

THE CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH AS RELATED TO WORSHIP

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Perhaps the broadest landscape in the domains of worship research being examined in this issue is that of historical studies. Certainly the subcategories that exist within this domain are numerous and could be categorized in a variety of ways. Therefore, the primary purpose of this article will be to delineate the major subcategories of historical worship research, highlighting salient examples within each subcategory. The categories of research that appear to be most related to worship history are Western musicology, ethnomusicology, sociological research, liturgical research, and hymnology. The greatest attention will be given to hymnology because, traditionally, it has drawn more interest from evangelical worship history researchers.

The writers of this article are using a historiographic approach. Meta-analysis regarding the various techniques used by historians was an important topic throughout the twentieth century.¹ Reflections regarding the process of historical analysis matured over that time period, reaching a particularly poignant summation of process toward the end of the century. For example, Bowden's comprehensive review and concise summations of the research process used by church historians in the 20th century revealed the importance of presenting a reflection on the historical process.² A decade later, Bedouelle reiterated the importance of historiography:

Historiography, then, appears to be one of the most instructive paths the Church historian can pursue today, and this is the very measure in which religious facts, more than any others, seem to have been deformed in the past. These have suffered from partisan views,

¹ Ernst Troeltsch, *Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, Translated by Olive Wyon (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1931); William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (1950; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973); C. T. McIntire, *God, History, and Historians: An Anthology of Modern Christian Views of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

² Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in Age of Uncertainty: Historical Patterns in the United States, 1906-1990* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1991); for example, Bowden's showed that Catholic researchers struggled between entering the dialogue of the general field of historical research versus maintaining their Sovereign view of church history from an institutional standpoint whereas protestant researchers tended to be more open to the prevailing techniques of history research in general.

failing to extricate themselves successfully from contemporary conflicts. We may hope that one of the new ways of writing history in the twentieth century—through the study of thought patterns in individual and social behavior—will, despite its limitations, facilitate a more serene approach.”³

WESTERN MUSICOLOGY

Musicology and ethnomusicology, though seemingly distant from worship studies at times, continue to be important resources for understanding the relationship between music and worship throughout church history. For example, one review of Pepin the Short’s use of the Schola Cantorum to force the Roman liturgy on the Gallican people reveals a complex relationship between state and church with worship as the medium of influence.⁴ Ongoing research into medieval church writings has shed light on the artistic motivations of that day. Music functioned as the mysterious bridge between a seemingly unquenchable human desire to create art and a pursuit of communion with God, the highest motivation for art. For example, the very idea of a trope as an extension of the Word in worship was a sincere attempt at the highest form of Christocentric worship in a corporate setting. The twenty-first century student of worship would do well to include Planchart’s compilation on recent research related to troping as an important source in understanding the progression of worship materials in the Western church.⁵ In terms of connecting church history with contemporary settings, the twenty-first century history-of-worship instructor might reference a connection to ancient practices by highlighting Palestrina’s use of the lute in the compositional process,⁶ or she might compare the medieval

³ Guy Bedouelle, *The History of the Church*, (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2003), 24.

⁴ James P. Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, Donald V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 8th edition, 2009), 30.

⁵ Alejandro Planchart, *Embellishing the Liturgy: Tropes and Polyphony* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

⁶ Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73.

European audience's perception of noise from an early organ with the 20th century American church's reaction to noise associated with a rock ensemble.⁷

ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

The most recognized ethnomusicologists immerse themselves in a particular culture, including its religious practices, before seeking to write authoritatively on the subject. For example, Michael Bakan's review of Balinese Gamelon was preceded by an extended stay in Bali, where he immersed himself in the culture.⁸

Usually, ethnomusicologists are not inclined toward examining the music of the church; however, when examining under-researched Christian music practices they bring the same level of interest as they would to other under-researched areas of world music practice. For example, Barz reviewed the influence of popular music forms among Christian choirs in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.⁹ Also, a recent issue of *Ethnomusicology*, the leading academic journal in the field, included an article on large evangelical gatherings for Christian worship.¹⁰

This example of interest in contemporary Christian music is not to be underestimated.

Among secular researchers there is often silent agreement in the academy that Western European

⁷ Craig Price and Gregory A. Woodward, "Clarity Versus Cultural Noise: An Ageless Theological Challenge for the Church," (Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, March 10, 2012); Peter Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 20, 224; Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Gracyk is a leading philosopher on aesthetics in relationship to popular music; Gracyk discusses noise in a rock band extensively throughout his writings.

⁸ Michael Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Balinese Gamelon Beleganjur* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Michael Bakan, *World Music Class Lectures*, (lectures, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, 2000).

