common place. To the issue of frequency and which would cheapen of the sacrament is to completely misunderstand Wesley's Eucharistic theology. To answer their concern, we must embrace Wesley's belief that the Eucharist is God's ordinary means of saving and sanctifying grace. To summarize briefly, Wesley taught that the Eucharist provides the means of grace because it is the sign and symbol of the atonement of Christ. In the Eucharist, the worshiper can embrace the presence and sacrifice of Christ as their means of grace for forgiveness and sanctifying mercy. There are two aspects of Wesley's Eucharistic theology that are important for this discussion. First is Wesley's understanding of real presence. He believed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was both spiritual and mystical. The real presence of Christ brings the reality of His sacrifice to the present moment of worship and makes available to atonement for the worshiper. A worship service that does not offer the Eucharist would exclude that opportunity for the worshiper to embrace the means of grace for them. The second aspect that is important for this discussion is Wesley's belief that the Eucharist is

the means of converting, sanctifying, and keeping grace. It is here that the worshiper can experience God's grace in a deep and personal way wherever they are in their spiritual journey. Wesley taught that through this means of grace the worshiper would be strengthened and empowered for their spiritual journey. Wesley summarizes it this way:

We must neglect no occasion, which the good providence of God affords us, for this purpose. This is the rule: So often are we to receive as God gives us opportunity. Whoever, therefore, does not receive, but goes from the holy table, when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.²⁰

Therefore, if we are to be true to our Wesleyan heritage, the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper must be restored to our corporate worship services. The Lord's Supper is a critical part of the four fold pattern and central to a Trinitarian/Incarnational theology of worship.

Other responses to the proclamation of the Word and the Table are; prayers, which include the intercessory prayers of the people, testimonies of praise and thanksgiving, the giving of tithes and offerings, the sharing of the Peace (if not done earlier in the service), and the doxology.

The Sending is the fourth action in the four fold pattern of worship. The congregation is called to stand and then sent into the world to minister to the needs of others. The Apostolic blessing is given or some other scriptural blessing is spoken. There may be a closing hymn or other act of praise. Just as the call to worship began with a pastoral greeting, the sending should contain an appropriate pastoral dismissal.

²⁰ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7:148.

CHAPTER 4

OUR WESLEYAN HERITAGE

The work of John and Charles Wesley began in England during the middle of the 18th century. One cannot fully understand the political, social, or religious conditions of England during this period without a deep historical study. This is outside the scope of the research, but it is important to note that the spiritual character of the Church of England and its influence on society was at an all-time low. In his own words Wesley writes:

The English in general, high and low, rich and poor, do not speak of God. They do not say anything about Him, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year... a vast majority of the English live in the constant neglect of the worship of God. To form a judgment of this, you may take a specimen in the good city of London. How few of the inhabitants worship God in public, even one day a week! Do not fewer of them make a conscience of worshipping God in their families? And perhaps they are still smaller that daily worship God in their closets?¹

Here we see Wesley's deep concern for England and the spiritual condition of his Church. There were many social problems and class discrimination issues concerning women and children which Wesley addressed in sermons and letters. The spiritual life of the clergy and concern of the Church for social issues was very poor. One writer put it this way; "Christianity under English skies was never, before or since, so near the death point."² This is the environment which birthed the Wesley brothers, and gave them the

¹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 11:160-161.

² W.H. Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century* (NY: The Abingdon Press, 1927), 12.

passion to see the world as their parish. The Church of England had closed its doors to the poor and masses of their society and the work of Methodism saw as its mission the whole world in the need of the grace of God.

The impact of the Methodist movement had upon the Church of England, the Great Awakening of the 18th century, and the frontier revival which spread across the United States perhaps has not even as of yet been fully understood. There were many components of Methodism which had their own contribution to spiritual renewal during this period of time. The focus this chapter is concentrating upon here is the emphasis which John and Charles Wesley brought to Methodism a concern for a deeper prayer life and a worship service centered in the Eucharist. This chapter is concerned with Wesley's Eucharistic theology.

Historical Perspective

In order to have a good understanding of John Wesley's Eucharistic theology and how that impacts worship, the first place to begin is with a historical perspective. There is clear evidence that Christian worship was centered upon the teaching and preaching by the Apostles and the celebration of the Table of the Lord. The model found in the early Christian community, as described in the second chapter of Acts, is a worship service that is centered upon the means of grace. Concerning the fellowship of the early believers, we read in the Acts of the Apostles that "they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). The teaching of the Word, the Eucharist, and prayer became the spiritual foundation for the ministry of worship and fellowship in the first century of Christianity. There is other supportive evidence of this in other "Early Church" resources such as *The Didache* and the writings of the Early Church Fathers. All of these documents support the understanding that at the heart of worship in the early church was the teaching of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Table. For example, *The Didache* taught that "on

the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure."³ This model became the standard for the Church throughout the early centuries of Christianity. Even as the world changed and the Church grew and embraced other cultures, this model remained in principle, as the foundation for corporate worship providing the four fold pattern for their liturgy. As the centuries passed, the richness of worship centered upon the Word and the Table began to change. By Wesley's day, the observance of the Lord's Table had become very infrequent in the Church of England, and in Roman Catholicism the cup was withheld from the laity. Wesley was very critical of both his church and Roman Catholicism for their practice of the Lord's Table in worship. He believed strongly that the Lord's Table should be celebrated each week in worship and that both the bread and wine should be given to all communicantes.

Anglican Roots

John and Charles Wesley were raised in the Church of England, Oxford-educated and ordained into the Anglican priesthood. Through their heritage, personal study, and spiritual experiences, they became deeply committed to the Church of England and the Book of Common Prayer. The Wesley brothers were sacramentalists to their very core. It is from this perspective and background that they lead the Methodist movement. John Wesley maintained a deep love for his church and the Methodist Societies in both England and the United States. His love for the Book of Common Prayer and Eucharistic worship guided his decisions as the leader of Methodism. His last great legacy to Methodism was an abridgment to the Book of Common Prayer given to the Methodists in North America in 1784. The preface of that work reads,

I believe there is no liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breaths more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety, than the

³Holms, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 157.

Common Prayer of the Church of England. And though the main of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred year ago, yet is the language of it, not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree.⁴

It was Wesley's conviction that the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer provided the best foundation for a biblical theology of worship. He recognized that Methodism in North America was going to eventually separate itself from England and the authority of the Church of England. In a letter to Dr. Thomas Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury, Wesley gives an explanation for the reasons of his sending them an abridgment to the Book of Common Prayer. He titled this work "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America." That letter reads:

By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North-America are totally disjoined from their mother-country, and erected into Independent States... In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice; and in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch⁵.

This "little sketch" was an adaptation of the Book of Common Prayer with little changes in its entirety. He shortened some of the scripture readings, and changed some of the prayers, but the liturgy for corporate worship and holy communion were left unchanged. Wesley gives his best effort through the Sunday Service document to keep Methodism grounded to a biblical theology of worship and to keep them connected to the historical faith of Christianity. He was also concerned that Methodism would keep a balance of the Word and the Table within corporate worship. In a letter to Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury, Wesley instructed them to have all the Methodist preachers to use the liturgy of the Sunday Service in all their congregations. In that same letter, he writes; "I also advise the

⁴James White, *John Wesley's Prayer Book* (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1991), 38.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

elders [ordained clergy] to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day."⁶ It was Wesley's deep conviction that Methodist worship would remain connected to the historical liturgy of the Church of the England.

Field Preaching

The evangelical revival which began in England moved across the ocean to birth the Great Awakening in North America in the early eighteenth century. This movement was characterized by evangelical preaching which pressed for conversions as a response to during altar calls. Tent revivals and camp meetings sprang up all over the country. Evangelical preaching, gospel singing, and altar calls make a dramatic impact on the protestant church in North America. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The early English revival movement has its roots in what was called "field preaching." Richard P. Heitzenrater in his work on Methodism explains, "Itinerant field preaching had been evident in Wales before the 1720's with the work of Griffith Jones, whom Wesley first met while at Oxford and who became a close friend of Whitefield and the Wesley's."⁷ In time, Wesley found it difficult to gain access to the pulpits of the Church of England in part because of his evangelical preaching. So, his friend George Whitfield persuaded Wesley to go to the English countryside and preach the Gospel to the poor. It was in field that Wesley found his platform to establish the Methodist movement, which he hoped would bring spiritual renewal to the Church of England.

⁶ Ibid..

⁷ Richard Heritzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 97.

Wesley's commitment to the evangelical work of field preaching and the establishment of his Methodist society meetings did not weaken his theology of worship or his loyalty to the Church of England. Under his leadership, the Methodist movement was an attempt to bring spiritual renewal to the Church of England, both to the parish church and the leadership of the Bishops. It was Wesley's intention to bring an authentic renewal to classic Christian devotion and worship centered once again upon the Word and the sacrament of the Lord's Table.

An important historical aspect to the Methodist movement was field preaching. Wesley's field preaching along with his new hymns brought much criticism by his fellow clergyman. Their criticism was the result of a fear of this new renewal movement and not understanding Wesley's purpose for Methodism. He did not start out with the purpose of establishing a new church or wanting to cause problems with the local parish churches. Due to his enthusiastic preaching for spiritual renewal in the pulpits of the parish churches and at Oxford, the doors eventually closed to his preaching. He was forced to go into the streets and to the country to preach. Field preaching was Wesley's attempt to solve what he saw as a gap in the ministry of the Church of England. There was little desire on the part of the established Church to reach out to the unchurched of England. So field preaching became Wesley's evangelical answer to this weakness he saw in his Church. This is a subject which could be an entire study in itself, but is outside the scope of this paper. It is mentioned here to reference an important concept in Wesley that is misunderstood. There is an understanding that Wesley's evangelical work of field preaching was his way of changing the worship style of the Church of England. This concept is clearly misguided. It was not Wesley's intention to replace the

established worship service of the Church of England. His love for the Book of Common Prayer and its rich liturgy of worship, guided Wesley's actions and decisions concerning his theology of worship to the very end of his life. There is a clear distinction between Wesley's' evangelical field preaching and what he sees as worship on the Lord's day. We can best understand his thinking at this point through a conversation he had with the Bishop of Bristol. The criticism of Wesley's field preaching had reached to the highest level of the Church and he was called before the Bishop to explain his views on worship and preaching. In that conversation, Wesley to him, "May it please your Lordship, we believe that worship which is not instituted is not right."⁸ Shortly after this, the Bishop was completely satisfied with Wesley's answers. Their conversation closed this way,

B. Have you any thing more to say to me, Mr. Wesley? W. Nothing; your Lordship sent for me. B. I am glad to hear this from your mouth; You will stand to your principles, you say? W. I intend it, through the grace of God; and to be faithful to the King's Majesty, however you deal with me. B. I will not meddle with you. W. Farewell to you, sir. B. Farewell, good Mr. Wesley.⁹

One conclusion to be drawn from this conversation is that Wesley had a clear conviction that his field preaching centered upon the Word as a teaching of the people the truth of the Gospel but was not the same as "instituted" worship from the Book of Common Prayer. It is here that we begin to understand Wesley's theological view of worship.

John Wesley's Theological Perspective On Worship

Wesley was well-educated, kept informed on the theological issues of his day, and was a serious student of the works of the early church fathers. He was not easily influenced by popular ideologies or in theological views that were not grounded in

⁸Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3:219.

⁹Ibid.

scripture. His theological views and the methods which guided the Methodist movement were well-thought and grounded in Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience, what is now called the Wesley Quadrilateral. This also applies to his theology of worship. In a conversation with the Bishop of Bristol, Wesley discussed his theology of worship. In that conversation, Wesley makes it very clear that scripture is the foundation for a proper theology of worship. Here is a excerpt from that conversation.

W. We have a plain, full and sufficient rule for Gospel worship, in the New Testament, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles.
 B. We have not. W. The practice of the Apostles is a standing rule in those cases which were not extraordinary. B. Not their practice, but their precepts. W. Both precepts and practice. Our duty is not delivered to us, in scripture, only by precepts, but precedents, by promises, by threatenings, mixed. We are to follow them as they followed Christ.¹⁰

Wesley clearly explains his theology of worship as being founded upon the teachings of scripture and the practice of the early Church. By the end of their conversation, the Bishop was satisfied with Wesley's answers and sends him back to his ministry.

As noted earlier, Wesley throughout his life maintained a "high church" view of worship with the Book of Common Prayer being the liturgical form. Yet at the same time, he saw within the Church of England a deadness of worship. Their worship had become a religious exercise of going through the liturgy of the Common Prayer Book with no sense of the spiritual life of God being anywhere to be found. Wesley wanted the holiness of God, often lifted in "high church" worship as something very distant, to be the connecting point for the people of God, not a source of barrier. Wesley writes;

In divine worship, the first thing to be considered is the end, and the next thing is the means conducing to that end. The end is the honour of God, and the edification of the Church; and then God is honoured, when the Church is edified. The means conducing to that end, are to have the service so administered as may inform the mind, engage the affections and increase devotion.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., 8:219.

¹¹ Ibid., 10:102.

In this paragraph, Wesley makes his clearest statement concerning his theology of worship. The central focus of worship is God. He is to be worshiped and honored by the congregation and by that action the congregation will be strengthened through the presence of God. Worship is the connecting point for the congregation to enter the very presence of God through which they can receive the means of grace. As Wesley points out, in order for that to occur, the worship service must be designed in a proper way, meaning biblically and historically in nature. It is his understanding that the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer is the proper liturgy for that to happen. When God is worshiped, and the congregation receives the means of grace, they are then empowered to do the work of ministry in their world.

Means of Grace

What are the means of grace? How does one gain the grace of God? These are questions which every generation since the Reformation seems to have struggled with. The Apostle Paul wrote, "It is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:5). This statement has caused much debate among the Christian community since the Reformation. How can one have His grace? What are the ways His may be given? Wesley answers these questions in a sermon titled "The Means of Grace." He writes; "This question could never have be proposed in the Apostolic Church... the whole body of Christians being agreed, that Christ had ordained certain outward means, for conveying his grace into the souls of men. Their constant practice set this beyond all dispute."¹² Wesley defines the means of grace, using the passage from the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles as, the teaching of the Word, the Sacrament of the Lord's Table, and prayer. Wesley taught that these are the ordinary means of God's grace. It is the means of grace that we are given the spiritual strength to do the work of

¹² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 5:185.

ministry and fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. It is also through the means of grace that our relationship with God grows in spiritual maturity through saving, sanctifying, and keeping grace. In a prayer Wesley wrote the following for the Lord's Day:

Bless to me Thy Word, O my heavenly Father, and all the means of grace, that I may not use them in vain or to my own hurt, but for instructing my mind, reforming my life, and saving my soul... enable me to worship Thee with holy worship, with joy and delight, with profit and pleasure. Till me with a comfortable sense of Thy presence, that I may serve Thee with reverence and godly fear, to the comfort of my soul and the glory of Thy name.¹³

It is Wesley's belief that through "holy worship" one would receive the means of grace and through that grace the worshiper is empowered to serve the Lord in the mission of the Church. "The honour of God" was of the highest importance for Wesley when the Church gathered for worship. When God is the center of worship, the Church is enriched by His grace as they worship the Lord by a liturgy which impacts the mind and causes a response to love God and others through obedient living. The proper means for this to take place is in a worship service that is "administered" (for Wesley this was a Book of Common Prayer (BCP) service around the teaching of the Word, the Christ event, where the Lord's Table was celebrated, and prayer which is woven throughout the whole service. It is through the Lord's Table that the means of God's grace impacts the community of faith, through saving, sanctifying and keeping grace. Wesley writes; "For God hath in scripture ordained prayer, reading or hearing, and the receiving of the Lord's Supper, as the ordinary means of conveying his grace to man."¹⁴ In this quote we see several important parts to the worship service which brings God and man together in an intimate way. For Wesley, the means of grace being the most crucial part of the worship service cannot be overstated as to its importance for the gathered people of God. Wesley

¹³Ibid., 1:260.

¹⁴Ibid., 1:279.

goes on to say,

that the Lord's Supper was ordained by God, to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities. That the persons for whom it was ordained, are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God, either to restrain them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God.¹⁵

The "means of grace" which Wesley speaks of is so central to worship that without it worship is void of its true biblical meaning. When the "means of grace" is in its proper context within worship, man comes into direct contact with the very heart of God and finds His mercy. It is through the "means of grace" that sin is forgiven and we experience the sanctifying power of Christ. In an explanation of the Lord's Table Wesley writes, "Do this in remembrance of me - the ancient sacrifices were in remembrance of sin. This sacrifice once offered is still represented in remembrance of the remission of sins."¹⁶ Sin is forgiven because of the sacrifice of Christ. When in worship we enact the whole action of the Lord's Supper, the sacrament is re-presented in the action of the crucifixion and it becomes a true means of grace.

