

A History of Christian Worship:

Ancient Ways, Future Paths

Part 4: The Music

A History of Christian Worship: Part 4 The Music

Narrator:

The deep, heartfelt rhythms of the Christian faith may be expressed in a variety of styles and voices as they emphasize different aspects of a common faith. Loud, triumphant anthems invoke God's greatness. Beloved hymns teach God's faithfulness and leading. Quiet, contemplative choruses recall God's love and mercy. Simplicity in a worship service invites intimacy and spontaneity. More formal worship services emphasize God's grandeur and order in the universe. The rhythms of worship, whether expressed through music or the work of God's people as His story is told and celebrated, is part of the ongoing story we know today as the history of Christian worship.

Narrator:

Music has always been part of worship, beginning with the expressive and rich psalms of Old Testament Jewish worship and the hymns and spiritual songs sung by early Christian believers in the New Testament church. Worship expressed through music has grown to include a variety of voices and instruments from single voice plainchant to choral arias, from the tambourine and harp to electric guitars and drums. As with most art forms, music in worship reflects the full range of human emotions and experiences: from sorrow to joy, from prayer to praise, from solemnity to exuberance.

Michael Pasquarello III, PhD (Asbury Theological Seminary):

I believe it was Augustine who said that when we sing, we pray twice, and that's a very important concept, we pray twice. We articulate to God with our words, with our

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feelings, and with our emotions. What it is that we've heard in the Bible, what it is we've read in the Bible, and we do that as one.

Dr. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D.de.N. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

Music is always serving a ministerial role in the worship. It's never standing as its own thing that draws us just into itself. Now, it does have to draw us. The music has to be engaging, appealing, appropriate. It has to be something that the people in the pews understand and can sing. But we never stop at the music. The music is an avenue towards a deeper thing.

Narrator:

The worship of God through music is often an intensely personal experience, and different for every believer.

Dr. Tom Boomershine

I remember vividly long nights 'til one or two o'clock in the morning in darkened churches playing the organ and those have been some of the most profound spiritual experiences of intimacy with God that I've ever had. I would frequently sit and, you know, play for hours, and I'd have tears streaming down my face. It was just so moving to me and it was because of what was happening through the music in my relationship with God.

Narrator:

We know from the Bible that music has been a vital part of the church since its inception and will continue and endure, even into the Heavenly church, as described in the Book of Revelation. The New Testament mentions the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in diverse times and places. These songs were often sung in unison to reflect unity among believers and accompanied the sharing of a meal as part of worship. Early Church Fathers such as Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria of the second century and the writers of the Apostolic Constitutions in the late fourth century all confirm the singing of Psalms and other hymns as a component of worship. Fourth century church historian Eusebius writes of worshippers often offering a sung response to a psalm or spoken text, which is referred to as an antiphon.

What is missing in the music of the early church is any hint or mention of musical instruments being used in worship. Quite the opposite is true. Clement of Alexandria and, later, Chrysostom and Augustine, all wrote of the lack of instruments in early worship, perhaps because instruments were used in the music of the heathen and pagan feasts and celebrations of the day. Eusebius, in his commentary on the Psalms, comments on the lack of musical instruments in worship, a tradition that continues today in the Eastern Orthodox and other churches.

Eusebius:

The unison voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument. Accordingly in all the churches of God, united in soul and attitude, with one

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mind and in agreement of faith piety we send up a unison melody in the words of the Psalms. – Eusebius, Commentary on Psalms 91:2-3.

Narrator:

By the early middle ages, the use of the psalms in worship was adapted by monks and priests into a style of music known as plainsong.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

Plainsong has been called the song of the church. It is the way the church has sung in various localities for thousands of years, may even go back to Jewish worship. We don't know for sure. There is not a direct lineage back to Jewish worship. But we know it is very ancient. It goes back at least to the time of Gregory the Great, and probably before his time, because Gregory the Great codified Gregorian chant, but the chant existed before him.

Narrator:

Plainsong and Gregorian chant are monophonic forms of music, which means there is a single melody line, often sung without accompaniment, in a free rhythm rather than a strict mathematical timing. The style strips the music to its barest elements and allows for greater concentration on the text itself.

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Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

They actually help to learn the Psalms in a different way. They engage a different part of the mind. So you learn it, you learn the Psalms, you learn whatever text you're singing, actually, in a whole different way than if you actually just say or recite the verses. The Psalms are written to be sung.