⁹ Gregory Barz, "Kwayas, They're Singing Jazz in the Streets," *Ethnomusicology Online*.

¹⁰ Monique Ingalls, "Singing Heaven Down to Earth, Spiritual Journeys, Eschatological Journeys, and Community Formation in Evangelical Conference Worship," *Ethnomusicology* 55, no. 2 (May 2011): 255-279, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/ethnomusicology> (accessed October 20, 2011).

music is a saturated market.¹¹ To the extent that there is waning interest in Western music scholarship, Western church music history is perhaps receiving the lowest amount of renewed research interest. Therefore, inquiries into global Christian music-making may serve as an entree for the young worship researcher who wishes to exchange ideas in the larger field of musicological scholarship.

Another encouraging aspect of ethnomusicological studies is the openness to genres of all types. There continues to be an inconceivable reluctance to consider popular Christian music as a legitimate body of literature to practice or investigate in Christian higher education.¹² The ethnomusicologist tends to view popular Christian music as simply another cultural manifestation of music-making.

Perhaps the most promising development in recent years related to ethnomusicology is the emergence of a community of Christian ethnomusicologists as a visionary research group. Robin Harris led the founding of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) in 2003. ICE defines ethnodoxology as “theological and anthropological study, and practical application, of how every cultural group might use its unique and diverse artistic expressions appropriately to worship the God of the Bible.”¹³ This definition broadens the scope of ethnographic research to include all artistic practices. This broader perspective eventually could affect curriculum development in worship studies, which in terms of artistic focus typically is dominated by music.

¹¹ The notable exceptions to this general rule are attempts to find under-researched individuals in European cultures not typically emphasized in a given musical period or under-researched female composers.

¹² This is not to say that a single popular Christian song or album would merit a thesis in comparison to a Bach cantata, but rather a recognition that one might approach the current Christian music culture with an ethnographic methodology.

¹³ International Council of Ethnodoxologists: A network for culturally appropriate worship (copyright 2012: accessed May 29, 2012). <http://www.worldofworship.org/Ethnodoxology.php>

In terms of research, ethnodoxology was being established as a distinct field through a journal titled, *Ethnodoxology*.¹⁴ One of the articles that appears in the journal, Hall and Nelley's reflections on the emergence of indigenous Christian music among the Vagla people of Ghana, West Africa, combines distinctive characteristics of ethnomusicology and informal Christian observations of spirit-filled creative activity.

Graduate Christian programs in ethnomusicology are another important aspect of research in this emerging field. John Benham oversees one of the few graduate degrees in ethnomusicology that is offered from a distinctly Christian perspective.¹⁵ He summarized the current state of the discipline as follows:

Although the field of applied ethnomusicology has been an aspect of mission activity for some time, it has over the last two decades become one of the most rapid areas of growth in world missions. Historically, the Western missionary has brought with them their own musical forms, often resulting in a confusion of cultural identity. The Christian ethnomusicologist expresses ministry through the critical contextualization of indigenous music forms in pre-evangelism/evangelism, worship and discipleship."¹⁶

SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES

A return to Bowden's historiographic review of twentieth century church historians provides a framework for the next subcategory, sociological studies. According to Bowden, after an attempted reconciliation of the scientific method and the historical method failed by the 1930's, "discussions about method faded into the background, and considerations of personal interest, subject matter, and interpretive viewpoint took their place."¹⁷ One of the categories that emerged as the methods to historical research became manifold was sociological inquiry.

¹⁴ Publications ended in 2010, but past articles are still available.

¹⁵ John Benham serves as coordinator for the MA in Ethnomusicology at Liberty University.

¹⁶ John Benham, e-mail message to author, September 8, 2011.

¹⁷ Bowden, 127.

Bowden showed that in the twentieth century, inquiry into the evolution of social systems eventually led to an interest in the history of ideas.¹⁸ For some historians, this progression led to an exclusive interest in ideas apart from social implications: “Historians of ideas appreciated thought for what it was, having little concern for what it did or did not do.”¹⁹ Bowden offered several examples of how historians began to reintegrate their analysis of ideas into an explanation of social action.²⁰ This later progression of integrating an understanding of ideas and social action reached a notably mature point in the work of Robert Handy.²¹ By focusing exclusively on actions as an outgrowth of historical ideas, rather than focusing on ideas apart from actions, Handy showed that a single idea from a single individual can influence groups of people. Thus, ideas as formed in a single individual are connected with social action.