Wesley maintained a deep scriptural and evangelical theology of salvation. In rejecting the Roman Catholic position on the "means of grace" and how that relates to our salvation in the Lord's Table, Wesley speaks in terms of "outward sign." Rather than speaking of "intrinsic power" Wesley talks about the Lord's Table as an outward sign of an inward grace which is accessed by faith in the full action of the Lord's Table, the giving and receiving of the sacrament. Wesley explains, "It is God alone who is the Giver of every good gift, the Author of all grace; that the whole power is of Him."¹⁷ Wesley's view does not weaken the power of the sacrament or any of the "means of grace" to forgive sin in any measure. In fact, it makes them more powerful to our human

¹⁵Ibid., 1:280.

¹⁶Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 4:432.

¹⁷Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 5:188.

condition because it requires the response of faith on the part of the one receiving God's grace. Wesley taught that it is not the object, but the very presence of God which gives His mercy and forgiveness.

In Wesley's day, there had been a trend within the church to use the "means of grace" in a limited capacity within public worship, especially the Lord's Table. He viewed this as a spiritual problem and the cause of the deadness in the Church of England. He writes; "According to the decision of holy writ, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying it aside."¹⁸ The Church of England had been resisting any and all aspects of the spiritual renewal of the Methodist movement. That resistance included Wesley's call for a return to a weekly celebration of the Lord's Table during corporate worship on the Lord's day.

In His sermon, "The Means of Grace," Wesley preaches one of his greatest theological works on God's grace. In this sermon, he speaks of the Lord's Table as one of the means of God's grace with brilliant insight. He writes; "All who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's Supper."¹⁹ He is very clear about his view on the Lord's Table and how important it is for man's salvation as it relates to the "means of grace." He continues,

And this is also an ordinary, stated means of receiving the grace of God, is evident from those words of the Apostle, which occur in the preceding chapter: the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of communication of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.²⁰

What Wesley teaches in this sermon is that it is God who is the giver of all grace. The

¹⁸Ibid., 5:190.

¹⁹Ibid., 5:194.

²⁰Ibid., 5:195.

believer receives God's grace by faith, and the proper response to His grace is obedience to His will and service to others. In this sermon, Wesley spends equal time on all three of the means of grace. The purpose of this paper is to focus more on the sacrament of the Lord's Table, since that is the one which Methodism has neglected in its theology and practice of worship. In the quote above, Wesley is very clear that if anyone desires the grace of God they must participate in the holy worship where the sacrament of the Lord's Table is being offered. There is no doubt that Wesley has received criticism from many within the evangelical community because of his strong view of the means of grace as it relates to the sacrament of the Lord's Table. However, strong criticism never caused Wesley to change his theology in any way. He closed his sermon on "The Means of Grace" with these words, "Remember also, to use the means, as means; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of soul in righteousness and true holiness."²¹

The question which arises out of this discussion is what does Wesley understand about the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Table? This question will not be fully explored in this paper, for it could be a topic unto itself. The focus of this discussion will be to see what Wesley does not mean about real presence and then to allow his words to define his theology of real presence.

Real Presence

In order to have a better understanding of Wesley's position of real presence, one must begin with his arguments against the Eucharistic positions of that period of time. The European Reformation had much to say about the sacrament of the Lord's Table and how that related to the means of God's grace for man's salvation. Wesley studied, both

²¹Ibid., 5:201.

the classical Eucharistic theology of the early Church Fathers, and the views of the Reformers. There is sufficient material for research on this subject, because it was extremely important to Wesley and the Methodist movement which he led. He wrote sermons, answered the questions of Bishops, corresponded with many by letter, wrote several Eucharistic hymns, and even had a discussion with his mother on the subject. It will be evident that the theology of the Eucharist was of great importance to Wesley and played an important role in the spiritual renewal for the Church of England and the Methodist movement.

Let us begin with a brief look at what Wesley rejects in the theology of Catholicism and the Reformers. The Roman Catholic position of Transubstantiation was debated at length during the Reformation and was still an issue during Wesley's day. It was some time after the 13th century that Roman Catholic scholars developed the understanding of Transubstantiation based on the Aristotelian theory of real presence. In their view, the sacrament of bread and wine contained both substance and accidents. As the bread and wine have certain accidents such as taste, color, texture, and etc., as it is consecrated by the priest the accidents remain the same but the substance is no longer bread or wine but the body of Christ. Transubstantiation fixes Christ's presence within the elements. Wesley rejected this explanation as "vulgar to holy writ." In an essay on the Roman Catechism, Wesley answers a question which gives his position in clear terms. We read:

What becomes of the bread and wine after consecration? [Roman Catechism Teaches] Upon consecration there is a conversion of the whole substance of Christ's body into the substance of Christ's body; and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of Christ's blood; which conversion is usually called transubstantiation. [Wesley's reply] No such change of the substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ, can be inferred from our Saviour's words, "this is my body;" for it is not said, "this is turned into my body,"...Cardinal Cajetan acknowledges, it is nowhere said in the Gospel that the bread is changed into the body of

Christ.²²

Wesley was not willing to develop a theology based on philosophy that did not have good scriptural foundations. His trouble with transubstantiation was this idea of the sacraments “changing into the substance of Christ’s body and blood.” He believed that there was no scriptural support for this understanding.

Martin Luther also rejects transubstantiation and develops the theology which states that the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper is “in, with, and under” the sacraments. Luther rejects the Roman Catholic view that the sacraments miraculously at consecration become the body and blood of Christ in substance. Borgen explains Wesley’s rejection of Luther’s theory when he writes:

Wesley rejects the Lutheran views of consubstantiation and ubiquity, which require a communicating of the properties of the divine nature to the human. Christ is only omnipresent according to his divine nature; therefore, in order to communicate the benefits of his human life and death to us, these must be, as it were, at the disposal of Christ as omnipresent God. According to Wesley, no corporeal, carnal, material, substantial or localized presence of Christ in the sacrament can be accepted.²³

Wesley’s arguments against Luther’s position are very similar to his arguments against the Roman Catholic view. For Wesley, Christ is only bodily present in heaven, therefore for the sacraments to have the “substance of Christ’s body and blood” is not scriptural and does not have solid foundation for spiritual truth.

Another view of that day, which has become very popular in many Protestant churches of today, was developed by Huldreich Zwingli. This position taught that the Lord’s Supper is a belief that Christ is present in the congregation and that the sacrament is a memorial which is to remind us of our redemption. This theory had no impact on Wesley and he rejected it completely.

Lastly, we come to what many believe to be the closet Reformer to Wesley, that

²²Ibid., 10:118.

²³Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Nashville, TN: Parthenon Press, 1972), 65.

of John Calvin. Calvin rejected all the other Reformers as well as Catholicism. He believed in the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. He wanted to give the sacrament its full value of God's means of grace without the trappings of Catholicism or Lutheranism. He believed that we can be joined to Christ in the Eucharist by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. He makes the work of Holy Spirit central to the Lord's Supper.

It is true that there are strong ties to Wesley's views and that of John Calvin. They both speak of the real presence in terms of a spiritual presence. They both agree that Christ is only in heaven in bodily form. Yet, there is an important difference between Wesley and Calvin as to their definition of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Calvin speaks of the presence of Christ's body in terms of "power communicated by the Holy Spirit." Wesley describes the spiritual presence of Christ in terms of His divinity. In fact, he believed the whole Trinity was present giving the benefits of the means of grace through Christ's redemptive sacrifice. This is seen throughout Wesley's writings and the many hymns written for services of the Lord's Table.

Now, the important question of, what does Wesley have to say about the real presence of Christ in the sacraments of the Lord's Table. There is a wealth of information written by Wesley and many Wesley scholars on this subject. As noted earlier, Wesley was well educated and was a student of the early Church Fathers. It is the view of this paper that Wesley was closer to the theology of the early Church Fathers and what he called the "Primitive Church" than any of the other positions of the Reformation. Even though Wesley and Calvin seem to be close in their Eucharistic theology, Wesley is in fact much closer to the Eastern Church which uses the language of "mystery" when defining the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Borgen describes Wesley's position this way, "Wesley holds a view of the Real Presence, which may properly be called

‘Dynamic’ or ‘Living Presence’: where God acts, there he is. The ‘objective presence’ cannot be thought of as the static presence of an object, but rather as that of a living and acting person working through the means.”²⁴

This is much stronger than any of the Reformers including Calvin. It is a return to an understanding of the “Mystery” which is seen in the early Church Fathers and was the position of the Eastern Church of Wesley’s day. This understanding of the “Mystery” to explain Wesley’s view of the real presence is evident when he wrote, “the Mystical relation which the bread by consecration has to Christ’s body is sufficient to give it the name of his body. For it is the usual way of scripture, to call things of a sacramental nature, by the name of those things they are the figure of.”²⁵ What Wesley saw in the works of the early Church Fathers and what he believed to be scriptural truth brought him to the conclusion that we do not need to define in any way the great mystery of God.

In an interesting exchange of letters, Wesley and his mother discuss the issue of real presence. In that correspondence we read the response from Susannah Wesley to her son John, concerning his remarks about a friend’s description of real presence. She writes:

The young gentleman you mention seems to me to be in the right concerning the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. I own I never understood by the real presence, more than what he has elegantly expressed, that the divine nature of Christ is then eminently presently, to impart, by the operation of his Holy Spirit, the benefits of his death to worthy receivers. And surely the divine presence of our Lord, thus applying the virtue and merits of the great atonement to each true believer makes the consecrated bread more than a sign of Christ’s body; since by his so doing, we receive not only the sign, but with it the thing signified, all the benefits of his incarnation and passion! But still, however this divine institution may seem to others, to me it is full of mystery. Who

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:118.

can account for the operation of God's Holy Spirit, or define the manner of his working upon the spirit of man, either when he enlightens the understanding, or excites and confirms the will, and regulates and calms the passions, without impairing man's liberty?²⁶

In this explanation of the real presence given to Wesley by an acquaintance, we find what will be a significant theological point for him. What Wesley picks up on is that the real presence of Christ is not in bodily form, but is present in His divinity. Wesley responds to his mother's question in this way:

One consideration is enough to make me assent to his and your judgment concerning the Holy Sacrament; which is, that we cannot allow Christ's human nature to be present in it, without allowing either con or transubstantiation. But that His divinity is so united to us then, as He never is but to worthy receivers, I firmly believe, though the manner of that union is utterly a mystery to me.²⁷

In this correspondence we have a wonderful insight to Wesley's thinking and will find that this will be consistent throughout his life and his works. It is here that Wesley separates his thinking with Calvin. For his theology of real presence is at a far deeper level than Calvin's spiritual presence. Borgen helps us understand what Wesley means by Christ's divinity as being present. He writes; "Wesley holds a view of the 'Real Presence,' which may properly be called 'Dynamic' or 'Living Presence': where God acts, there he is. The "objective presence' cannot be thought of as the static presence of an object, but rather as that of a living and acting person working through the means."²⁸

The question of importance for study regards what Wesley mean by the idea that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is in His divinity. Borgen points out that the real presence is dynamic not static. Real presence has to do with the power of the resurrection and Christ in His divinity actively involved in the sacrament as a living sacrifice. It is not the crucified body of Christ which is the means of God's grace in the Eucharist that is too static for Wesley. It is the full resurrection of an ascended Christ in

²⁶Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 63.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 69.

all His divinity which brings the means of grace to His Table. This is what Wesley understood as the meaning of real presence. The dynamic presence of God in the full power of the Trinity is what the congregation will experience as they gather in worship through the celebration of the Christ event. It is in this event that the mystical presence of God through the blessing of the Lord's Table that He enters into the worshiping community of faith. Wesley expresses it this way in a Eucharistic hymn, "The cup of Blessing, blest by Thee, Let it thy Blood impart; The Bread thy Mystic Body be, and cheer each languid heart."²⁹ Wesley could not be more clear about his theology of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as we have seen in his correspondence, his sermons and this hymn. As Wesley pushed the Church of England toward spiritual renewal and established the work of Methodism in England and in North America, he used hymns to teach his theology of worship. John and Charles Wesley wrote more than 160 Eucharist hymns. These hymns can give us great insight into the Wesleyan theology of the Eucharist. Many of these Eucharistic hymns have theological language that speaks of the mystical presence of God. In one of the hymns, we find this verse: "But none, like this mysterious rite, which dying mercy gave, can draw forth all His promised might and all His will to save."³⁰ In this verse, Wesley speaks of the "mysterious rite" which is reflective of the conversation he had with his mother concerning real presence quoted earlier.

What is now seen in Wesley is the development of his theology of real presence into a hymn that becomes a part of the Eucharistic celebration in worship. Wesley uses this medium to teach the theology of real presence and makes it a vital part of the liturgy of the Eucharist through congregational singing. In another hymn he writes; "Memorial of Thy sacrifice, this Eucharist mystery the full atoning grace supplies and sanctifies our

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1996), 171.

gifts in Thee.”³¹ Wesley had no doubts that the Sacrament of the Lord’s Table was a channel of God’s grace through which humankind would receive the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Wesley believed this to be possible due to the mystical presence of Christ in the Eucharist, not a local bodily presence, but the risen Christ in all of His mystery. For Wesley, if the sacrament is only a memorial and void of His real presence, then it is empty as a means of grace through which the worshiper can experience the atonement. In a hymn that explains what happens at the Eucharist, Wesley writes; “Thou art with all Thy members here, in this tremendous mystery, we jointly before God appear, to offer up ourselves with Thee. True followers of our bleeding Lamb, now on Thy daily cross to die and, mingled in a common flame, ascend triumphant to the sky.”³²

The problem that many theologians have with Wesley is that he does not attempt to maintain a systematic theology. For him, the Eucharistic theology of real presence is a mystery and does not need to be defined but believed. It is here that Wesley connects with the early Church Fathers. So to put Wesley’s theology of the Eucharist, concerning real presence, in the Reformation camp at any level is to make a great error in judgment, because he clearly moves back to the early church and its beliefs.

Wesley believed that the Eucharist was one of the “ordinary means of God’s grace.” Therefore, the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine was an essential part. It is through the liturgy of worship with the Lord’s Supper as the central action, where the spiritual connection by the worshiper is made to the mystical presence of God. When this occurs, Wesley teaches that our spiritual life will grow in God’s grace and we will be empowered to live holy lives. In his sermon on this subject, titled “The Duty of Constant Communion, Wesley says,

The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by the bread and

³¹Ibid., 191.

³²Ibid., 196.

wine, so our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. This is the food our souls: This gives strength to perform our duty and leads on to perfection.³³

This is where Wesley's theology of the Eucharist has its richest meaning for the Church. He shows the true meaning to his understanding of the means of grace and how it is the foundation of our relationship to God. It is not only the means of our salvation, but it is the work of God's grace for our sanctification; the continual work of His will for our earthly journey, thus "dynamic."

The best way to give a summation of Wesley's understanding of real presence and its importance in spiritual lives is to quote his interpretation of a prayer by Thomas a Kempis. Wesley writes:

O Lord, in the Simplicity of my heart, at thy commandment, I come unto thee, with hope and reverence, and do truly believe that thou art present in this sacrament. Thy will is, that I receive thee, and that by love I unite myself unto thee. Where I implore thy mercy and crave thy special grace that I may wholly melt and overflow with love unto thee, and hereafter never seek any comfort out of thee. For this most high and worthy sacrament is the health of the soul and body, the remedy of all spiritual weakness; hereby my vices are cured, my passions bridled, temptations overcome, grace is infused, virtue begun, is increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and love inflamed.³⁴

The Eucharist as Sacrifice

This section of the purposes to explore Wesley's view of the atonement as it relates to the sacrifice of Christ and how His sacrifice is realized in the Eucharist. The work of the atonement has its power in the sacrifice of Christ as the Savior of the world. Wesley believed that the atonement is the focus of faith and where we find the whole meaning of the Gospel of grace. Wesley writes about his belief of the atonement in a

³³Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3:148.