David Neff (Editor, *Christianity Today*):

People can learn older forms, like chant, and so at my church, we do use some Gregorian chant in order to sing the Psalms. We use Gregorian chant, or even earlier forms of chant, a chant setting of the Lord's Prayer, which we sing together each week, because those can be simple, memorable. And when everybody is actually on the same note, not singing harmony for a change, it actually is a wonderfully unifying experience.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

In the Medieval church, we have a remarkable repertoire of music that developed. Often, it was sung by a group of singers called the Schola Cantorum, a company of singers who along with the presiding clergy and priest would assist in the unfolding liturgy of the day. It was practiced, this plainchant, both in parish churches as well as in monasteries, though some differences emerged in these different contexts. But much of the music that we have record of was music with one simple melody, monophonic music, would be sung typically in unison. I think, though we all know, that outside of a studio recording, there is no perfect unison. There is always the different human voices coming together to sing an unfolding melody. But then, especially over the course of the late middle ages,

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increasing complexity emerged with that music. At one point in the development of the music, a very simple, rudimentary harmony would be sung where two voices, or two sets of notes would be sung that moved in parallel nature.

Narrator:

This shift in sacred music from a single voice to multiple voices singing in harmony also inspired the writing of masses and requiems to highlight the new found range of choral singing. By the late twelfth century, the use of organ music emerged as a method of accompaniment, and it was these grand, sweeping styles of music that moved the church forward to the Reformation, where legendary figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin would introduce hymns into the liturgy and life of the church.

David Neff (Editor, *Christianity Today*):

Certainly, the Reformation hymns are very important to me, and so we would start with something like A Mighty Fortress. You think about how penetrated with scripture those lyrics are. Now that's something that a congregation can sing, certainly, and a congregation should and does and they do sing that. I love the sturdiness of Luther's tune. So many of our hymns have essentially weak tunes that are chromatic and not based on sort of the fundamentals of the scale. Luther had a real good sense there. But he also, then, took scripture, in this case Psalm 46, and recast it in Christian terms, recast it in terms that could be remembered because there was meter and there was rhyme and rhythm and those kinds of elements, which help people to take things that otherwise they might read and lose and commit them to memory and make them part of their experience.

Narrator:

The eighteenth century marked great advancement in the music of the church on many levels. In Europe, composer Johann Sebastian Bach, sometimes called “The Fifth Evangelist” for his gift of sacred music, gave the world many grand organ and choral works. His famed *Mass in B Minor* was said to have been “the supreme cultural achievement of all Western civilization.” Equally devoted in his passion for church music was George Frederic Handel, whose oratorio *The Messiah* became one of the most popular sacred choral works, still performed by orchestras and choirs around the world.

Likewise, the rise of hymn writing transformed the English church. Isaac Watts, the father of this movement, expanded upon the earlier work of John Calvin in adapting the Psalms for congregational singing. His *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was released in 1707, which contained the timeless hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. Watts may have pioneered modern English hymnody, but it was the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, who spread the movement abroad along with a new Protestant denomination known as Methodism. Charles Wesley wrote the soundtrack for this new religious movement, contributing volumes of stirring hymns, close to 9,000 total, that are still sung in churches today: *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*, *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*, *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*, *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*, to cite just a few. These hymns expanded to the revival movements of the American frontier and have endured to the present for their emotional connection with worshippers of many Christian denominations.

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Michael Pasquarello III, PhD (Asbury Theological Seminary):

I found it very interesting over the years that I was a pastor that when I would talk with folks, especially when they had gone through difficult times in their lives, and they were looking for ways that their faith as a Christian could anchor their life, give them a place to stand and orient them to keep on going and to go forward, what they would draw from would be a hymn: *Amazing Grace, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*. And now, more contemporary songs that have been introduced in the life of the church, but that we absorb into our being and they form our lives and orient them to God. And that we recall them often unconsciously at times in our life when we need them most.

Dr. James Abbington (Candler School of Theology, Emory University):

I think that hymns that speak to the Christian faith and tradition, that are well-written, that are accessible to the congregation, that really emphasize or reinforce God's majesty, His holiness, God the Father, God the Son, the Holy Spirit, God in so many different forms and ways, speak to us in ways that, as I said before, really form us to be the Christians that we need to be.

Narrator:

As the use of hymns and musical instruments grew and expanded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some Christian denominations remained true to their traditions of a

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capella singing or chanting and prohibited the use of some or all instruments in worship.