³⁴John Wesley, *The Christian's Pattern*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 111-2.

letter to a friend. He says, "Indeed, nothing in the Christian system is of greater consequence than the doctrine of the atonement."³⁵ So why does Wesley believe so strongly about the doctrine of the atonement? He sees the benefits of the atonement, the justification and the sanctification of God's grace for humankind is essential to salvation. The doctrine of the atonement is the foundation for Wesley's theology of the means of grace and his Eucharistic theology. One begins to have a better understanding of Wesley's Eucharistic theology as it is placed in the context of the work of the atonement and the sacrifice of Christ. Wesley is consistent in all of his writings concerning our need for salvation. He places the initiative and cause of salvation in God. He writes, "The author of faith and salvation is God alone. It is he that works in us both to will and to do. He is the sole Giver of every good gift, and the sole author of every good work. There is no more power than of merit in man; but all merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us"³⁶ In the quote above, Wesley has outlined the framework of his Eucharistic theology. He is very evangelical in his views of salvation by faith yet, at the same time, believes as the early Church Fathers taught that the ordinary means of grace for salvation was accessed by the sacrament of the Lord's Table. As discussed earlier, Wesley believed that it is in worship we celebrate the Christ event as a drama in which the believer responds to the loving grace of God by coming to His Table of grace. The center of the Christ event is experienced in the sacrament which is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is here that Wesley goes much deeper in his theology of the Eucharist than any of the other Reformers. The full meaning of anamnesis for Wesley not only

³⁵John Wesley, *Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, 8 vols., (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 6:197.

³⁶Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 8:49.

brings the worshipper to the very presence of the Savior, but also puts them at the altar of sacrifice where the full atonement can be realized. It can be explained in one of the Wesley Eucharistic hymns. We read,

Father, behold Thy favourite Son, The glorious Partner of Thy throne, For ever placed at Thy right hand O look on Thy Messiah's face, And seal the covenant of Thy grace To us who in Thy Jesus stand. 2. To us Thou hast redemption sent; And we again to Thee present The blood that speaks our sins forgiven, That sprinkles all the nations round; And now Thou hear'st the solemn sound Loud echoing through the courts of heaven. 3. The cross on Calvary He bore, He suffer'd once to die no more, But left a sacred pledge behind: See here! It on Thy altar lies, Memorial of the sacrifice He offer'd once for all mankind.³⁷

Wesley moves beyond the simple meaning of memory as anamnesis and connects to the event through the mystery of the atonement. The true meaning of the sacrament is bringing the worshipper to the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Christ. There are more than twenty of the Eucharistic hymns that speak to this subject of sacrifice at the Lord's Table. Another hymn speaks with great clarity of the connection of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the sacrament of the Lord's Table. We read,

Father, to Him we turn our face Who did for all atone, And worship toward Thy holy place, And seek Thee in Thy Son. 2. Him the true ark and mercy-seat By faith we call to mind Faith in the blood atoning yet For us and all mankind. 3. To Thee His passion we present, Who for our ransom dies We reach by this great instrument Th'eternal sacrifice. 4. The Lamb as crucified afresh Is here held out to men The tokens of His blood and flesh Are on this table seen.³⁸

What we learn from this hymn is that the sacrifice of Christ provides us with the means of grace through the sacrament of the Lord's Table. The sacrament is more than a mere retelling of the story of the Christ event and the work of the atonement; it is the effect of what it represents. Therefore, the sacrament of the Lord's Table as anamnesis involves a

³⁷Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, 190.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 192.

total or complete worship experience. The sacrament serves as a representation of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Ole E. Borgen gives a summation of Wesley's theology of the Eucharist as sacrifice. He writes:

It is here that the whole miracle of salvation is revealed. It is here that we meet, for the first time, with what this author has chosen to call Wesley's doctrine of the "Eternal Now." The main Intention of Christ herein, was not the bare Remembrance of his passion; but over and above, to invite us to his sacrifice... to a Soul-transporting feast³⁹

What we see in Wesley's Eucharistic theology is an understanding that is much deeper than any of the Reformers. The great event of Calvary becomes powerfully real through corporate worship which is centered on the Christ event. By faith, the worshipper moves beyond human time and enters God's presence at the altar of His cross.

Practice of Communion

The practice of the Lord's Table has a very interesting history in the Methodist movement. Under Wesley's leadership from early on, he decided that all the Societies would be held only at times which would not conflict with any regular scheduled times of worship at the parish churches. He wanted all Methodists to attend the worship service at the local parish church and receive in the Lord's Supper. As time passed, the local parishes would not allow members of the Methodist movement to attend worship and receive the Lord's Supper. So this forced Wesley to build small chapels for the purpose of worship. He eventually allowed the Methodist Societies to hold worship services and celebrate the Lord's Table as ordained clergy were available. There was a problem, due to the strained relations between the Church of England and the Methodists. Most of the priests would not go to the Methodist Chapels and consecrate the sacraments. The result for Methodism was a celebration of the Lord's Table on a quarterly basis. As Methodism grew, the problem of limited ordained clergy only grew greater.

³⁹ Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 90.

Consequently infrequent celebration of the Lord's Table became a tradition which has remained for over two hundred years. There is now a movement within Methodism to a renewal of the week celebration of the Lord's Table, but as of now it is celebrated on a monthly basis.

John Wesley greatly influenced the Church of England and laid the foundation for the renewal of the weekly celebration of the Lord's Table in worship. His sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion," had a great impact on both the Church of England and the Methodist movement. Wesley writes; "I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can."⁴⁰ It was important to Wesley for the believer to realize how crucial this act of worship was because of its deep theological nature. In his sermon, he goes on to say,

Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian Sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day. Four times a week always, and every Saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament.⁴¹

The clarity of Wesley's thought is that besides the sacrament being the ordinary means of God's grace, there is the historical roots of the early church which set a strong pattern of Eucharistic celebration. In his closing remarks, he says, "It has been shown, First, that if we consider the Lord's Supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretence to Christian piety, who does not receive it [not once a month,] but as often as he can."⁴²

The personal practice of Wesley is a strong example of his personal desire to have the Lord's Table celebrated on a weekly basis. His journals and personal letters have

⁴⁰Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7:147.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 7:148.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 7:156.

recorded his thoughts and actions with careful detail. We can learn a great deal from these materials about Wesley's theology and daily behavior. In his journal, Wesley records his ministry activities showing that he preached the Gospel each day of the week, and told when and where that occurred. He gives us many details, dates, and places. And when he records, his actions on Sunday he writes, "I gave the sacrament at seven..."⁴³ The final document which Wesley gives to the Methodist Church of North America contains a very important preface which give an important insight into Wesley's thinking even at the end of his life. He writes:

And I have prepared a liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England which advise all the traveling preachers to use, on the Lord's day, in all congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesday and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the Elders [ordained clergy in Methodism] to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.⁴⁴

It is very evident that Wesley's personal practice of the Lord's Supper was very important in his daily life. What is also evident, is that he gives strong leadership to Methodism that the celebration of the Lord's Table was to be a weekly part of worship. The Lord's Supper was to be a vital part of the spiritual development of what Wesley believed to be a renewal movement in the Church of England.

The history of Methodism has an interesting story to tell. Its theological and ecclesiastical development has given many students a wide range of topics to research, debate issuers, and to write many masters and doctoral papers. This paper has set about to discuss Wesley's theology of the Eucharist in the context of the historical perspective of the renewal movement of his day and, looking at his theological perspective, to show that the Lord's Supper is the "means of grace" due to the real presence of Christ. Then

⁴³Ibid., 4:263.

⁴⁴White, *John Wesley's Prayer Book*, ii.

lastly, Wesley's consistency in theology with a commitment to putting into practice what he preached was developed.

Throughout his life, Wesley maintained a consistent theology of worship and a belief in the real presence of Christ in communion. Worship was to be the celebration of the Christ event and maintain a balance between the Word and Table. This was Wesley's main focus to the very end of his life. He wanted Methodism to be the spiritual means which brought liturgical worship to the Church. So the question then arises, as to why is this so important to understanding this as Wesleyans. The answer is not that complicated. For Wesley, an active faith required a dynamic presence in the Eucharist in order to have the power to bring to the worshiper the means of grace. At the heart of Christian worship, Wesley believed that the Word properly preached and the sacraments duly administered were absolutely necessary for the spiritual life of the Church. He wanted the Church to once again bring back to worship its historical roots, with its liturgy grounded in the Christ event, with the Word and the Table as the center of its celebration. Wesley believed that the Lord's Supper was the response to the Word preached which brought the worshiper before God in the proper position to receive God's grace.

The Table of the Lord, given to the Apostles by Christ himself, was ordained to be a sacrament which would unify all believers and witness to the world the grace of God. At the Lord's Table, all are one and blended together in faith through oneness in spirit and blessed as God's redeemed. When the Table of the Lord is celebrated in this atmosphere, the worship becomes the symbol for salvation, sanctification, and the assurance of faith. If one's faith is to be complete, the Eucharist should be celebrated each Lord's Day as Wesley practiced in his own life and instructed the Methodist

movement to do as well.

Wesley gives us the historical understanding and teaches that the Lord's Table is a converting ordinance. He showed that throughout the history of Christianity, the Lord's Supper was a sacrament to proclaim the Gospel with an evangelical call to sinners to receive the "means of grace" for their salvation. He preached the Word to awaken the soul to Christ, and upon conversion, he would lead them to the Church so that they could receive the sacrament of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Wesley was truly an evangelical that was grounded in historical liturgical worship which was centered in the Christ event. It seems as if Wesley was almost alone, among the reformers, in this understanding of the Eucharist as a converting ordinance. Early in his evangelical work of field preaching, he would send the new converts to the Church of England to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But soon that became very difficult because of the strained relationship between the Methodist Societies and the Church of England. Wesley had no other recourse than to begin offering the Eucharist on the Lord's Day to those who attended the Methodist services.

Wesley's theological position was in his sermons, hymns, and liturgy. The Eucharistic liturgy which he used began with an invitation and call to prayer. Before the people were invited to the Lord's Table, they were called to a time of prayer for confession and repentance. In order to have a deep appreciation for Wesley's use of the Lord's Supper in his evangelical work, you have to understand his thoughts on the Eucharist as a means of grace. For Wesley, the Lord's Supper was both a converting sanctifying ordinance. For some Wesleyans this is a difficult issue because of their legalistic view of salvation. They do not understand Wesley's theology as dynamic and

that the principle means of sanctification is love not behavior. Wesley's view of salvation has to do with a dynamic relationship of the love of God and humankind. He saw in the Eucharist, as a converting sacrament the dynamic presence of God's grace connecting in a powerful way forgiveness of sin.

To understand Wesley's Eucharistic theology as a means of grace for salvation, it must be placed in the whole context of the work of the atonement and its final victory in heaven. Wesley believed "that the Lord's Supper was ordained by God as a means of conveying to men preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace... That inasmuch as we come to his table, not to give him any thing, but receive whatsoever he see best for us, there is no previous preparation indispensably necessary, but a desire to receive whatsoever he pleases to give."⁴⁵ This belief not only shaped Wesley's theology but made a major impact on his practice of ministry and the mission of Methodism. The result had a tremendous spiritual impact on the Church of England and the work of Methodism which would change not only the practice of worship but the mission of the Church as well. Early in Wesley's ministry as a priest in the Church of England he would serve the Eucharist only to those who were baptized in the Church. But as his theological position on the understanding of the means of grace and the purpose of the Eucharist developed, they became central to the evangelical work of Methodism. So when will Free Methodism return to the rich heritage of our faith and use all the means of grace in our worship services.

⁴⁵ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:280.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP IN THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

Methodism has made a major contribution to Christianity and the work of the Church in North America. This chapter is not an extensive work on the history of Methodism or the Free Methodist Church. It will merely give a historical perspective of Methodism and a historical context of the Free Methodist Church in relationship to a study of John Wesley's theology of worship.

The Historical Context

The Methodist Episcopal Church had become one of the largest Protestant denominations by the nineteenth century. When Methodism began in England during the 18th century as a renewal movement, the spiritual condition of that country was in a deep spiritual decline. Leslie Marston describes England during that period this way, "Historians report that about one-half of the children of London were born out of wedlock; that every tenth person sold liquor, and every sixth shop, in the metropolis was a gin-shop."¹ Marston says that this moral decline had made its way into all areas of public and political life in England. The Church was affected as well by this moral decline and the clergy was in a state of both intellectual and spiritual decline. Marston

¹ Leslie Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness* (Indianapolis, IN.: Light and Life Communications, 1997), 19.

explains that “more serious than their intellectual deficiency was the moral disease of many clergy.”² The result of this situation was that the spiritual life of the Church and its passion for ministry to others through evangelism suffered greatly. The worship services lack spiritual vitality and the preaching contained little inspiration as the divine Word of God for his people. This was a critical issue which the early Methodist work attempted to correct. They believed preaching was an important part for maintaining a high level of spirituality and the Christian discipline for a holy life. Wesley understood that preaching was one of the means of grace through which the atonement would be experienced. Preaching and the use of lay preachers were critical in the work of Methodism in both England and North America. So when preaching lost its spiritual vitality, the renewal movement of Methodism criticized the leadership of the Church and then moved into the situation and provided an answer through field preaching. Marston goes on to say, “Sermons of that day lacked definiteness, urgency, and unction. The prophet had yielded the pulpit to the priest and the essayist.”³ What Methodism saw as the result of poor preaching was the spiritual and moral deadness of the Church and its inability to minister to society. Church attendance was on the decline, church facilities were being neglected and the negligence of the Eucharist in corporate worship was seen throughout the Church of England.

The leadership of John and Charles Wesley and the Methodist movement set out to correct the spiritual decline in England and to restore a proper discipline to the work of the Church. They put into practice a call to a holy life through the means of grace with an emphasis on preaching to the masses and receiving holy communion for

² Ibid., 20.

³ Ibid., 24.

spiritual strength. The Methodist movement was the catalyst for a great spiritual awakening which brought spiritual renewal to England and in a short time established a great work in North America. The Methodist work in America was not fully organized into a separate denomination until 1784. There was a great need for the many lay preachers to be ordained to give ecclesiastical leadership to the work and to be able to serve the sacraments. Wesley finally appointed Dr. Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury to be the Superintendents of the Methodist work in North America. Marston gives a good summary of these events. He writes,

Shortly after Dr. Coke's arrival in America, the famous "Christmas Conference" of 1784 was summoned. In this conference the preachers voted to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church, for which John Wesley had provided Articles of Religion, revised largely by abbreviation from the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and also a revision of the liturgy of the Church of England called the Sunday Service. These were adopted, but the latter never became popular and soon fell into discard without having been revoked by official act. The Articles of Religion, however, continue to this day as Methodism's statement of doctrine.⁴

Methodism grew rapidly through North America and established preaching circuits which would eventually become established congregations. The circuit was a geographic area which had several preaching point which the lay preachers or circuit riders, would travel and establish Methodist societies which would eventually become local congregations. Methodism began as an evangelistic work through the lay preachers going throughout the circuits preaching the gospel. The work on the circuit was strengthened by the quarterly meetings. The quarterly meetings were established for the purpose of connecting the circuit to the vision of Methodism. The quarterly meeting became an important part of Methodism which proved to be important for its success.

⁴ Ibid., 123.

Lester Ruth explains that the “standard features of the American version of quarterly meetings: two-day weekend format, business session, multiple preaching services, prayer meeting, administration of the love feast and the Lord’s Supper, administration of pastoral rites, the renewal of fellowship among Methodists.”⁵ The quarterly meetings in England were two-day events during the week for the purpose of conducting the business of the circuits. In North America, in a very short time frame, the quarterly meeting was moved to the weekend and was expanded to include times for significant spiritual gatherings. Ruth continues, “Originally designed as a business meeting to conduct certain affairs of the circuit, these meetings developed – particularly in America - into great worship festivals.”⁶ This would have a major impact on the development of corporate worship in North American Methodism. At this point in its history, preaching is the most important event in Methodism on a daily and weekly basis and the sacraments are celebrated on a quarterly basis. This was necessitated by the lack of ordained clergy and the system of circuit preaching. This would eventually become the model for worship in the America Methodism.

Another important influence of the quarterly meeting was that it became the catalyst of the camp meeting movement. Methodism was once in the forefront of changing the spiritual character of a nation. The camp meeting movement and the holiness associations began to move beyond the established Methodist Episcopal Church in its efforts to impact the spiritual life of America. From this group, a renewal movement developed which began criticizing the leadership of the Church for moving toward liberalism. They believed that the Church was failing in its mission of spreading

⁵ Lester Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below* (Nashville, TN.: Kingswood Books 2000), 22.

⁶ Ibid.

the gospel throughout the land and becoming too worldly minded. Preaching had become less than prophetic, and worship was too formal to have a spiritual impact on the worshipers. John M'Geary writes about this in his work on Free Methodism. He writes:

The decline in spiritual power and drift toward the world were rapid. The effort was no longer in the direction of promoting deep spirituality and thorough revivals of religion, but rather to some tone Methodism down as to render it attractive to the worldly-minded. In order that this might be done those doctrines and usages which had been the peculiar heritage of Methodism and had characterized the movement and made it a mighty agency for good in the hands of God must be set aside and others more palatable to the carnal mind substituted. The result of this was that in a few years the distinctive doctrines of Methodism ceased largely to be preached from Methodist pulpits, and the distinguishing practical features of Methodism which had always rendered them outwardly a peculiar people were no longer insisted upon.⁷

This criticism was voiced by several preachers and lay leaders to the denominational leaders. Many believed that the spiritual depth of Methodism was being weakened by the liberal direction of the Church. Edward Hart explains it this way:

Early in the fifties Rev.'s B. T. Roberts, Loren Stiles, Joseph McCreery and other members of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church saw, as they believed, evidences of a growing departure from scriptural Christianity and original Methodism. At the session of the Conference held at LeRoy in the fall of 1857 Rev. B. T. Roberts was tried and declared guilty of immoral conduct for writing, and publishing in the Northern Independent, an article entitled 'New School Methodism.'⁸

In this article, B. T. Roberts criticizes the leadership of the Conference and for its liberal direction of the theology and practice of ministry. He believed that the Conference leadership was moving them away from the original tenet of Methodism and weakening the message of holiness. His critical analysis of the direction of the Conference had

⁷ John S. M'Geary, *Outline History of The Free Methodist Church* (Chicago, IL: W. B. Rose, Publisher, 1917), 16-17.

⁸ Edward Payson Hart, *Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism* (Chicago, IL: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1913), 2.

denominational implications as well. His article on “New School Methodism” and was extremely critical of its impact on the Church. “New School Methodism was in Roberts’s opinion the liberalization of the core of Methodism, the call to a disciplined and holy life. He believed that ‘New School Ministers’ treat with distrust all persons of deep Christian experience.”⁹ The presiding Bishop gave Roberts a reprimand and sent him to his next assignment and told to cease his critical attitude toward the leadership of the Conference. The article was reprinted by George Estes without the permission of Roberts. This created a situation which caused a great deal of difficulty for Roberts and others in his camp. He was once again brought up on charges.

When the Genesee Conference convened at Percy, New York, in October, 1858, a charge of “Unchristian and Immoral Conduct” was again preferred against B. T. Roberts based upon the claim that he had published and circulated the above mentioned pamphlet. Regarding its publication Mr. Roberts says, “I never saw this article until some time after it was published, and was in no wise responsible for its publication.”¹⁰

Roberts did not deny writing the article or even still holding to his belief in its content. He simply denied having published it the second time. Even though George Bates spoke up and took full responsibility for its publication, B. T. Roberts was expelled from the Conference and left with no voice in the Conference. There were many within the Conference which voiced opposition to the action by the Conference which expelled Roberts. Marston’s work emphasizes what happened;

There followed the 1858 expulsions of Roberts and McCreery a series of resolutions from local Church bodies, condemning the proceedings against these men and denouncing those responsible for the expulsions. Many such resolutions were published in the Northern Independent which had asked concerning the expulsions, “Expelled for What?” The

⁹ Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness*, 187.

¹⁰ M’Geary, *Outline History of The Free Methodist Church*, 31.

editor predicted, “The public verdict will be that these men were expelled, not because they had done wrong, but because they were in a minority.”¹¹

The call for reform was not silenced by this action. Several preachers and many lay people were forming small prayer groups to maintain their cause for reform within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Their desire was for reform not separation. B. T. Roberts knew his final hope was in an appeal to the General Conference. Many believed that the General Conference would restore Roberts as a member of the Church and restore his ministerial credentials. Then the reform movement would be able to gain momentum again. But this was not the outcome. Edward Hart tells what took place at that General Conference. “Brother Roberts took an appeal to the ensuing General Conference which met in the Spring of 1860, at Buffalo, New York. The appeal was not entertained. All hope of redress being cut off, these men of God knew of no way but to organize a new Church, which organization was effected at a convention held at Pekin, New York, August 23, 1860.”¹² The reform movement was now becoming a new denomination. The Free Methodist Church would be born out of controversy with a vision to keep alive what they believed to be “Old Methodism.” The driving principle to accomplish their passion was holiness preaching with revivals and camp meetings as their method for continual spiritual renewal. This would have a major impact on the development of their theology of worship and the use of the experiential model for corporate worship.

The Free Methodist Church did not come into existence because of a Church split, but because the doors of reform and change were closed. Bishop Wilson T.

Hogue, Church historian, writes:

¹¹ Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness*, 207.

¹² Hart, *Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism*, 3.

The Free Methodist Church had its origin in necessity, and not in choice. It did not grow out of secession, nor out of an unsuccessful attempt to bring a reform in the government of the Church. Those concerned in its formation never expected a separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, until they were unjustly excluded from its pale. They sought redress at the proper tribunal. It was not granted. Even a candid hearing was denied them. Thus thrown out, and the possibility of a restoration being cut off, and believing that still called them to labor for the salvation of souls, they had no alternative but to form a new organization. In doctrine, discipline, and spirit they were Methodist, and hence they could not offer themselves to any other denomination. The issue on which they were thrust out was between dead formalism, and the life and power of godliness.¹³

The driving passion of Free Methodism centered upon the preaching of scriptural holiness everywhere and ministry to the poor. This was the vision which had its roots in the early history of the Methodist movement under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley. Bishop Hogue explains, “The Free Methodist Church claims to have been providentially raised up, as Wesley said of the Methodist of his day, ‘to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.’¹⁴ The leadership of Free Methodism believed that the way to accomplish this mission was through worship services centered upon holiness preaching, revivals, and camp meetings all across the nation.

Free Methodism a Revival Movement

The early leadership of Methodism had a deep concern for the spiritual character of the Church and its influence on society. The core work of Methodism in North America was its connectionalism through the circuits and the quarterly meetings. In

¹³ Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church* (Chicago, IL: The Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915), 4-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

time, Methodism grew into a large denomination and the preaching points in the circuits became local congregations. The quarterly meetings changed from only business sessions to include preaching and Sunday worship. As Methodism developed and evolved as a denomination, so does the quarterly meeting. Lester Ruth describes the role and development of the quarterly meeting in early Methodism:

Methodists belonged not so much to a parish or congregation as to the Connection. Quarterly meetings provided the opportunity for the circuit to assemble as a worshipping community. When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, it appears that its leaders relied upon this already existing phenomenon as they ordained enough preachers to at least be able to provide sacraments and pastoral rites in these settings. Quarterly meetings' festival status was not permanent. A series of factors in the nineteenth century eventually eroded their liturgical role. Fore one thing, the decline of active itinerancy by ordained Methodist preachers meant an ever increasing growth of congregations with ministers in residence and also a greater sense of identification with a particular parish. There was less occasion and motivation to assemble for quarterly meetings. They eventually regained their original purpose: to serve as business meetings only, surviving in that role among man branches of twentieth-century Methodism.¹⁵

When Methodism became more structured as a mainline denomination, the circuits became Conferences and the quarterly meetings returned to a business format, the spiritual emphasis of spreading holiness across the land suffered greatly. The role of evangelism almost disappeared when the circuits gave way to Conferences. However, Methodism found a new means for its passion of holiness in the Camp Meeting movement. The circuit preachers now had a new vehicle to fulfill their calling and to keep a revival fire burning within Methodism. This was an important development in the history of American Methodism. Ruth explains,

By the end of 1802 the spotlight began to shift, at first slowly, to the camp meeting. By 1812, camp meetings most frequently took center

¹⁵ Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below*, 211.

stage in Methodist accounts. Although not pushed into total obscurity, quarterly meetings were eclipsed. Whereas an itinerant's journal in the 1780's would inevitably place quarterly meetings at the heart of a "work of God" on his circuit, by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century this limelight was usually captured by accounts of his camp meetings. If Methodists had gone to school at quarterly meetings to learn how to combine worship and evangelism in a large extended setting, camp meetings showed that they had graduated to something larger within a few years after the emergence of the Second Great Awakening.¹⁶

This became an important transition in the spiritual life of Methodism. The camp meeting was seen as a spiritual time for renewal and evangelism. The quarterly meetings and Annual Conferences became times of business sessions and vision casting. This separation plays a key role in the development of an environment from which Free Methodism will come. As each Conference began to develop and grow in number of churches, it also saw the development of an annual camp meeting. Each year these camp meetings would have a full slate of preachers calling the Conference to spiritual revival. Often the camp meetings would be at the same time as the Annual Conference. The Annual Conference would conduct its business during the day and the camp meeting services would be at night. The camp meeting movement became so large that a separate association was formed to coordinate its work. This would eventually prove to be a serious mistake. Most of the evangelical Methodist preachers left their pulpits and places of influence with the Conferences and went into fulltime camp meeting work. The result was a shift in leadership within Methodism. The positions of leadership which had been previously filled with the conservative pastors were now being filled by a more pastor of a liberal mindset.

By the time the nation approaches the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal

¹⁶Ibid., 187.

Church had become the largest protestant churches with a liberal leadership at control of its government. The camp meeting through its independent structure no longer had an impact on the decision process in Methodism. It did continue to have a strong influence on a large group of laity with the Church still loyal to the camp meetings. It is here that we see how important the camp meetings were to the development of Free Methodism. Almost all of the leaders which formed the Free Methodist Church were influenced by the camp meeting and had a great spiritual awakening at a camp meeting altar. David McKenna writes about B. T. Roberts and his call to preach.

In the 1840's, a student a Wesleyan College in Connecticut named Benjamin Titus "B.T." Roberts heard the evangelist Dr. John Wesley Redfield preach during a campus revival. Although Roberts had been converted earlier and changed is career plans from law to ministry, the ministry of Redfield stirred his soul with a passion for revival that he never lost. In one sense, when the intellectually gifted and socially sensitive Roberts confessed Jesus Christ a his Lord and Savior and responded to the call to ministry, the first seeds of Free Methodism were sown.¹⁷

B. T. Roberts went into pastoral ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church with a revivalist mindset and a love for the camp meeting. His leadership in Free Methodism was grounded in a deep commitment to revivalism and ministry to the poor. This was not direction which was difficult for early Free Methodist to agree with because their experiences and passion were very similar to Roberts. The Free Methodist Church became a denomination which had revivalism at the core of its DNA. Bishop Marston explains it this way, "In the early years, when the young Church was primarily an evangelistic movement, little legislation on evangelism was necessary. Every pastor, district chairman and general superintendent was an evangelist, and the principle task of

¹⁷ David L. McKenna, *A Future with a History* (Indianapolis, IN.: Light and Life Communications, 1997), 22.

the Church was evangelism of a very distinct, revivalistic type.”¹⁸ Free Methodism believed its highest purpose was to maintain the ministry of “Old Methodism” and the preaching of holiness throughout the land. The local church would use the revivalist style for its worship services and the camp meeting would be means for spiritual renewal for the Conference. The emphasis upon revivalism had a major impact upon the theology and practice of worship in Free Methodism. Preaching and personal experiences at an altar call became central in corporate worship. This will be discussed in or detail in the next section of this chapter.

There was a very interesting event early in Free Methodist history concerning revivalism. A young preacher named Vivian A. Dake had organized an evangelistic group called “Pentecost Bands” and was very successful in expanding the work of the Church. Bishop Hogue in his historical on Free Methodism writes,

For a number of years “Pentecost Bands,” mostly of young people, had been organized in the central west and also in some other parts of the work, for evangelistic purposes. The originator of the movement was Vivian A. Dake, an able and stirring young preacher of the Michigan Conference. Mr. Dake was their chief leader. They were filled with a most commendable degree of zeal, and gathered much precious fruit into the Free Methodist Church.¹⁹

These Bands were a natural outgrowth of a denomination which had revival DNA structure. These Pentecost Bands were a movement which grew out of passion for the lost and were not part of the leadership strategy on the Conference. This caused a problem for the Conference because they had little control over its direction. So they wanted to put a stop to its development. Marston tells us that

¹⁸ Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness*, 432.

¹⁹ Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church*, 2 vols. (Chicago, IL: The Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915), 2:194.

These bands had developed under the ardent and devoted leadership of Rev. V. A. Dake, but along lines outside the established channels of Church authority. In time they developed a strenuous if not strained spiritual emphasis and a growing resistance to denominational control. The 1890 General Conference attempted to bring these bands into line with Church authority by adopting a set of rules to govern bands and their operations, but these regulations were unsatisfactory to the leadership of the movement²⁰

The result was a separate organization was developed and the Free Methodism lost a powerful means to reach a new generation of young people. "In its dealings with the Pentecost Bands, the Free Methodist Church came the nearest repeating Methodism's historic pattern of action against 'irregulars.' A more moderate course might have conserved to Free Methodism the zeal of this movement which had been fruitful in bringing a considerable harvest into the Church."²¹

This is perhaps a turning point which began the journey of Free Methodism from a reform movement into a traditional denomination. The evangelistic drive and the rapid growth of Free Methodism came to an end at this point. The action of the General Conference and the attitude of the leadership seemed to plant a new attitude within Free Methodism concerning its outreach to others. A maintenance mindset developed and revivals and camp meeting became methods of spiritual renewal for those within the Church. The emphasis of reaching others was weakened and Free Methodism became caught up in trying to preserve the past. This added to the denominations difficulties of expanding its work in North America. Marston explains his view of this difficulty. He writes, "A major explanation offered of the Church's slowing down was the subsidence of the aggressive evangelistic spirit that had characterized the first generation, as the

²⁰ Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness*, 435.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 435.

Church withdrew into itself to devote its energies more to saving itself and converting the past than to saving sinners outside the pale.”²² The leadership believed that the answer to this problem lied in a stronger emphasis on holiness preaching and more revivals in the local churches. This would bring about more devotion by the people and push them to become more evangelistic. This has proved to be an ineffective means to bring either spiritual or numerical growth to Free Methodism in North America.

The leadership of Free Methodism in its second century of history began to view revivalism in a different way. They do not have the high view of revivals and camp meetings as their predecessors. The change of our culture to the high tech society of today, the leadership looks at revivals and camp meetings as methods of the past and not relevant for today. In a research project to discover the future leadership of the Free Methodist Church, a comparison of attitudes were surveyed and put into a profile chart. It is learned in that survey, taken in 1995, that “past leaders gave significantly higher ratings of importance than future leaders on the crisis experience and on revivals and crusades as the primary mode of evangelism.”²³ In that same report, an interesting attitude was also discovered. It gave a comparison of the convictions of local pastor’s and the laity. What was learned is that “Both groups agreed on the low importance of revivals and crusades as the mode of evangelism for the growth of the Church.”²⁴ This was a major shift in thinking from early Free Methodism for both clergy and lay. The Bishops of the Free Methodist Church are now leading our denomination to become an apostolic movement in purpose and mission.

²² Ibid., 447.

²³ McKenna, *A Future with a History*, 277.

²⁴ Ibid.

Worship in Free Methodism

The rich heritage of worship in Methodism is still in the discovery stage. There are several factors which helped shape the theology of worship in Free Methodism. Those factors which helped to shape its worship were; the sociological, political and religious settings of the day. None of these influences have been more important than the hymnology of John and Charles Wesley, field preaching, and the Sunday Service given John Wesley to the Methodist Societies of North America. Worship in American Methodism was shaped more by cultural circumstances than by theological principles. The Sunday worship service was centered upon preaching, congregational singing, and testimonies by the people. The sacraments and other liturgical services were celebrated as part of the quarterly meetings when the ordained clergy were certain to be present. This became an established tradition very early in American Methodism. The impact of this on the development of corporate worship and a theology of worship is significant. It is here that the experiential model for worship is established and has been the model to this day. The Sunday Service that Wesley gave to the Methodist Church along with his instructions to celebrate the Lord's Supper on each Lord's day were not put into practice in the Methodist Episcopal Church or Free Methodism. Lester Ruth give us some insight to what took place.

In reality the Sunday Service – its rites and its assumed liturgical rhythms had to be grafted onto an already functioning set of Methodist ritual patterns; it did not arrive in America to be inscribed upon an ecclesiastical. By 1784 American Methodism had been operating for some time with a much loved set of liturgical practices as a group of United Societies (to use the original Methodist terminology). For example, two-day, weekend quarterly meetings were already a well established liturgical setting for American Methodist by this time. They

were deeply convinced that a history of God's blessing validated their forms of ministerial itinerancy and connectional worship. They could not be expected simply to set these aside. The real question for them was how to fit the "extras" [including the Sunday Service], which they received with ecclesiastical organization, into how they already worshiped as a societal movement.²⁵

The setting aside the Sunday Service and the weekly celebration of the Lord's Table were not based on theological research but on cultural and practical means. So less than one generation from Wesley's leadership, Methodism was developing a new tradition for worship. This was certainly driven by cultural differences and the lack of ordained clergy to fulfill the needs of a growing Church. Even though congregations were being established, the development of enough ordained clergy lagged behind. This created an inconsistency in the observance of the Lord's Table in corporate worship. The lay preachers became the foundation of the leadership in American Methodism. Therefore the tradition of preaching became the centerpiece for the worship service on Sunday. The liturgy for the Lord's Table remained relatively unchanged but was only a few times a year corporate worship on Sunday. The Sunday Service which Wesley left to Methodism remains in the Book of Discipline almost without change, but its use by the Church is very rare. The changes to the worship service in American Methodism have been caused by cultural and social trends. Even the Lord's Table, is not insulated from cultural influences. "In particular, the setting and constituency of Eucharistic observance were dramatically influenced by the growth in numbers and the 'settling' of Methodist clergy."²⁶ This situation speaks of the practice of the Lord's Table within the worship experience of Methodism. It is important to note that their liturgy for the

²⁵ Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below*, 213.