These include the Eastern Orthodox Church, Anabaptist churches including Amish and Mennonite, and Protestant denominations such as Primitive Baptists, Churches of Christ, and others that follow a teaching of the Puritans called the *Regulative Principle*.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

The Puritans were deeply concerned about grounding worship in scripture. And they are known for what is often called the *Regulative Principle*. It might be translated most broadly that scripture regulates worship. But it is usually understood by its more narrow articulation that only those things that are explicitly warranted in scripture should be practiced in worship. So if something was not explicitly warranted in the biblical text it should not be practiced. Puritans used this principle to rule out, for example, the use of candles in worship, and many other expressions of ceremonial, that they found in Anglican practice, to go beyond the explicit mandates of scripture itself.

Narrator:

While some Christians upheld the teachings of the *Regulative Principle* in regard to worship, other Christians, particularly those in the Charismatic movement of the mid to late twentieth century, took the idea of personal expression in worship to a whole new level, one that involved using spiritual songs and hymns, stringed instruments and drums, and bodily expression in praise and adoration.

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Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

The Charismatics have modeled for us, pioneered for us, and established in many places a pattern of opening worship with up to half an hour of hymn singing or praise songs.

They have a kind of body language which you learn: you raise your hands, or do other things with your hands, and the actions themselves signify your attitude. Adoration, need, dependence, and how does one say it, openness, I suppose, to the great grace of God. Never limit what God and His love will give to His children. And I think that these features of worship have come to stay.

Narrator:

As new styles and voices of modern worship have entered the life of the church, this revolution has led to what some people call the “worship wars” and the debate over contemporary versus traditional worship.

Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

I think there’s a place for both traditional and contemporary worship as long as we remember to ask questions that take us to more substantial depth. In my mind, we really should not be mesmerized by the adjectives we put in front of the word “worship.” That really, what we need to be committed to is Christian worship and asking what it is that makes worship Christian and what is it that makes “worship” worship.

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Dr. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D.de.N. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

The type of music, the style of music over two thousand years of the history of the Church has changed and will continue to change. What kind of music we sing, how we sing it that depends on cultures and periods in history. But the role of the music will stay the same underneath the style.

Michael Pasquarello III, PhD (Asbury Theological Seminary):

Many folks ask me about the issue of traditional versus contemporary worship. And it's very obvious if you visit a variety of churches where you'll find that a congregation has decided that they're committed to one type or another. Now, I think often, that tends to be because we think worship is a style. If worship is the praise of God, and expressing our love and our gratitude to God, it doesn't have to be a matter of style. And traditional worship is essentially learning from the wisdom of the past and then living into that wisdom in fresh ways for today. And so true worship of God will always be traditional and contemporary. It will live out of the past and it will be fresh and new and truly relevant, as we like to say, for who we are in a particular place in time.

Narrator:

Some worship leaders are seeking ways to blend contemporary and traditional worship styles in a way that incorporates each in a meaningful way into the worship service.

Narrator:

Others are using globalization as a tool to introduce different worship styles to their congregations.

Dr. James Abbington (Candler School of Theology, Emory University):

We are seeing now in terms of worship resources an abundance and more and more global praise songs: songs from Taize, the Iona community, songs from South Africa, and so many more. And that's great.

Narrator:

In opposite corners of the world, two very different singer/songwriters are touching lives through their music. Darlene Zschech is an internationally known worship leader who has performed around the world before millions as the recognizable voice and face of Australia's Hillsong Music. She describes what draws us to worship.

Darlene Zschech (Singer/Songwriter):

Out of a revelation of who God is, out comes this created need in us to worship, worship, our Father in many different ways. You know, many times in song, very Biblical to worship in song. Even in the Psalms alone, over forty times we're asked to sing. You know, I don't know why sing, I don't know why He didn't say dance or do a jig, but He said sing and it's a very powerful thing when you start to lift your voice and declare His greatness to the atmosphere. There's nothing like it.

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Narrator:

The music that has shaped a modern generation of worshippers is rooted in the Scriptures and inspired by the awe of encountering God in everyday life and situations.

Darlene Zschech (Singer/Songwriter):

Well, personally I draw on two things mainly: of course, the Word of God and then experience. So whether it's either telling a story of something that I'm observing, an experience, or an experience with God, you know if I open up the Word and start to play, it speaks, it's alive, so that itself...there are so many songs to be written.