²⁶ Ibid..

Lord's Table and the theology of the Eucharist does not change only the practice and frequency within the Sunday Service. Ruth explains,

Early American Methodists would likely be startled by the accusations that they did not value the Lord's Supper, or that it did not hold a central place in their piety. They regularly scheduled it for one of their most important and greatly anticipated settings for worship, the quarterly meeting. In that setting they frequently linked it to one of their most loved rituals, the love feast, and thus surrounded the sacrament with the most intense, enjoyable fellowship context imaginable.²⁷

This would set the attitude and pattern of worship in American Methodism and be the tradition for the development of worship in the Free Methodist Church. This tradition has not been challenged until recently. There is now a call for liturgical renewal of worship to return to a true Wesleyan theology and practice of worship. This movement is lead by the Order of St. Luke and a group of pastors wanting the Sunday Service to be used again in Methodism. This would be a change from the experiential model to the Trinitarian model.

The influence of the revival movement and the camp meeting association, Methodism was moved deeper into the experiential model from its early days. As the Methodist Church grew up and became more a traditional denomination, a new vision began moving the Church in a different direction. But even as the revivalism began to fade, the experiential model centered upon the preaching of the Word remained strong in Methodism. Yet there was a group of conservative pastors and lay people who believed the liturgy was too formal and lacked spirituality. The holiness movement, which was born in the revivals of the camp meeting, called for a return to a revivalism and holiness preaching. This was the seedbed of controversy which brought about the situation for

²⁷ Ibid., 215.

the formation of the Free Methodist Church. When the Free Methodist was established, one of its major criticisms of the Methodist Episcopal Church was directed at the formalism of worship. The early leaders of Free Methodism believed strongly that the Methodist Episcopal Church had become spiritually dead partly due to poor preaching and liturgical worship. In writing about this issue, David McKenna says,

When B. T. Roberts published his paper on “New School Methodism” in 1857, the nature and meaning of worship became one of the most volatile points of contention. Without regard for personal risk, he issued a stinging rebuke against statements published in the Buffalo Advocate that denied Christianity as a system of devotion, demeaned worship as an affront to God and taught that emotional expression in worship is a detriment to the “development of genial and humane dispositions and formation of habits of active, vigorous goodness. Against this background of controversy, it is no surprise to find that the founding principle of Free Methodism regarding freedom and order in worship tips the balance toward freedom. In his rebuke against formal and fashionable worship as promoted by the New School Methodist, Roberts called for “... free churches, congregational singing, and spirituality, simplicity and fervency in worship.”²⁸

B. T. Roberts and the others who formed the Free Methodist Church believed that part of the spiritual deadness within American Methodism was caused by the lack of holiness preaching and the formality of public worship. This sets the direction which will move Free Methodism deeper into the experiential model of worship. Preaching and the altar call will take center stage in Free Methodism as they attempt to recapture the old days of the circuit riders and the quarterly meeting. This is seen in Roberts criticism of the leadership on the Genesee Conference just before he is expelled. He writes in his article on “New School Methodism”:

Differing thus in their views of religion, the Old and New School Methodists necessarily differ in their measures for its promotion. The latter build stock Churches, and furnish them with pews to accommodate a

²⁸ McKenna, *A Future with a History*, 49.

select congregation; and with organs, melodeons, violins, and professional singers, to execute difficult pieces of music for a fashionable audience. The former favor free Churches, congregational singing, and spirituality, simplicity and fervency in worship. They endeavor to promote revivals, deep and thorough; such as were common under the labors of the Fathers; such as have made Methodism the leading denomination of the land.²⁹

Roberts, in his quote from an article on “New School Methodism,” he believes there is an important contrast between Old School and New School Methodism which must be understood. His point of contention is that the New School Methodist no longer promotes revivalism upon which early Methodism built their work. Worship that once centered on the revivalist style has given way to formalism. This has led to spiritual deadness in the Church. Free Methodism would guard against this spiritual deadness in worship by all means and maintain simplicity in worship at all costs. Free Methodism established their belief on the “Old School” and shaped their worship to reflect a revivalist style. It is important to note that the liturgy for the sacraments, both the Lord’s Table and Baptism was included in the Book of Discipline with little change. The practice of these services in corporate worship remained on the quarterly basis. Free Methodism did not change the theology of the sacraments as a means of grace or its importance to the spiritual life of the believer. The sacrament of the Lord’s Table, along with the other liturgical rituals of Methodism were retained in Free Methodism but were not made an active part of weekly corporate worship. Bishop Marston explains this action,

As is true of groups generally that hold to the tradition of free worship, ritual has occupied by a minor place in its worship. However, the special occasions when ritual is the order have made a contribution of value to the stability and the spiritual depth of the congregation. Most important of the church’s ritual services is the Communion of the Lord’s Supper, which in

²⁹ Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness*, 576.

Free Methodism follows historic Methodism in essentials of content, form and rubrics. The high regard in which the church has held its heritage in this area is disclosed in the resistance would-be innovators have encountered from the General Conference in their attempts to make changes in the ritual of the Communion.³⁰

Here we see the tension between the free-style worship service and the desire to maintain a high liturgical view of the sacraments. The answer for Free Methodism was to keep a high view of the Eucharist, but to use it only as a special service of worship. The rich heritage and work of John Wesley in the Sunday Service and liturgy of the Lord's Table has remained a part of the Book of Discipline for Free Methodism from its very beginning. The use of the Lord's Table as a means of grace is seen as an important part of the spiritual life of the Church but, by practice, has made it secondary to preaching.

The issue of simplicity in worship was a deeply held belief by early Free Methodists because it was their answer to high-church formalism which they believed was one the causes for the spiritual deadness of Methodism. They believed that high-church liturgy, the use of choirs, musical instruments and the ornate church buildings distracted the worshiper from the simplicity of God and weakened their spirituality. In their understanding, simplicity in worship space and form provided a better opportunity for the Holy Spirit to impact the life of the believer. This has certainly been a major guiding principle in the theology of worship in Free Methodism. Bishop Marston once again provides us a better understanding of this issue. He says,

Free Methodist worship is a going concern with worship-centered music, reverent and simple sacramental ritual, simplicity of physical arrangements with a quickening concern for attractiveness, believers' participation with freedom of spiritual spontaneity expected and

³⁰ Ibid., 339.

appreciated – all providing a warm setting for the ministry of the Word as the focal feature of the service. But certain changes have occurred, some of them changes that brought alarm to sober Methodists a century ago. Instrumental music and choirs are accepted – and who will say that, in general, they are not remaining within bounds of the church's clearly defined principle? Standing for prayer in public worship instead of kneeling is increasingly common: God forbid the time would ever come when Free Methodists are content to remain seated! Seldom now is a worshiper seen to kneel quietly in his pew when he takes his place – or even to bow his head, for a moment of silent prayer.³¹

As the Free Methodist Church moved into its second century of history time and change would affect its style of worship. These changes are slow and painful for many. The most obvious change was the addition of choirs and the addition of musical instruments into corporate worship. Nevertheless the principle of simplicity of form and buildings remain strong to this day. In closing remarks, Bishop Marston said,

Free Methodism today holds a strategic position in the area of worship. It maintains simplicity and earnestness, with restraint against an undue liberty that sacrifices true devotion by exalting the flesh on the one hand, and maintains a vitality that resists the creeping death of ritualistic formalism on the other. There seem to be little danger now that the church will veer from its course into the extravagances of the former, but may it guard against the subtle pull of the liturgical current, and refuse to take on forms and symbols to induce the mood of worship while allowing the fire of devotion to die down on the altar of the heart. Only this can it minister to the inner experience of cleansing and power in the freedom of the Spirit in the congregation.³²

The leadership of Free Methodism has been strong to maintain simplicity of worship and keep preaching the center of corporate worship. They want to maintain the revivalist style because they believe that a set liturgy leads directly to spiritual deadness.

So where is Free Methodism today in its theology of worship? There has been significant change that has opened the door for an adjustment in the attitude toward

³¹ Ibid., 355.

³² Ibid., 358.

liturgical renewal. Revivalism and the camp meetings of the conferences are almost dead and Free Methodism has not been spared the worship wars of modernity. Many are asking questions about worship and seeking a richer context to express their praise to God. In the Book of Discipline, the section devoted to the theology of Christian worship contains more favorable language to the rituals of the church than ever before. It reads:

We believe rites and ceremonies of the church are to be accorded respect. Members should not through private judgment willfully and purposefully disregard the rites of the church to which they belong... Public worship in our churches shall seek a balance between freedom and form. Preaching shall be emphasized as a means of edifying believers and converting sinners. All public worship shall be in the language of the people.³³

This opening statement of the theology of worship in Free Methodist Church gives an indication of a possible change in attitude toward a liturgical model for worship. There is at the least a directive to have a balance between a free-style of worship and a liturgical form. It is important to note that preaching is still the centerpiece of corporate worship. This is an endorsement to the experiential model which is deeply entrenched in Methodist history and doctrine. This is certainly clear in the doctrinal statement in the Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church. It states:

The Sunday morning corporate worship service should provide four basic results: (1) to provide opportunity for the praise of God; (2) to give worshipers insight into the will of God; (3) to lead individuals to commit themselves personally to God's revealed will; and (4) to strengthen the dedicated person to perform the will of God. To accomplish these desired results, each service should include congregational singing, reading from the Scriptures, pastoral prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and preaching. The apostolic benediction is recommended for dismissing the congregation. Others services shall include congregational singing, prayer, reading from the Scriptures, and preaching. On occasion, sharing, healing of human hurts and other forms of worship may be used. The order of services should avoid routine by providing fitting variations in worship forms

³³ Carol Bartlett, ed. Chair, *The Book of Discipline 1999* (Indianapolis, IN.: The Free Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 66.

within the limitations of propriety, the Scriptures, and specific rituals when used [Chapter IX]. By precept and example, the minister shall insist on reverence and a worshipful attitude before, during, and after worship.³⁴

This section is the defining doctrinal statement that makes up the current theology of worship for the Free Methodist Church. What is quoted above is the first part in the section of the Book of Discipline that gives direction to what is titled Christian Worship. It is obvious that this first part is the most important section, because it gives the principle by which its theology of worship is developed. This statement is a classical description of the experiential model where preaching is central to the worship experience. It is important to note that the Lord's Table is not mentioned in any way in this section. It is only referred to in the fifth section in relation to the Love Feast. It must be made very clear that the Free Methodist Church has a high view of the Lord's Table. Its theology of the Eucharist has not changed from the work given to Methodism by John and Charles Wesley. The practice of the sacrament of the Lord's Table is used in a secondary role as the means of grace to the primary means of preaching. This is a critical issue that must be discussed if Free Methodism is going to be able to move to the Trinitarian Model for worship and have a balanced center of the Word and Table.

Worship and the Doctrine of Holiness

This section of the chapter is going to briefly discuss the doctrine of holiness referenced by Wesleyan understanding and how that relates to corporate worship. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the role of corporate worship to the experience of

³⁴ Ibid.

sanctification in the life of the believer. The centerpiece of our discussion is John Wesley's belief that corporate worship must offer all the means of grace for the worshiper. The means of grace as Wesley understood them were the teaching of the Word, the sacrament of the Lord's Table, and prayer. The very heart and passion of Wesley were a concern for the salvation of the lost and the spiritual maturity of the believers. The result was an emphasis upon the teaching of the doctrine of atonement from preventing grace to sanctifying grace. This emphasis has been at the heart of Free Methodism from its very beginning. The doctrine of holiness is preached from our pulpits and has a prominent place in the Articles of Religion in the Book of Discipline. There seems to be an important part of Wesley's teaching on this subject as it relates to the Lord's Table which the holiness movement and the Wesleyan churches have not embraced. This is important because it has to do with how we move from infant faith in Christ to the dynamic life of a sanctified believer and the continual journey of faith. The holiness movement believes that preaching and an altar experience is the means by which the sanctified life can be maintained. Wesley teaches that it is not only preaching but the Lord's Table which will give the believer the spiritual strength to move into the sanctified life and the strength to continue to grow in that state of grace. So why should we discuss this in the context of worship. It helps one to discover that our model for worship should be the Trinitarian Model rather than the Experiential Model which most Wesleyan and holiness churches use.

There is an important question to ask. Why does Wesley insist upon the weekly celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Table? Many Wesleyan scholars and Methodist preachers explain this by pointing out his Anglican heritage and his love for

high church liturgy. That is only part of the answer. The best answer comes through understanding his theological belief of the doctrine of the atonement and his view that the sacrament is a true means of grace. Wesley writes:

That the Lord's Supper was ordained by God, to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities. That the persons for whom it was ordained, are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God, either to restrain them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God. That inasmuch as we come to his table, not to give him any thing, but to receive whatsoever he sees best for us, there is no previous preparation indispensably necessary, but a desire to receive whatsoever he pleases to give.³⁵

Wesley insists that on every Lord's Day, we should come to the Table to receive God's preventing, saving and sanctifying grace. The teaching or preaching of God's Word and the Christians disciplines for growth are the standards in Wesley's life. His insistence of spiritual growth through the sacrament of the Lord's Table has been rejected by the holiness movement and much of Methodism. In the Wesleyan and holiness traditions they believe that the experience of salvation and sanctification will come by responding to preaching at an altar of prayer. This is usually accomplished by two trips to an altar of prayer which the person gains the two works of grace. Wesley agrees that preaching is necessary and the experience of salvation and sanctification is by faith in response to God's grace. But Wesley has a deeper understanding of God's grace. He writes:

In the ancient Church, every one who was baptized communicated daily. So in the Acts we read, "they all continued daily in the breaking of bread and prayer." But in latter times, many have affirmed that the Lord's Supper is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance... But experience shows the gross falsehood of that assertion, that the Lord's Supper is not a converting ordinance. Ye are witnesses, for many now present know, the very beginning of your conversion to God was wrought at the Lord's Supper.³⁶

³⁵ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:280.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 279.

Wesley does not lessen the role of preaching in this process nor does he want anyone to lessen the role of the sacrament of the Lord's Table as the saving or sanctifying grace of God. The experience of holiness has been the subject of theological debate for centuries. Many believe that Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification can only be received by an altar experience in response to holiness preaching. Some believe that the experience of entire sanctification is experienced only through growth in grace. Wesley would speak of both as part of the dynamic life of holy living. Wesley did not develop a systematic theology of holiness which set an exact pattern which all believers must follow to achieve the sanctified life. He did not define the experience but he did define the means. The means of God's saving and sanctifying grace would be found in the worship experience as we hear the Word preached and the sacrament of the Lord's Table shared. Wesley writes of the Lord's Table; "The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins, and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and the blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: This gives us strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection."³⁷ Wesley believed that theology must be lived in experience. The experience of entire sanctification is dynamic and one gains continual strength to live in holiness by the spiritual presence of Christ in our lives through Holy Communion. This is a view which is outside the tradition understanding of holiness in the Wesleyan and holiness denominations. Some would insist this is a major shift in our theology of worship and the doctrine of holiness. It is certainly a significant change but one that would bring a consistent theological position with the teaching of John Wesley.

³⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7:148.

In order to facilitate a change in the practice of the Lord's Table and align it with the doctrinal statement of entire sanctification, the statement on the Order of Public Worship cited earlier needs to be rewritten. The statement could read,

The Sunday morning corporate worship service should provide four basic results: (1) to provide opportunity for the praise of God; (2) to give worshipers insight into the will of God; (3) to lead individuals to commit themselves personally to God's revealed will; and (4) to strengthen the dedicated person to perform the will of God. To accomplish these desired results, each worship service shall be developed from the Trinitarian Model and offer the means of grace; (1) the teaching of the Word, (2) the sacrament of the Lord's Table and (3) prayer. The liturgy of worship should provide a means for the congregation to experience a fresh expression of praise and adoration to God. The worship services should include: the reading of scripture, all forms of prayer including the Lord's Prayer, congregational singing, the teaching of the Word, the Lord's Table, the anointing with holy oil, the offering, and the sharing of praises in testimony. The apostolic benediction is recommended for dismissing the congregation. By precept and example, the minister shall insist on reverence and a worshipful attitude before, during, and after worship.³⁸

This statement would provide a consistent theology of worship with a doctrinal position of holiness that would be consistent with the teachings of John Wesley in the Book of Discipline in the Free Methodist Church of North America.