Narrator:

The music of Darlene Zschech and Hillsong resonates with Christians around the world who are seeking a powerful and intimate worship experience with God.

Darlene Zschech (Singer/Songwriter):

I look at their music that God is using around the earth and there are some common denominators. You know, I'm an observer and I like to kind of look underneath what's going on on the top. But I would say that the songs are...they're prayers, and they're very close prayers. It's like in that song *Savior King*, there's a moment when we sing "we love you, Lord" and a lot of people find that easy to sing. "We worship you." But

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then there's a moment that we say, "I love you, Lord and I worship you." And people find that harder to sing than "we" because it brings it close.

Narrator:

For Darlene Zschech, worship is as much a part of life as music. It is a gift and a call to a greater purpose and power.

Darlene Zschech (Singer/Songwriter):

Seasons change, but the call of God, it says in Romans, is irrevocable. His gifts and talents are given without repentance. It's in there, but seasons change, so there's times when you will have time to devote to one thing more than another, or a time when God will say, 'Come away. Get out of that light. Come into my light. Just let me fill you.' That's what changes, but not his call.

Narrator:

This call, as Zschech describes it, extends to every aspect of daily life.

Darlene Zschech (Singer/Songwriter):

I don't have a time when I worship and then a time when I'm a mother and a time where I'm...I am a worshipper. I am a mother. I am a daughter of God. I am a bringer of change. I am these things, and so every part of my life has got to represent that.

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Narrator:

Across the globe in a community church in Nashville, Tennessee, record producer and singer/songwriter Jason Houser was teaching a weeklong youth Bible school when he experienced a life-changing worship experience.

Jason Houser (Seeds Family Worship):

Through the course of that week, I taught the Scriptures, and on a Friday I stood on the stage in the barn and I'm playing through the songs and one of the verses was 1 Timothy 4:12: don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers: in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. And I remember just standing up in the barn, singing that song and just watching every kid and every teacher just sing the verses word for word.

Narrator:

Out of that experience in the barn grew a ministry called Seeds Family Worship that teaches the Scripture to children, and parents, through contemporary worship music.

Jason Houser (Seeds Family Worship):

To have families together during that praise time where the kids can see their parents singing to God, where they can see their parents taking communion, where they can be a part of the worship service and really talk about what these things mean. But it's very meaningful to see that, and the greatest influence on a child's life is going to be their

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parent, and to have that time the way you draw a kid in is to be an example. As an adult, you show them here's how we praise God, it's exciting, you know.

Narrator:

Houser believes there is a strong connection between the power of music and Scripture in teaching the truth of God's word to young people as well as adults.

Jason Houser (Seeds Family Worship):

The thing that's been so exciting for us is that music builds an affection for the Scripture because it helps the kids take it in, and so it really is a connecting point. For all of us, music helps us to memorize. I mean, it's the bottom line. There are Scriptures that are hard to remember. One of my favorite Scriptures is Romans 8:38 and 39: 'For I am convinced, neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.' That's always a Scripture that I wanted to memorize, but just like pieces of the puzzle, I had all the pieces there, but I didn't have them in the right place, but then when we put a melody to that Scripture, then I'm able to just say that and it's just a part of who I am.

Narrator:

One of the most rewarding aspects of the ministry for Houser is seeing the joy and enthusiasm of children as they learn the worship songs.

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Jason Houser (Seeds Family Worship):

It's fun to connect with kids. I always have kids that come up and lead worship with me every night. And then I have kids that are discovering the songs and they're singing the songs and maybe they've been singing them in their van or at home, but they kind of make the connection that the songs are all in the Bible because all the Seeds songs are word for word Scripture. But a kid will inevitably come up to me and say, 'Mr. Jason, your songs are in the Bible!' And they're so excited that they've discovered that, yes. And I was like, 'Well, yes they are. Actually, the Bible came first and we're doing this...it's fun to see the lights come on for them and to realize, 'Wow, we're learning the Bible in your songs.'

Narrator:

Seeds Family Worship has changed lives, as Jason can attest.