To live in a generation that has just seen the turn of a new century is exciting and challenging. As the 21st century brings change to our world, so the Church will go through changes as well. The theology of worship must be grounded upon the Word of God and have a consistent theological understanding of worship with our Wesleyan theology of holiness. The world in the 21st century will bring many challenges to the Church. One of those challenges is the ever changing landscape of worship styles. Corporate worship must not fall victim to the emotional trends of generational thinking. The only way to insulate worship from generational trends is to firmly establish a

³⁸ Rob McLaren, legislation to the General Conference, 2003.

theology of worship which is centered upon the Christ event and use the Trinitarian Model. The best way for this to be realized is to use the four-fold pattern as the basic model for corporate worship. The liturgies of worship for the Free Methodist Church are located in the Appendices B thru H.

CONCLUSION

The biblical and historical materials which have been discussed lead to one very important conclusion concerning corporate worship. The primary corporate act of worship must be developed upon the Trinitarian Model and celebrate the Christ event.

There must be a balance between the Word and the Table. Many Protestant worship traditions have weakened the role of the Lord's Table and placed it in a secondary position to the Sermon. This clearly moves worship outside traditional historical Christianity. This paper has developed a theology of worship which believes that corporate worship must be built upon the means of grace in the spoken word of Christ and the Embodied Word of Christ through the Eucharist. This, in essence, is what is meant by the phrase, Christ-centered worship. The liturgy that is used for a Christ-centered worship experience must follow the four-fold pattern and use the Incarnational or Trinitarian Model.

The first chapter developed a theology of ministry in mission which would be consistent with historical Christianity and the practice and teachings of John Wesley. There were several important truths discovered about the theology of ministry through the study of the scriptures and the work of the early Church which impact our theology of worship. The first truth for a strong foundation of ministry is to discover the will of God through which a vision for ministry can be established. Once this is determined, the clergy must train and disciple the laity to do the work of ministry in order to fulfill the mission which God has given to the Church. This principle was

the foundation of the theology of ministry for the early Church but was lost to the later generations of Christianity. It must be recovered in order to bring back to the Church a spiritual vitality for the work of ministry. The work of ministry is not what takes place within the walls of church buildings but what takes place through the lives of the believers to others. The key principle which guided the public ministry of Jesus was that the will of God was the highest goal for his mission and purpose for ministry. The development of his public ministry involved the recruitment, training and sending of his followers into the world to do the works of ministry. From this the disciples learned the principle tool by which the ministry of Christ would be carried on through the Church. The Church would continually make disciples and send into the world for the purpose of doing the work of ministry. The importance of corporate worship is vital to the work of ministry. The role of the clergy is not only to teach and disciple the believers for the work of ministry but also to lead them in corporate worship. Corporate worship is critical to a theology of ministry because it is through worship that the spiritual strength and passion for ministry is received. When the Corporate act of worship offers the means of God's grace through; the teaching of the Word, the sacrament of the Lord's Table, and prayer the believer is strengthened and empowered by God's very presence. This is the strength needed to fulfill God's will and purpose in ministry. This model for ministry guided the early Church throughout the first few centuries of Christianity. By the time of the modern era, the theology of ministry had been drastically changed to the point that ministry was completely redefined. The work of ministry, by the time of modernity, had been taken out of the hands of the laity and placed in the ranks of the clergy. And in effect, ministry was removed from the world and brought within the walls of the Church. The result was total weakening of the theology of ministry and its impact still affects the Church today. This is a very serious theological error which must be corrected.

There are several renewal groups within the Christian community which are attempting to correct this error and reestablish a biblical theology of ministry in mission.

The second chapter begins to develop a theology of worship. The first step was to take a very brief look at both the Old and New Testaments for a few key principles to build a foundation. The biblical foundations for worship are critical because they give us the proper vantage point and purpose for corporate worship. The proper vantage point must be from God's perspective. The corporate act of worship is the most important activity of the Church. There is no greater way to honor God than for the Church to gather and worship Him. This is the most important concept to a proper theology of worship. Through the study of the scriptures, it was discovered that God must be the central focus of corporate worship.

The guiding question for this chapter was, "What is Worship?" Worship is a celebration of the actions of God in the atonement which provides the means of God's grace for all humankind. In this celebration, the people of God offer up a spiritual sacrifice of praise to God for all His mighty acts of redeeming grace. True spiritual worship must be God-centered. In both the Old and New Covenant, it is God who acts and humankind that responds. In corporate worship, the believers respond to God through a timeless liturgy that honors the redemptive work of God.

In the Old Testament there are two concepts that are critical to our foundation for building a biblical theology of worship. The first concept that we need for a biblical theology of worship is that God must be the focus of worship because He is the creator and sovereign Lord of all the earth. It is very clear that the Torah teaches that humankind is to hold God is the highest of honor and respect. It is the Lord our God which established a covenant with Abraham and all humankind through which we might be saved. Worship is about honoring and glorifying

God for all his mercy. It is not about the individual needs and desires of the worshiper. With the passing of time, and the eroding of theology, the focus of worship has shifted from God to a self centeredness. The second concept that we must have for our theology of worship is a sense of humility, submission, and adoration. This comes from the phrase, "bow down." This phrase is found throughout the Old Testament and teaches us the proper attitude for a worship experience. Worship is more than simply going through a liturgy in corporate worship. It is connecting with God at a deep spiritual level.

This can only be accomplished with a proper attitude as we "bow down" before Him.

The New Testament understanding of remembrance and sacrifice will guide this study as we find its truth for a biblical theology of worship. Remembrance and sacrifice are critical because the New Testament teaches us that at the heart of Christian worship is an event. The event is the life and ministry of the Christ. His sacrifice made a full and complete atonement through which all humankind could find forgiveness and mercy. In worship, the privilege of reconnecting to that event in the celebration of the Word and Table are provided. The New Testament teaches that it is here that we have the deepest connecting point to God in an intimate and spiritual level. It is in worship that the covenant with God becomes realized in a personal way. It is in the New Testament that we gain the understanding of a personal encounter with God in worship. The theology of the New Testament offers the atonement through the sacrifice of the Christ and it is in the worship experience that we gain access to His grace and mercy. The very presence of God can be experienced through the teaching of the Word and the sacrament of the Lord's Table every time the body of Christ gathers for corporate worship. This is the principle which must be at the center of a biblical theology of worship.

In chapter 3 we discuss the cultural and generational influences which have caused

changes to the liturgy of the Church. Throughout the centuries as Christianity spread throughout the world, the various cultures changed corporate worship in various ways. None of the changes over the centuries have had a more negative impact as the changes which resulted from the Protestant Reformation and the Modern Era. By the time of the Modern Era had arrived, Catholicism around the world had weakened the preaching and teaching of the Word to a point of insignificance and most of Protestantism weakened the sacraments to the point of emptying them of God's grace and elevated preaching to an unhealthy spiritual level. By the end of Modernity much of Protestantism had moved the central focus of worship away from preaching, to music, to a self-centeredness that moved God to the background altogether. The three models of worship were briefly discussed in order to put some perspective to the process. The Unitarian Model has a very humanistic approach to worship. This model is rejected for many reasons but primarily because it rejects the Trinity and has no view of a Christological view of salvation. The Experiential Model is the model used by most Protestant churches today, and centers its focus upon the sermon and the preacher. The essence of this model teaches that it is through the *Kerygma* (preaching) that Christ is experienced by the congregation when they respond to the sermon at an altar of prayer. This model explains how to gain God's grace and mercy as a result of responding to the preaching of the Word of God. The center of worship in this model is preaching and the preacher then becomes the primary actor. This describes the primary problem with this model. God is, in essence, replaced as the focus of worship. The means of God's grace is no longer centered on the Christ event. This model must be rejected and replaced with the Incarnational or Trinitarian Model. The model which was used by the early Church as recorded in the Book of Acts and which was the basis for corporate worship in the early centuries of Christianity was the Incarnational or Trinitarian Model. This model places the

Trinity as the focal point of worship and the Christ event as the divine drama to be celebrated. In this model, the focus of worship is not the experience of God's grace, but God Himself. This shows the most significant difference between the Experiential Model and the Trinitarian Model. The Experiential Model seeks the presence of God and the means of grace through preaching. The Trinitarian Model seeks the presence of God by coming to Him through Incarnational worship which celebrates the Christ event. In the celebration of the Christ event, the scriptures in proclamation will retell the story of God's atoning work in Christ and the Table of the Lord will provide the means of grace through the sacrifice of Christ as a fresh experience by the congregation. This is the only way we can fulfill the call of Christ to "spiritual worship." The Trinitarian Model offers us the only framework to build a biblical theology of worship.

Chapter 4 gave us the Wesleyan perspective to our theology of worship. John and Charles Wesley had a deep love for the Church of England. Yet they saw the deep need for spiritual renewal within the ranks of the clergy and the laity. John was determined to lead a revival movement that would bring renewal to his Church. The result was the Methodist movement. Field preaching, prayer, and a disciplined life marked their work. In some ways their love for worship and liturgical renewal has been lost to many Methodists until recently. The impact of Methodism to Christianity is something that is well- documented. The focus that this paper brings attention to is the emphasis which John and Charles Wesley give to liturgical renewal and their Eucharistic theology. The Wesley brothers were priests in the Church of England and had a deep love for the liturgy of The Book of Common Prayer. Many Protestant scholars use this to dismiss their work in this area believing that their perspective was somehow compromised by their traditions. A brief historical perspective is given and a discussion of Wesley's field preaching and evangelistic work are developed.

The important aspects to a Wesleyan theology of worship are a balance of the teaching of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Wesley believed that worship must be centered upon God. God is to be worshiped and honored and when that takes place then the congregation will be strengthened through the presence of God. Worship then is the connecting point between God and the worshipper. Therefore worship must be designed in a proper way, meaning biblical and historical in nature. Wesley's believed that the liturgy of The Book of Common Prayer is the proper liturgy for that to happen. It is in corporate worship that God is honored and the means of grace are given. What are the means of grace? Wesley used the teaching of the Book of Acts to answer this question. They are the Teaching of the Word, the Lord's Table, and prayer. So how do we gain these wonderful means? It is Wesley's belief that through corporate worship we would receive the means of grace and through that grace we would be empowered to serve the Lord in the mission of the Church. Wesley maintained throughout his life both in the Church of England and the Methodist movement that the Lord's Table should be celebrated every Lord's day. An important question that must be asked concerning the Eucharist, What does Wesley believe about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist? Wesley studied the classical Eucharistic theology of the early Church Fathers, the Roman and Eastern Catholic theology and the views of the Reformers. He rejected the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation and most of the Reformers views as being unscriptural. It is true that there are strong ties to Wesley's view of real presence and that of John Calvin. They both speak of the real presence in terms of a spiritual presence. But what do they mean by a spiritual presence? Wesley describes the spiritual presence of Christ in terms of His Divinity. He believed that the whole Trinity is present within the Eucharist giving the benefits of the means of grace through the sacrifice of Christ. Calvin believed that the spiritual presence was in

terms of power communicated by the Holy Spirit. Wesley seems to be more aligned with the work of the early Church Fathers on the subject of real presence and the Eastern Catholic view of mystery. His position is described as a dynamic or living presence, meaning that where God acts, there he is. What Wesley understood in the early Church Fathers on this subject, and what he believed to be scriptural truth brought him to the conclusion that there is no need to define in any way the great mystery of God.

The work of the atonement has its power in the sacrifice of Christ as the Savior of the World. Wesley believed that the atonement is the focus of faith and where the whole meaning of the Gospel of grace is realized. It is at this that Wesley speaks of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrament is more than a retelling of the story of the atonement in Christ; it is the effect of what it represents. Therefore, the sacrament of the Lord's Table as *anamnesis* involves a complete worship experience. The sacrament serves as a representation of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The great event of Calvary becomes powerfully real through corporate worship as the worshiper experiences in a fresh way the grace of God at the altar of Christ. Wesley's theology of worship moved beyond the pages of his work and impacted his very living. He believed to his very end that at the center of corporate worship the Church must celebrate both the Word and the Table on every Lord's Day. He challenged the Church of England to restore its use in public worship and instructed the Methodist Societies to use the liturgy (which included the celebration of the Lord's Table) he had given to Dr. Coke as the primary order of worship on Sundays. It was Wesley's deepest belief that the Eucharist was a critical part for worship because it was a means of God's saving, sanctifying, and keeping grace.

Chapter 5 briefly traces the roots of Free Methodism in relationship to the theology and practice of worship. The Free Methodist Church of North America has its roots in the Methodist

Episcopal Church of North America. In 1858, a group of reformers were expelled from the Genesee Conference in New York. In 1860, they formed a new work of Methodism in North America. One of the issues that this group was concerned over was the spiritual deadness of worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Their reaction to this spiritual deadness was to assign it cause to weak preaching on holiness and the formal liturgy of worship. The result was an emphasis on preaching and a freedom of expression in worship. Revivalism and camp meetings became the vehicle which Free Methodism used to bring about spiritual vitality to the Church. The result was that the Experiential Model was entrenched as the means to freedom in worship. These decisions were made out of an emotional reaction rather than based upon a biblical research or a true Wesleyan theology of worship. It is interesting to note that within the Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church that the liturgies that Wesley left to Methodism remained apart of the ritual section with little change. Yet their use in Free Methodism is infrequent and in some places not at all. The leadership of Free Methodism has been strong to maintain a simplicity of worship and to keep preaching at the center of corporate worship. There is a deep love and appreciation for the Lord's Table, but its practice is infrequent. There is the desire to maintain the revivalist style because this provides the best atmosphere for a freedom in worship. Another critical issue with Free Methodism was the weakness of holiness preaching by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The doctrine of holiness is one of the core beliefs in Free Methodism. The question of how a holy life is maintained is discussed in this chapter? The traditional answer by Free Methodism is that it is through preaching and a response to an altar of prayer. The answer that Wesley gives is that the holy life is maintained through the constant use of all the means of grace which includes the Table of the Lord. There is within Free Methodism today a call for liturgical renewal and develop a theology of worship that is consistent with our

Wesleyan heritage.

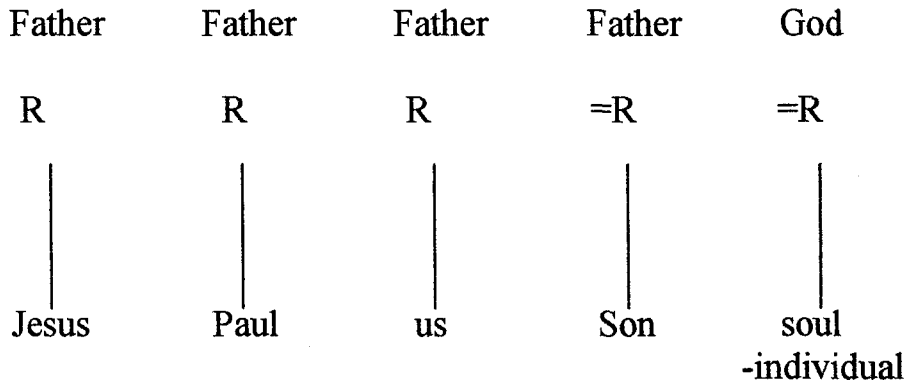
The basic pattern of worship and four services of worship of the Word and Table are developed for the Free Methodist Church and are found in the appendices. The basic pattern of worship is developed from the Book of Acts and the early Church. This basic pattern consists of four parts, The Entrance, The Word, The Table, and The Sending. This basic pattern should shape our liturgy for corporate worship. This four-fold pattern will guide the development of the liturgies given in this paper. The four services of worship that have been included in this paper were adaptations of services within the Methodist tradition. They will follow the four-fold pattern and use the Trinitarian Model to develop the liturgical movements of the worship services. There is a balance of the Word and Table in each worship service. There are four services which give the ability for some freshness and within each service of worship there is opportunity for the free expression of praise and adoration by the congregation. The rich liturgy of the worship does not weaken the ability for the freedom of the spirit to work within the corporate worship service, but it actually provides a genuine opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in more freedom. The liturgy of worship provides the framework through which the believers can come into the very presence of the Almighty. There is nothing more refreshing in this world than to come face to face with God. Corporate worship is where that is made possible. As the psalmist proclaimed, [let us] “enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; and give thanks to him and praise his name.” (Psalm 100:4).