Jason Houser (Seeds Family Worship):

One of the stories that had such a profound impact on me was a church in Dallas, Texas. Every time I lead a family event, I always have young kids come up and sing with me, usually ages from six to fifteen. And they come and actually lead worship, they're a part of the praise time and they lead for the whole time and use their gifts for God. And we had a young girl and she was about eight years old and she did such a great job. She just was a light and she was beaming. And her mom came up to me after and she just said, 'I want to share a story with you.' She said, 'One of the songs that you guys sang tonight,'

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the song Take Heart, and the Scripture is ‘I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace, for in this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world.’ That’s the Scripture. So she said, ‘When we were practicing,’ she said, ‘my little girl was in her room, cleaning her room. We had her CD on and we were singing this song.’ She said, ‘I’ve recently just gone through a really difficult divorce and this has been such a challenging time for her ‘cause her dad really just left us and abandoned us, and this has meant so much for her to be a part of this night. But as we were practicing, she said...she just looked at me and said ‘Mom, this is our song.’ And as she was telling me that, I just knew that that girl was encouraged and the joy that was in that little girl as we did that night, and then for her to share her story with me, is the power of God’s Word. And that is her song, because God has overcome the world. And that just meant the world to me to be able to be used by God to be a small part of that. Music reaches into our hearts and connects with us in a very powerful way, and that is God ordained.

Narrator:

Music is, indeed, powerful and God ordained. Whether it is the words of the Psalms chanted in a unison voice, the organ accompaniment of a solemn mass, the comforting words of a beloved hymn, the sea of hands uplifted to a contemporary praise song, or favorite verses of Scripture sung by a children’s choir, it is certain that God inhabits the praises of His people. The style may change, but the underlying song of God and His love sings on for all eternity.

Narrator:

In Christian worship, a community of believers gathers for the purpose of bringing their shared experiences and activities together for God's glorification and praise and in anticipation of the Heavenly life to come. The Church Fathers described these ceremonial gatherings, with their communal actions and rituals as *liturgy*, which is a Greek word meaning "the work of the people". Because liturgy is the formal, or sometimes informal actions of the participants in the worship experience, whether through songs or prayers or spoken creeds or testimonies, almost all churches engage in some form of liturgy, even those who consider themselves to be non-liturgical churches.

Dr. David W. Fagerberg (University of Notre Dame):

Liturgy is not my expression. It's something which, when placed on me, conforms me to the body of Christ, which is much larger than any individual, much larger than any individual century, any individual culture.

Narrator:

While some may find the idea of liturgy constraining, others find beauty and freedom in its form and practice.

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Dr. David W. Fagerberg (University of Notre Dame):

C.S. Lewis writes somewhere of a fairy tale in which a person feels himself to be so ugly that he wears a mask so as not to repulse people. And, at the end of his life when the mask is removed, they discover that his face has grown in conformity to the mask. He now fits the mask and has become handsome. Wearing liturgy reminds me of that story. It's not that I want to express my face, myself in liturgy; rather, I want to be conformed to Christ in wearing the liturgical forms.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

The value to having a ritual structure in our worship is it frees us from being concerned about what's next or being overly involved in the mechanics of the worship experience. The freedom allows us truly to turn ourselves toward God, which is what worship is all about.

Narrator:

Liturgy is both a public and private pattern for how worship is expressed in a particular Christian community.

Dr. David W. Fagerberg (University of Notre Dame):

It begins by assembling. Alexander Schmemmann used to say the first liturgical action on a Sunday morning is getting up out of bed and going there. It centers around a liturgy of the Word...this is a proclamation of covenant and a retelling of the salvation history... There's response in terms of creed and the prayer of the faithful, and then the Eucharistic

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sacrifice is the ratification of that covenant. Those are the four components of liturgical worship.

Narrator:

The idea of using form and structure as part of worship extends back to the early story of God and His people as found in the Old Testament.

Fr. Ted Bobosh (St. Paul Orthodox Church):

Worship is supposed to shape or form us. And the whole notion of worship in Orthodoxy is involved with an idea: God has revealed certain things to us. And we know, like in the Old Testament, when they built the Temple or when they built the Tabernacle, they were building upon ideas that God had revealed to them and they were supposed to be following certain forms.

Denis R. McNamara, Ph.D. (The Liturgical Institute, Mundelein, IL.):

Well, many people think that the Christian revelation made the Old Testament revelations obsolete. But when you listen to the words of Christ Himself, He says, 'I am not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.' So you see how the Law is given to the people of Israel in the Ten Commandments, and then almost immediately, God says, 'This is how I want you to worship and build a building that looks like this and wear these vestments that look like this and use these kinds of implements and use these particular words.' So the foundation for worship comes from God Himself.