APPENDIX A

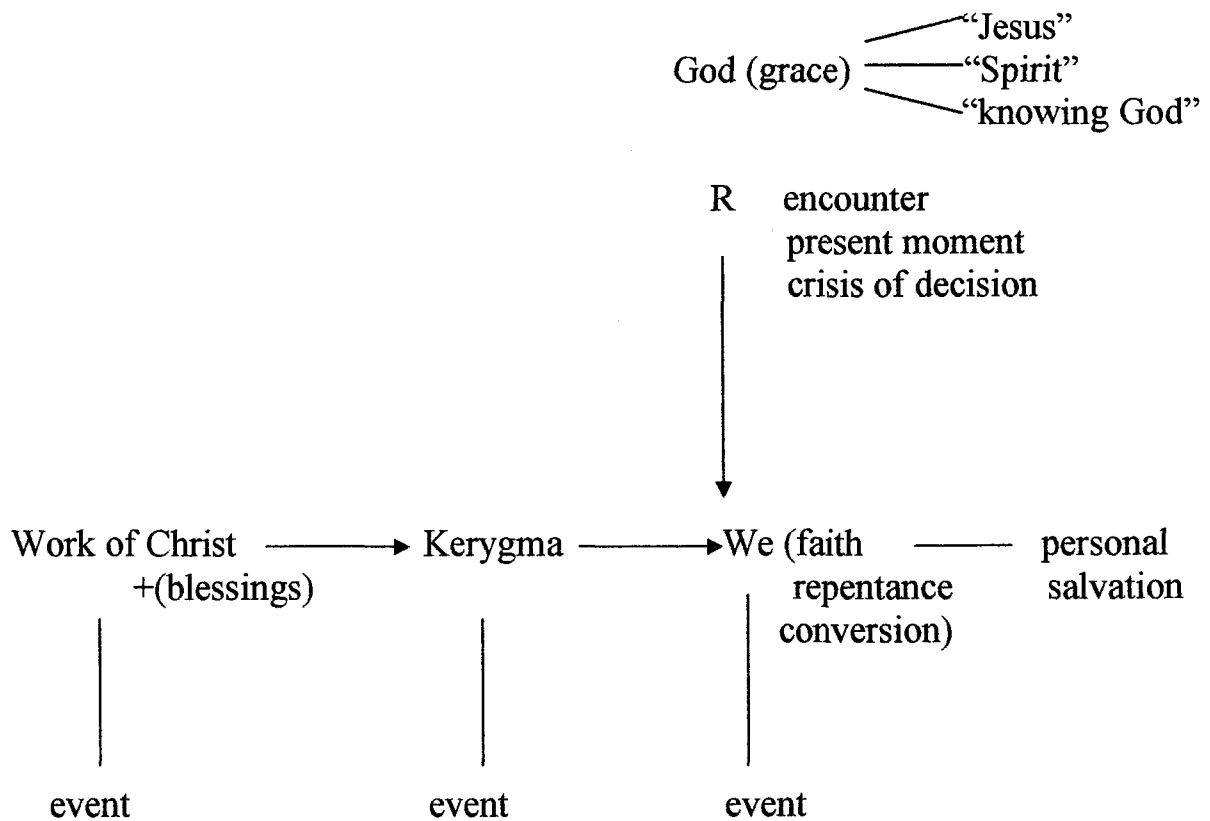
This material is from Torrance, *Worship, Community & The Triune God of Grace*, 26-28.

MODELS OF WORSHIP

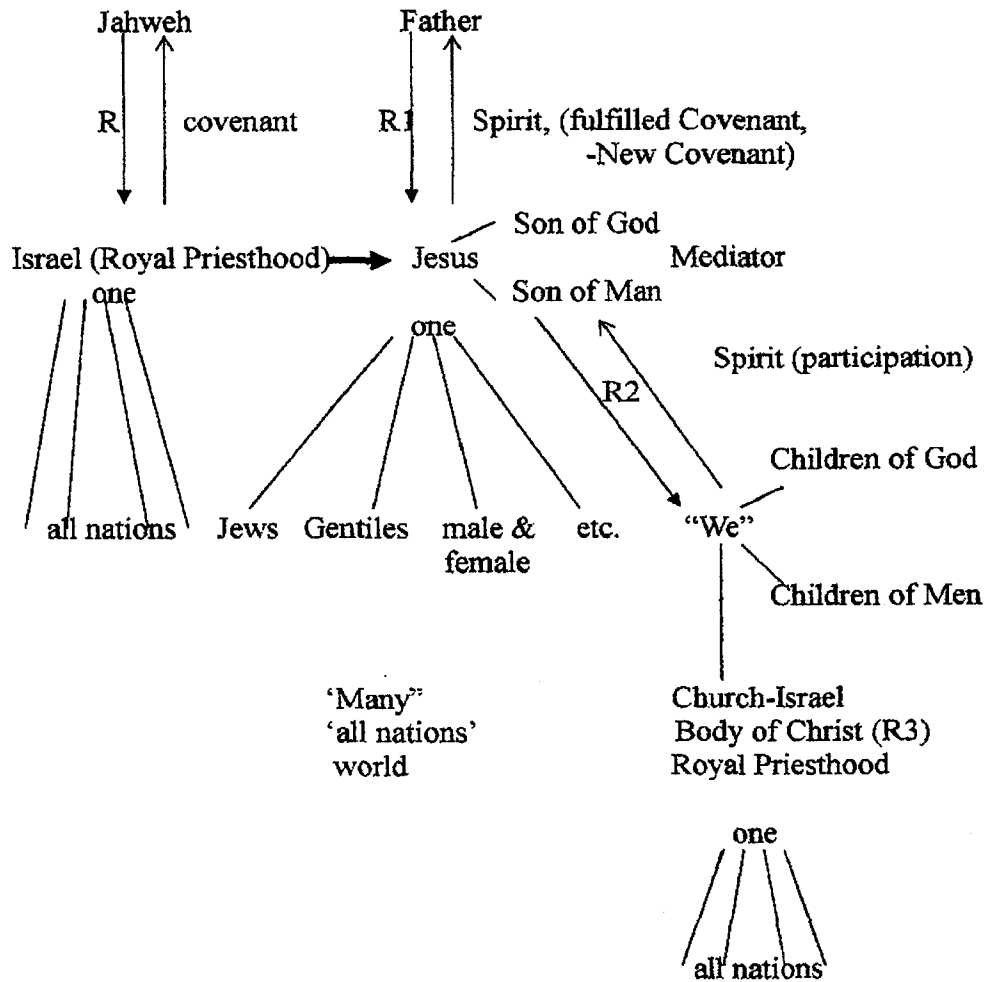
The Unitarian Model (Harnack, Hick - Liberal Protestantism)



The Experiential Model (early Barth, Bultmann, evangelical experience)



Trinitarian, Incarnational Model (Nicaea, Calvin, McLeod Campbell, Barth)



Note: R=Relationship

APPENDIX B

This section of the appendices, from B thru E will be four services of the Word and Table which can be used as the primary corporate worship service for Free Methodism. The first two services are an adaptation from the Free Methodist services of Holy Communion which is found in the *Book of Discipline* and the *Pastor's Handbook*. The other two services are adaptations from *The United Methodist Book of Worship* and *The Book of Common Prayer*. It is important to vary the services of the Word and Table to keep them fresh.

A SERVICE OF THE WORD AND TABLE I

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God. There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. This silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The People: And also with you

The Pastor: The risen Christ is with us.

The People: Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

(This can be an extempore prayer or the traditional collect which can be a unison prayer).

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: 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 Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting).

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

The Pastor and People pray: Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons may be the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be a ministry in song or a congregational song).

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

Silence (This is time for personal prayer and meditation).

The Apostles' Creed

The Pastor and People: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

The Pastor: Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

The People: We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us.

The Pastor: Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

The People: Forgive us. Cleanse us.

The Pastor: Give us strength to serve and please you in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And now we pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power,

and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Assurance of Faith

May Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to Him, with repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Great Thanksgiving

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

ALL SAYING: (This may be sung or said) Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of host!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your Table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your Table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

(Here a communion hymn or a spiritual song may be sung)

Consecration of the Sacraments

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

The Pastor laying his hands upon the bread says: In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." The Pastor laying his hands upon the cup says: In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Words of Distribution

The Pastor lifting up the bread says: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. The Pastor lifting up the cup says: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Pastor continues to pray: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

The Lord's Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist.

The Prayers of the People

Here the prayers of the People are offered in intercessions, petitions, and thanksgiving by the Pastor and lay ministers. Spontaneous prayer may be offered by members of the congregation as well. It is during these prayers that the anointing of holy oil may be offered for a blessing or healing of those who would like to respond to God's grace. At the close of these prayers the Pastor or lay minister may say: Lord in your mercy. The people will respond: Hear our prayer. Words of praise or testimony may be given.

Worship in Giving

Offering of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering)

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation)

OUR SENDING

The Blessing (The Pastor gives the Apostolic or other blessing)

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; and may the blessing

of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever.

Amen.

Closing Song (A closing hymn is sung by the congregation during the recessional)

The Pastor: Go in peace and love to serve the Lord.

The Congregation: Thanks be to God.

APPENDIX C

A SERVICE OF THE WORD AND TABLE II

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God.

There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen.

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. The silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you and the Holy Spirit be with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

(This can be an extempore prayer or a written collect which can be a unison prayer)

Give us, O merciful Lord, your forgiveness and peace. For in You there is no limitation to mercy, love, and grace. Help us to find your presence, for we are empty without your touch. Grant us your presence so that we may live in your boundless blessings. All the night and all the day we need your constant care and the heavenly gifts we receive will bring glory and honor to your name. Amen.

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting).

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Almighty God, who has spoken to us through your Son, let your written work now be spoken and heard by each of us. Give us ears to hear and hearts to understand, that we would not refuse your calling or ignore your voice. May we all be taught by your powerful Word. Bring our every thought captive to obeying Christ, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons may be the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be a ministry in song or a congregational song).

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

Silence (This is time for personal prayer, confession and meditation).

The Lord's Prayer

(This prayer may be said or sung) Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

The Pastor and People: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from True God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he

is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Assurance of Faith

May Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to Him, with repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

The Pastor and People: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Maker of all things, Judge of all people, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness and deliverance to all who turn to you with hearty repentance and true faith, we confess that we have sinned against you and are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us, O merciful Father, have mercy upon us; pardon and deliver us from all our sins: from blindness of heart and lack of love; from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil; from false doctrine and neglect of Your Word; from anxiety and lack of trust. O God, our Savior, keep us this day without sin. Give us strength to serve and please you in newness of life, and to honor and

praise your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Petition

The Pastor: Almighty God, You have so faithfully watched over us, and so graciously helped us; now hear our petitions: for good health and sound minds, for strength to earn our bread, for rest from worry and labor, for safety and protection from our enemies, for our families and for our nation. Out of Your compassion give us those things which are good and proper for our souls, and protect us by Your might in all our tribulations. Grant us in this world the peace that is from above, and bring us to everlasting life in the world to come, through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The Intercession

The Pastor: Almighty God, who created the world from nothing, and who sustains it by Your powerful Word, support and protect us that we may serve You as Christ Ambassadors in Your world, and to that end hear our prayers for those in need:

(Here the prayers of the people are offered in intercession, petition and thanksgiving by the Pastor, lay ministers, and people. Spontaneous prayer may be offered as well.)

The Pastor: Thank you, o Lord for hearing our prayers of intercession.

The People: Amen.

(Here may be sung a communion hymn.)

The Great Thanksgiving

The Pastor: The Lord be with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

The People: We lift them up to the Lord.

The Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord.

The People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

The Pastor: We give thanks, O Lord God, for all your goodness at all times and in all places. You have shielded, rescued, helped, and guided us all our days and brought us to this hour, letting us once again worship You and seek Your presence. Blessed are You, Lord God, Ruler of all creation; for by Your goodness we have this bread from the soil and this fruit from the vine. It is always right and proper that we should give You thanks and praise, O Lord God, for You alone reign. You judge the world in righteousness and rule over all the nations. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying: (All Proclaiming) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Glory be to you, O Lord, Most High. Amen.

The Pastor: Almighty God, You created us to enjoy Your fellowship; and even when we transgressed Your command, You did not forsake us, but loved us as a merciful Father; You called Abraham from the land of his fathers, and freed the children of Israel from bondage and slavery; you gave Your law and sent Your prophets to guide them in your ways; At the right time you gave the world Your only Son, who by His birth of a virgin, and through His temptations and ministry, His suffering and death, His resurrection and

ascension, opened to us the way to heaven; You sent Your Holy Spirit, the counselor, who through the apostles and the church, called us to salvation; you adopted us and daily give us aid in the journey of faith by the same Spirit. Our hearts are full, O God, and in thanksgiving to you we cry, Abba, Father. In confidence that You will bring us to our full inheritance, and give us our place at the heavenly table with Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, we offer thanksgiving, joining our voices with all the church to confess:

(All Proclaiming) Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again.

Glory To God

(All Singing) Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Prayer of Approach

The Pastor: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send the power of Your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may experience anew the suffering, death and the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. May Your Spirit help us to know, in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup, the presence of Christ who gave His body and blood for all. And may your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in service to all the world. Amen.

Consecration of the Sacraments

The Pastor laying his hands upon the bread says: In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

The Pastor laying his hands upon the cup says: In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying: "Drink of this, all of you,

for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Words of Distribution

The Pastor lifting up the bread says: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. The Pastor lifting up the cup says: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Lord’s Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist. The Pastor closes the Lord’s Table with an extempore prayer of thanksgiving.

Worship in Giving

Offer of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering).

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering).

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation).

OUR SENDING

The Blessing (The Pastor gives the Apostolic or other blessing)

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

Closing Song (A closing song is sung by the congregation during the recessional).

The Pastor: Go into the harvest field and serve the Lord!

The People: We go in the name of the Lord!

APPENDIX D

A SERVICE OF THE WORD AND TABLE III

(This service of worship is an adaptation from the *United Methodist Book of Worship*)

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God.

There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. This silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you

The Pastor: The risen Christ is with us.

The People: Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

(This can be an extempore prayer or the traditional collect which can be a unison prayer)

O Gracious Father, your name is exalted through all eternity. You have called us to be

your own. Receive us in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, that we might be strengthened by his grace and hear his Word so that we might celebrate his mighty acts of redemption. To you, O Gracious Father, beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit be all glory and honor now and for ever. Amen.

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting).

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today.

Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons may be the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be a ministry in song or a congregational song).

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

Silence (This is time for personal prayer, confession and meditation).

The Lord's Prayer

The Pastor and People: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

(The Apostles' Creed could be sung or chanted by the congregation)

The Pastor and People: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Here the prayers of the People are offered in intercessions, petitions, and thanksgiving by the Pastor and lay ministers. Spontaneous prayer may be offered by members of the congregation as well. It is during these prayers that the anointing of holy oil may be offered for a blessing or healing of those who would like to respond to God's grace.

At the close of these prayers the Pastor or lay minister may say: Lord in your mercy.

The people will respond: Hear our prayer. Words of praise or testimony may be given.

(Here may be a spiritual song or prayer song in preparation for Holy Communion)

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

The General Confession

Pastor and People: Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be obedient to your holy will. We have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pastor: Hear the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

The People: Praise the Lord!

The Great Thanksgiving

The Pastor: The Lord be with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

The People: We lift them up to the Lord.

The Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

The People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

ALL PROCLAIMING: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Consecration of the Sacraments

The Pastor prays: O God you are holy, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age.

The Pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread, or lift the bread says: On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread,

gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." The Pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the cup, or lift the cup says: When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith. All Saying: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

The Pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and wine and prays: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. And now let us pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray. All praying: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Words of Distribution

(The bread and the cup are given to the people, with these words being exchanged).

The Pastor or lay minister: The body of Christ, given for you. The People: Amen.

The Pastor or lay minister: The blood of Christ, given for you. The People: Amen.

The Lord's Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist. At the close of the Eucharist, the Pastor prays: Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Worship in Giving

Offering of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering).

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering).

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation).

OUR SENDING

The Blessing (The Pastor gives the Apostolic or other blessing).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

Closing Song (A closing song is sung by the congregation during the recessional).

The Pastor: Go forth in peace to serve the Lord. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The People: Amen.

APPENDIX E

A SERVICE OF THE WORD AND TABLE IV

(This service of worship is an adaptation from *The Book of Common Prayer*)

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God.

There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. This silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The People: Amen.

The Pastor: I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

The People: We have come to give praise and worship the Lord.

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

(This can be an extempore prayer or the traditional collect which can be a unison prayer).

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are

hidden: 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 Jesus Christ

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting) .

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

The Pastor and People pray: Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons may be the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be a ministry in song or a congregational song).