Narrator:

In the New Testament, the church begins with the liturgy developed by the Apostles as they ministered in houses and proclaimed the words of Christ in sharing the Eucharist with early believers. Over time, the patterns of songs and prayers and rituals used in early worship were written down.

In the benediction from the third century Divine Liturgy of James the Holy Apostle, there is a great deal of teaching and doctrine contained within a few short sentences. The Trinity is proclaimed, the community of the church celebrated, and the connection is established between the work of the people and the foretaste of the divine to come in Heaven.

Female reading:

Thou has given unto us, O Lord, sanctification in the communion of the all-holy body and precious blood of Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; give unto us also the grace of Thy good Spirit, and keep us blameless in the faith, lead us unto perfect adoption and redemption, and to the coming joys of eternity; for Thou art our sanctification and light, O God, and Thy only-begotten Son, and Thy all-holy Spirit, now and ever, and to all eternity. Amen. – The Divine Liturgy of James the Holy Apostle

Narrator:

Other documents such as the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions* describe the liturgy associated with various events in the life of the church including baptism, fasting, prayer and

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the assembly and shepherding of the people. The life of the early church may have been carefully scripted through liturgy, but the liturgy full of joy and life. Christians today might be surprised if they were to travel back in time and experience the exuberance of early worship.

Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

It would be hard to overstate how loud and boisterous worship in the 4th and 5th centuries was. There was shouting, there was crying, there would have been lots of physical movement, prostration. There's a story told, for instance, of Augustine preaching one of his sermons and he was really trying to bring a sense of the conviction of sins. Well, the people just started beating their breasts, their chests with their hands. It sounded like workers hitting hammers against pavement stones. It was loud. It was boisterous, and it involved full participation of the whole human person.

Narrator:

In the Western Church, the pattern of worship that developed was called the Mass. This term comes from the Latin word "missa", which means "dismissal" and refers to the sending out into the world to engage in the mission work of the Church. The earliest accepted reference to this word is found in the fourth century writings of Saint Ambrose, though other Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Tertullian, and Saint Augustine all describe the liturgical actions performed in the celebration of the Mass. By the time of Gregory the Great in the late sixth to early seventh century, much of the Liturgy of the Mass had been developed, giving the Western church an ordered

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structure for worship that would remain largely unchanged until the Protestant Reformation. Even today, there are many familiar elements from this early liturgy in the Mass of the Catholic Church.

Fr. Robert Reed (Network Director, Catholic TV):

Our rituals and traditions go back to the Church at its very beginning, and those rituals, those gestures and words that we use in public and in private represent for us an expression of the church before God through the ages, over two millennia.

Narrator:

As the Eastern and Western Churches began to differ and divide on many theological and liturgical issues, which led to their separation as part of the Great Schism in 1054, the Eastern Orthodox Church continued a pattern of worship became known as The Divine Liturgy. It consists of three parts: the Liturgy of Preparation, which is performed privately as the priest prepares for worship; the Liturgy of the Word, in which all are invited to sing and hear the Scriptures and applicable teachings; and the Liturgy of the Faithful, which includes communion. The Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates its roots in the beginnings of the Christian faith and continues to use early forms and patterns for worship, including the Liturgies of Saint John Chrysostom from the fifth century, Saint Basil the Great from the fourth century, and Saint James of Jerusalem from the first century, among others.

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By the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century, several changes were taking place in the liturgy of the Church at large. In previous centuries, the Roman Mass reflected the societal and cultural flavor and customs of the local church in the West. That changed in 1545 at the Council of Trent, when a standard Roman Missal was developed that all Catholic Churches throughout the world would use in their liturgy and worship.

Another advance in worship practice that took place during this time was in the Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church, when the Book of Common Prayer was published in 1549. It is important as the first liturgical volume written in English and as a comprehensive book for both daily and weekly worship services and occasional services such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals. The Prayer Book was also important for spurring a religious movement against the Church of England called Puritanism that changed the history of modern Protestant worship.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

What needs to be said about the Puritans is that originally they were brought up Anglicans, members of the Church of England, using the Reformation Prayer Book, which Archbishop Cranmer had composed in the middle of the fifteenth century. But then a number of the Puritans came to feel that there were details in the Prayer Book that needed to be changed, and that made them, how can I say, less than affirmative of the Prayer Book, although most of them continue to use it under protest. And then, in 1645, in the middle of the civil war, the Prayer Book was simply outlawed. It was part of a

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larger exercise that Parliament was carrying through to finish with the Church of England. If you abolish the Prayer Book, and also abolish bishops and the whole diocesan structure, well Anglicanism is gone. And Parliament, for reasons that belong to the history of the time, wanted the Anglican Church to go, so it went.