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

Silence (This is time for personal prayer and meditation).

The Prayers of the People

Here the prayers of the People are offered in intercessions, petitions, and thanksgiving by the Pastor and lay ministers. Spontaneous prayer may be offered by members of the congregation as well. It is during these prayers that the anointing of holy oil may be offered for a blessing or healing of those who would like to respond to God's grace.

At the close of these prayers the Pastor or lay minister may say: Lord in your mercy.

The people will respond: Hear our prayer.

The Apostles' Creed

The Pastor and People: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

(Here may be a communion hymn or a spiritual song for communion)

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

Our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repents of their sin and seek to live in peace with God and one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

The General Confession

The Pastor and People: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Silence (This is a time for personal prayer and meditation).

Affirmation of Faith

The Pastor: May Almighty God, who caused light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, cleansing us from all our sin, and giving us His mercy and grace through the sacrifice of Jesus our Christ. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Pastor: The Lord be with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

The People: We lift them to the Lord.

The Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

The People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

The Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you

Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name: All singing: Holy, Holy, Holy, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

The Pastor continues: Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. Jesus stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself; in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

(The Pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread, or lift it).

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(The Pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the cup, or lift it). After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith: All proclaiming: Christ has died. Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The Pastor continues: We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son,

the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom. All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is your, Almighty Father, now and for ever. And now as our Savior has taught us to pray, we now pray,

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Words of Distribution

The Pastor may lift the bread while saying: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve you soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. The Pastor may lift the cup while saying: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Lord's Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist. At the close of the Eucharist, the Pastor prays: O God, our heavenly Father, you have graciously invited us into the eternal family of the Redeemed, through Christ our Lord, and you

have fed us with spiritual food in the sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and holiness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

These words may be exchanged while serving the sacrament:

The Pastor or lay minister: The body of Christ, the bread of heaven. The People: Amen.

The Pastor or lay minister: The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. The People: Amen.

Worship in Giving

Offering of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering).

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering).

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation).

OUR SENDING

The Pastor: Let us Bless the Lord.

The People: Thanks be to God.

Closing Song (A closing song is sung by the congregation during the recessional).

The Pastor: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

APPENDIX F

A SERVICE OF INFANT BAPTISM

(This service of worship is an adaptation from the Free Methodist Pastor's Handbook.)

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God.

There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. This silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The People: And also with you

The Pastor: The risen Christ is with us.

The People: Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

(This can be an extempore prayer or the traditional collect as a unison prayer).

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no

secrets are hidden: 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 Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting).

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

The Pastor and People pray: Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson). The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons there may be the reading or singing of the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be a ministry in song or a congregational song).

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

Silence (This is time for personal prayer and meditation).

THE SACRAMENT OF INFANT BAPTISM

(This ritual is an adaptation from the Free Methodist Pastor's Handbook).

God, through Moses, made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." And on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, "The promise is to you and to your children." It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents/parent now bring this child to offer her/him in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation to bring her/him up in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

The Pastor's prays: Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving covenant with your people and who, out of your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before you in families; we thank you that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to you, and offer them in baptism in steadfast hope that they will cleave to your covenant

and live to your glory. We entreat you for this child that she/he may be delivered from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to you by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine assistance, so that both by instruction and example they may lead this child in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Questions to the Parents/Parent

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this Church, solemnly dedicate this child to the Lord? Answer: We/I do.

2. Do you, so far as you are able on her/his behalf, renounce Satan and his works, the lure of the world and the sinful desires of fallen humanity, so that in the training of this child you will not be led by them and so that so far as you are able, you will keep this child from following them? Answer: We/I do.

3. Will you faithfully strive by the word and example to lead this child to personal faith in Christ? Answer: We/I will.

4. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments? Answer: We/I do.

5. Out of them, will you diligently teach this child the commandments and promises of the Most High God, raising her/him in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

Answer: We/ I will.

Question to the Congregation

The congregation will now stand. Let us acknowledge our duty to strengthen this family with prayers and encouragement, thus assisting both parents and child to fulfill all that

has been promised.

Congregation will you support this family with your prayers and love and be for them an extended family for spiritual and moral strength? Answer: We will. Let us reaffirm our faith and commitment to the Lord by saying together the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles' Creed

The Pastor and People: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Blessing of the Water

O Eternal Father, when nothing existed but chaos, you swept across the dark waters and brought forth light. In the days of Noah you saved those on the Ark through water. When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt, you led them to freedom through the sea. Their children you brought through the Jordan river to the promised land. In the Fullness of time you sent Jesus, who was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit. He called his disciples to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection and to make disciples of all nations. Pour out your Holy Spirit, to bless this water of baptism so that those who receive it may find your grace and mercy, that dying and being raised with Christ, they may share in his final victory.

Holy Baptism

(Here a Baptismal hymn may be sung. Then the Pastor shall take the child and say while sprinkling or pouring the Baptismal water)

Name this child. _____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(After the administration of the water, the Pastor anoints the Child with holy oil in the sign of the cross on her/his forehead and says)

The Pastor: May the Holy Spirit work within you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Here a song of praise or a hymn of adoration is sung before Holy Communion is celebrated.)

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

The Pastor: Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

The People: We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and

every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us.

The Pastor: Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

The People: Forgive us. Cleanse us.

The Pastor: Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And now we pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Assurance of Faith

May Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to Him, with repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Great Thanksgiving

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

ALL SAYING: (This may be sung or said) Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of host!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your Table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are

not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your Table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the

body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

(Here a communion hymn or a spiritual song may be sung)

Consecration of the Sacraments

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

The Pastor laying his hands upon the bread says: In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying:

“Take, eat this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” The

Pastor laying his hands upon the cup says: In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Words of Distribution

The Pastor lifting up the bread says: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. The Pastor lifting up the cup says: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Pastor continues to pray: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist.

The Prayers of the People

Here the prayers of the People are offered in intercessions, petitions, and thanksgiving by the Pastor and lay ministers. Spontaneous prayer may be offered by members of the

congregation as well. It is during these prayers that the anointing of holy oil may be offered for a blessing or healing of those who would like to respond to God's grace.

At the close of these prayers the Pastor or lay minister may say: Lord in your mercy. The people will respond: Hear our prayer. Words of praise or testimony may be given.

Worship in Giving

Offering of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering)

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation)

OUR SENDING

The Blessing (The Pastor gives the Apostolic or other blessing)

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever.

Amen.

Closing Song (A closing hymn is sung by the congregation during the recessional)

The Pastor: Go in peace and love to serve the Lord.

The Congregation: Thanks be to God.

THE SERVICE OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN
UNDER THE AGE OF TWELVE

(This section may replace the “Questions to the Parents/Parent” portion of the previous service of worship. The following questions may be asked the children to be baptized.)

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and do you desire to be baptized in His name? Answer: I do.
2. Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and will be a loyal follower of Christ? Answer: I do.
3. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? Answer: I do.
4. Trusting God to help you, will you resist temptation always and keep from doing those things which you know to be sinful or displeasing to God? Answer: I will.
5. Will you attend the church services and do those things you know a Christian should do? Answer: I will.

APPENDIX G

A SERVICE OF ADULT BAPTISM

(This ritual is an adaptation from the Free Methodist Pastor's Handbook.)

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God.

There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. This silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The People: And also with you

The Pastor: The risen Christ is with us.

The People: Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

(This can be an extempore prayer or the traditional collect as a unison prayer).

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no

secrets are hidden: 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 Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting).

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

The Pastor and People pray: Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson). The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons there may be the singing of the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be sung a hymn or a spiritual song or other act of praise)

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

Silence (This is time for personal prayer and meditation).

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

(This service of worship is an adaptation from the Free Methodist Pastor's Handbook. A hymn may be sung as the candidates come forward to the altar).

In Christ, our faith declares that by the sin of Adam, the offspring of Adam are corrupted in their very nature, so that from birth they are inclined to sin; and that new life and a right relationship with God are possible only through the redemptive acts of God in Christ Jesus. Believing these declarations to be true, and in obedience to the command of Christ, (Name/Names)_____ has come to make public confession that her/his sins have been washed away, and by means of baptism with water, to give sign of that inward washing and new life in Christ which are now her/his by faith. We therefore implore you to pray that through this means of grace you may find greater strength to keep covenant with God and experience the constant washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. (Then shall the Pastor say let us pray)

Almighty and everlasting God, whose covenant is firm and whose promises are always to be trusted, we call upon you to be present in this sacrament of grace for those being baptized today. Give them the assurance of forgiveness of sins and the blessing of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Accept their act of faith and grant that they may be

faithful to thee all the days of their lives, and finally come to the eternal kingdom which you have promised through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The candidates shall stand and the Pastor shall say)

Christ Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:10-20). You, who present yourselves for the sacrament of baptism, have heard the promises of the scriptures and how Jesus our Christ offered himself up for our redemption to grant us God's grace. You must now promise, in the presence of this congregation, to keep your covenant with Him, renouncing the life of sin, believing His Holy Word and obeying His will for your life.

Questions to the Candidates

(The Pastor shall ask the candidates these questions.)

1. Will you by this act of baptism testify to the world that you are a Christian?

Answer: I will.

2. Do you have the assurance that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: I do.

3. Do you renounce Satan and his works? Answer: I do.

4. Do you renounce the ungodliness of this world and all sinful desires? Answer: I do.

5. Will you live in obedience to Christ? Answer: I will.

6. Will you actively participate in the life and ministry of His church? Answer: I will.

7. Do you accept the Old and New Testaments as the authority for your life?

Answer: I do.

8. Will you by this act of baptism testify to the world that you are a Christian?

Answer: I will.

Question to the Congregation

(The congregation shall stand.) The Pastor: Let us acknowledge our duty to strengthen these candidates/this candidate with prayers and encouragement, thus assisting them/her/him to fulfill all that has been promised. Congregation will you support these candidates with your prayers and love and be for them an extended family for spiritual and moral strength? Answer: We will.

Let us reaffirm our faith and commitment to the Lord by saying together the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles' Creed

The Pastor and People: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Blessing of the Water

O Eternal Father, when nothing existed but chaos, you swept across the dark waters and brought forth light. In the days of Noah you saved those on the Ark through water. When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt, you led them to freedom through the sea.

Their children you brought through the Jordan river to the promised land. In the Fullness of time you sent Jesus, who was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit. He called his disciples to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection and to make disciples of all nations. Pour out your Holy Spirit, to bless this water of baptism so that those who receive it may find your grace and mercy, that dying and being raised with Christ, they may share in his final victory.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

(Here a Baptismal hymn may be sung. Then the Pastor shall take by the hand each person to be baptized, place them in a convenient place and shall baptize them by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the candidate's desire, saying)

(Name) _____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(After the administration of the water, the Pastor anoints those who have been baptized with holy oil in the sign of the cross on her/his forehead and says) May the Holy Spirit work within you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Here a song of praise or a hymn of adoration is sung before Holy Communion is celebrated.)

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament

for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

The Pastor: Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

The People: We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us.

The Pastor: Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

The People: Forgive us. Cleanse us.

The Pastor: Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And now we pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Assurance of Faith

May Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to Him, with repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and

bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Great Thanksgiving

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You,

ALL SAYING: (This may be sung or said) Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of host!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your Table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your Table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

(Here a communion hymn or a spiritual song may be sung)

Consecration of the Sacraments

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel

commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

The Pastor laying his hands upon the bread says: In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." The Pastor laying his hands upon the cup says: In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Words of Distribution

The Pastor lifting up the bread says: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. The Pastor lifting up the cup says: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Pastor continues to pray: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

The Lord's Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist.

The Prayers of the People

Here the prayers of the People are offered in intercessions, petitions, and thanksgiving by the Pastor and lay ministers. Spontaneous prayer may be offered by members of the congregation as well. It is during these prayers that the anointing of holy oil may be offered for a blessing or healing. At the close of these prayers the Pastor or lay minister may say: Lord in your mercy.

The people will respond: Hear our prayer. Words of praise or testimony may be given after this time of intercession.

Worship in Giving

Offering of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering)

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation)

OUR SENDING

The Blessing (The Pastor gives the Apostolic or other blessing)

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever.

Amen.

Closing Song (A closing hymn is sung by the congregation during the recessional)

The Pastor: Go in peace and love to serve the Lord.

The Congregation: Thanks be to God.

APPENDIX H

THE WESLEY COVENANT SERVICE

(This worship service is an adaptation from *The New Handbook of the Christian Year*).

THE ENTRANCE

The Gathering

This is the informal gathering of the people making their entrance into the house of God.

There may be prelude music and informal greetings by the people as they gather.

The Call to Worship

The Pastor: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The People: Amen

Silence (This is a moment of meditation and centering upon Christ. This silence is broken with music that begins the processional).

The Greeting

The Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The People: And also with you

The Pastor: The risen Christ is with us.

The People: Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

The Opening Hymn of Praise

(This can be a traditional hymn, a song of adoration, or a spiritual song of praise).

The Invocation or Collect

The Pastor and People: O God, Savior of our lives, you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your own. We come before you to acknowledge your sovereignty and

grace, and to enter anew into covenant with you. Let your Spirit reveal any reluctance or weakness within us, and impress your truth in our inmost being. Receive us in your mercy, for the sake of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

We Share the Peace

(This can be the traditional sharing of the Peace or other appropriate Christian greeting).

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with you.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

The Pastor and People pray: Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

The first Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes the reading with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God.

The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Between the first and second Scripture lessons there may be the singing of the Psalm or a spiritual song).

The second Scripture lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The reader concludes with: The Word of the Lord, for the people of God. The congregation responds with: Thanks be to God.

(Here may be a ministry in song or a congregational song).

The Gospel lesson is read. (See the lectionary readings for the proper lesson).

The Pastor concludes the reading with: The Good News of Christ!

The congregation responds with: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Teaching of the Word

(The sermon should be from one of the lectionary readings and communicated as a means of grace. Preaching should emphasize a response by the congregation to God's grace).

The Response to the Word

(Here may be sung a hymn or spiritual song or other form of the ministry of music).

The Covenant

The Pastor: In the Old Covenant, God chose Israel to be His people. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, has made a new covenant with all who trust in him. We stand within this covenant and we bear his name. On the one side, God promises to give us new life in Christ. On the other side, we are pledged to live not for ourselves but for God. Today, therefore, we meet to renew the covenant which binds us to God. Let us claim the covenant God has made with his people and accept the call of Christ to be His servants. The Lord has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some make others applaud us, others bring only reproach. Sometimes we please Christ and meet our own needs, at other times we cannot please Christ unless we deny ourselves. Yet Christ strengthens us and gives us the power to do all these things. Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own. Let us give ourselves completely to God, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

The Pastor and People: I give myself completely to you, God. Assign me to my place in your creation. Let me suffer for you. Give me the work you would have me to do. Give me many tasks or have me step aside while you call others. Put me forward of humble

me. Give me riches or let me live in poverty. I freely give all that I am and all that I have to you. And now, holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May this covenant made on earth continue for all Eternity. Amen.

We share the Peace

The Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you.

The People: And also with.

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

The Pastor: Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

The People: We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us.

The Pastor: Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

The People: Forgive us. Cleanse us.

The Pastor: Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And now we pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Assurance of Faith

May Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to Him, with repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Great Thanksgiving

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You ALL SAYING: (This may be sung or said) Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of host!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high.

Amen.

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your Table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are

unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your Table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

(Here a communion hymn or a spiritual song may be sung)

Consecration of the Sacraments

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood. The Pastor laying his hands upon the bread says: In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." The Pastor laying his hands upon the cup says: In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Words of Distribution

The Pastor lifting up the bread says: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving. The Pastor lifting up the cup says: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Pastor continues to pray: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

The Lord's Table

The congregation is invited to come to the altar table or altar railings to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Table. Here the congregation may sing communion songs, listen to communion hymns or praise songs, or other forms of the ministry of music may be offered during the Eucharist.

The Prayers of the People

Here the prayers of the People are offered in intercessions, petitions, and thanksgiving by the Pastor and lay ministers. Spontaneous prayer may be offered by members of the congregation as well. It is during these prayers that the anointing of holy oil may be offered for a blessing or healing of those who would like to respond to God's grace.

At the close of these prayers the Pastor or lay minister may say: Lord in your mercy.

The people will respond: Hear our prayer. (Words of praise or testimony may be given.)

Worship in Giving

Offering of Praise (A musical offering of praise is given during the offering)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Pastor or lay minister prays a blessing for the offering)

Doxology (The Doxology is sung by the congregation)

OUR SENDING

The Blessing (The Pastor gives the Apostolic or other blessing)

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever.

Amen.

Closing Song (A closing hymn is sung by the congregation during the recessional)

The Pastor: Go in peace and love to serve the Lord.

The Congregation: Thanks be to God.

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