Narrator:

The Anglican Church did endure, however, as one of many liturgical church traditions. Others include the Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and some Methodists. Puritanism, however, was one of a number of traditions such as Anabaptists, Quakers, and Congregationalists that became known as “free churches” or non-liturgical churches.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

Descriptions of churches are a complicated topic, and especially in the area of worship. One distinction that is often made would be a distinction between so-called liturgical churches and non-liturgical churches. And what is often meant by that is the sense that some churches, liturgical churches, have a very formal, perhaps prescribed order of worship. Often, it includes more elaborate ceremonial or gestures or actions, more ritual practices that are part of the unfolding worship service.

Narrator:

This formal worship style differs from non-liturgical churches such as the Quakers, where the worship service is less structured and geared toward individual response.

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Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

And for the Quakers, the early Quakers, it's that passage from the Gospel of John about worshipping in spirit and in truth. Therefore, they said that if you plan anything ahead of time, you're not really relying upon the Holy Spirit. So the classic Quaker approach, a Biblicist approach, was to gather in silence and wait for the spirit to move.

Narrator:

The lack of a structured liturgy in free church traditions should not be confused with a total absence of patterns and rituals in the worship service.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

Non-liturgical churches often develop patterns, so strong that if a given pastor or worship leader were to depart or change from them, there would be great resistance.

Narrator:

In fact, according to Dr. James Abbington who teaches seminary students at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, many Christians in non-liturgical churches are unaware that the rituals and traditions of their worship services contain order and structure just like their liturgical church counterparts.

Dr. James Abbington (Candler School of Theology, Emory University):

It's always interesting when I start talking about the fourfold pattern of worship: the gathering, the hearing of the word, the response to the word, and the sending forth. I see

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students (mumbling) “all that liturgical stuff. I know I’ve got to get it right for the quiz. Will this be on the test?” And so I said, “Well, what’s wrong with liturgy? What’s wrong with liturgical? You know, what does it mean?” “Well, the work of the people.” I said, “Yeah, well I know you read at least that part of the assignment.” But it’s interesting to hear those who come from what they consider to be non-liturgical traditions say, “Well, we’re free church. We’re just anointed. We’re led by the spirit of God. We’re open to God’s breadth and direction and we don’t come, we don’t even have programs. We don’t do all of that reading prayers off of papers and those kinds of things. That’s OK for people, I guess, who really aren’t that anointed or who don’t have the real spirit of God.” But I said, “Well, tell me, if I were to come to your church, what would I experience?” “Well, we begin with praise and worship. And after praise and worship, there’s always a scripture lesson. Then after that scripture lesson, we greet each other. No, there’s a prayer and then we have the choir sing, and then the pastor comes out, and of course, takes the offering. And after the offering, there may be special music and then it’s the word. And then after that we ask people that want to give their lives to God to come and then we, we leave singing.” And I said, “Now you do that every Sunday.” “Oh, yeah. That’s how we do it every Sunday, but we don’t have bulletins.” I said, “Hmm . . . So it sounds like there is a form and a structure. There’s a liturgy there.” “Oh no, it’s not liturgy. That’s just what we do every Sunday.” I said, “OK.” So I think that those students leave there discovering, “Well, maybe I am liturgical, but I just don’t want to be called liturgical.”

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Narrator:

Whether one belongs to a liturgical or non-liturgical church tradition, the rhythms and forms associated and practiced with worship are skills that develop as an individual matures and grows within his or her church community.

Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

At one level, because God created us to worship Him, there's some little vestige, some little echo of the desire and the ability to worship, I think, in everyone. But to be able to worship deeply is really a learned art or skill. Sometimes with students, I'll take twenty to twenty-five minutes worth of Notre Dame football ritual on a videotape that I've shot and I'll show it to them and I'll ask them how well they could participate fully in all of that to begin with. And at one level, you can. You know the lyrics of the songs, the fight songs, are not that difficult. You could sing along. The silly stuff that the band does and the cheerleaders do, you could follow along. But to really get into all that Notre Dame football ritual is a learned skill. It's a learned art. And so, in the same way, I think somebody could come into a Christian worship service and at one level can participate pretty easily and quickly, but to be able to break open the deep symbols that are there, to be able to hear the story of God and to have your heart swell with love, those are learned skills. Those are learned capacities.

Narrator:

Like music, liturgy is another area of worship where style is a matter of debate.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

Too often we find the discussion of worship, the reflection of worship has to do with style. I would prefer to see the discussion, reflections of worship incorporate three areas of reflection. One is content, second is structure, and the third is style. The first two, content and structure, are non-negotiable. Style is totally negotiable. The content is the Gospel. The Gospel is the story of God culminating in the life, the death, resurrection, ascension and Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And it is the culmination of the entire redemptive history of God. That's non-negotiable. The second part is the structure. Structure is this dialogical structure of God's call and our response, the invitation by God to come and participate in His ongoing community of the triune God. It's also this dialectic of remembrance and anticipation that happens in worship, that we remember His great works in history, we anticipate His coming again. So that's the structure, and the content and structure are non-negotiable, but style can be totally negotiable.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

Worship is not pleasing to God, as I understand the matter, when one or both of two things are wrong. One is that the focus of the worshipper is on him or herself rather than on God, and the worshipper's interest is in the quality of experience, perhaps an experience of comfort, you see, or being soothed in trouble. Anyway, the worshipper's experience means more to the worshipper than anything else, and the giving of praise and

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glory to God really isn't the major thing. The second thing that makes worship displeasing to God is if we do it, shall I say, formally, hypocritically, going through the motions without our heart being in it. I am a preacher, and I try to preach in such a way that will get beyond that. I don't know what success I have, but I know that's one of the things that I'm constantly trying to do. I don't want worship to be spoiled by formality, backed by lack of moral honesty.

Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

So much of worship is aimed towards Jesus Christ right now that it's easy to forget that the default setting, if I can call it that, of classic Christian worship is to direct worship towards the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, done through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Narrator:

One thing is certain when it comes to liturgy and worship. In every tradition, whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant, there is consensus that to worship is to bring glory to God and to partake of the glories of Heaven while here on Earth.

Fr. Ted Bobosh (St. Paul Orthodox Church):

Orthodoxy has that sense that there has been certain revelations about the kingdom of God by the prophet Daniel and the book of Revelation, and in worship we try to do some of what God revealed to us, and the use of the vestments or the incense or the processions that we have, the movement, the bowing down. You read the book of Revelation and

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you'll see all this takes place in the kingdom of Heaven. Orthodoxy just follows that form... There's certain things that God has revealed and that should shape and change the way we think and how we worship, and it also helps form us as a people or community and gives us our sense of our relationship to God and to the world and to each other and to non-believers and to everything. The revelation of God encompasses the entire world. Whether people believe or not, it's about everything and everybody.

Denis R. McNamara, Ph.D. (The Liturgical Institute, Mundelein, IL.):

If you read the early church fathers, they say, "You can't become ready for heaven unless you practice." You're not ready to run a marathon until you start running one mile, and then two miles, and going and celebrating the liturgy is actually to participate in the things of heaven. So when you hear the choir, you hear the angels and saints praising God at the foot of his throne. When you see the church building, you see the light and the gold and the radiance and the order of the Heavenly Jerusalem and you participate in it now. When you sit as a community, you shake the hand of the person next to you, who could be a corporate CEO or a homeless person, and that anticipates the time when they'll be no division between human beings. When you smell the incense and the flowers, you are brought back to the original condition in the Garden of Eden, and then the sweet smell of incense is like the sweet prayer rising up to the throne of heaven. And then, of course, you taste the food of the Eucharist, and so all the senses are engaged in this practicing for heaven.

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Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

As I've walked with Christ, and as I've gotten older as a Christian disciple, one of the things I've also come to realize is that Christian worship doesn't start with us, doesn't start with me. An image I like to think of as, is as worship is kind of like a chat room, a heavenly chat room in which God the Father and God the Son are in constant eternal relationship to each other and the entire Heavenly host is part of that in terms of adoring and worshipping God. So when we gather on a Sunday, it's not as if we're initiating something. We're just logging on to the chat that's already been taking place for all eternity and will take place for all eternity.

Narrator:

For the past two thousand years, the work of the people as carried out through the liturgy of the Church has brought a diverse body of worshippers to a shared and ongoing relationship with the one true God. It is a connection that has, and will, endure throughout eternity as Christians declare through word, song, and action the story of God for future generations.

The End.