A decade later, Csikszentmihalyi, a noted psychologist, presented a fully developed theory on the relationship between individual creative genius and the affect this genius can have on society.²² Csikszentmihalyi referred to creative individuals who permanently change the direction of cultural output in a given setting as “large C” creative individuals. Csikszentmihalyi included historical analysis in his theory on creativity by exploring how societal standards can affect the perceived recognition of genius in particularly sophisticated social settings.²³ For example, he showed that an outstanding artist in fifteenth century Florence would have had to reach

¹⁸ Bowden, 127.

¹⁹ Ibid., 129.

²⁰ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 23; Bradley and Muller also emphasized the influence of social science on historical inquiry after 1950.

²¹ Bowden, 186.

²² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery* (New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), 30; Bradley and Muller, 24; Bradley and Muller noted the influence of quantitative analysis, particularly as used in the social sciences, on secular historical studies after 1950. According to these authors, this period also included multidisciplinary combinations of history and psychology and history and sociology. Csikszentmihalyi’s work revealed a multidisciplinary approach, although he worked primarily from a sociological perspective.

extraordinarily high levels of artistry as compared to outstanding individuals in other cultural settings.²⁴

This method of recognizing the role of society in affecting the creative output of outstanding artists could be fruitful in future socio-historical studies of church musicians. For example, one might examine Bach's emergence as one of the greatest Protestant composers in history as being somewhat related to the emergence of high artistic ideals as a means of answering the complex theological debates of his day.²⁵ Furthermore, this model suggests that the artistic form in which we are to offer "our utmost for his highest" might be related to the maturity of the recipients of religious art as well as the preparation of sacred art creators and performers.

A recent work by Stringer is an example of sociological research specifically focused on worship history.²⁶ Rather than focusing on how individuals affect society, Stringer focused more on how socially-embedded ideas or group behavior, particularly contextualized in strategic European or Middle-eastern cities, affected the particular worship practices in a given area. In some instances, socially embedded ideas were communicated reciprocally to society through worship. In fact, Stringer suggested that Christianity, as the dominant socially embedded idea or discourse between 600 and 900 A. D.,²⁷ was formed primarily through "liturgy and other forms

²³ Sophistication is not bound to Western ideals. The idea of group sophistication can be achieved in various cultures, but certainly historical inquiry reveals that certain cultures reached an unusually high standard of creative output at distinct points in history.

²⁴ Csiksentmihayi, 32-34.

²⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Bach Among Theologians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 38-41, 53-54; Pelikan highlighted Bach's bold stand against an overly rationalized view of scripture in the scholarly setting in which he worked at Leipzig; Bach's settings were traditionally minded hermeneutic interpretations emphasizing the mystery of God speaking through scripture; regarding *sola Scriptura* Bach emphasized scripture over reason through several of his cantatas, some of which were set based on the writings of Neumeister.

²⁶ Martin D. Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 89-91; Stringer explained that a particular discourse emerges as the "hegemonic" or dominant discourse of any given age in Western church history

of popular devotion.”²⁸ Stringer suggested that between 1400 and 1600 humanism emerged as the dominant discourse in Europe and has remained the dominant discourse to the present age.²⁹

As an example of the influence of a group behavior on worship practices, Stringer presented processional movement as the primary distinction of worship practices in Constantinople between 300 and 900 AD. Processionals from church to church in Constantinople become an important worship activity because parishioners viewed local churches as being part of one community of believers.³⁰ Some processionals highlighted particular relics featured at various churches in the city. The movement of church and political leaders emphasized the pilgrimage-oriented identity of the Christian community as a whole in Constantinople such that “this demanded a particular relationship between the worship of the Christian community, the bishop, the Emperor and the city.”³¹ Processions were used to garner support for particular theological movements such as the Arian movement.³² Furthermore, processional groups sought the attention of the emperor.³³ These examples of complex social interactions among various members of society as related to worship distinguishes Stringer’s work as sociological.

Stringer also noted the work of Susan White in the integration of sociology and worship. White’s research is less synoptic in scope, focusing, rather, on under-researched aspects of Christian worship. White’s review of the role of women historically in worship could be described as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, which Bradley and Muller

²⁸ Stringer, 91.

²⁹ Stringer, 179-180.

³⁰ Stringer, 65-66.

³¹ Ibid., 66.

³² Arianism was a 4th century heresy that suggested that Jesus was a created being, therefore not divine.

³³ Ibid., 66.

called for a decade before White's publication.³⁴ White balances quantitative reports with personal accounts of commitment to various aspects of worship. She showed that this balanced approach is needed to get a complete picture of the role of women in worship. For example, in relationship to reading biblical or religious texts, White explained that quantitative accounts only offer a partial picture of a given era of the church: "Even the most detailed calculations of women's literacy and book ownership should not necessarily lead us to conclude that women were internalizing the book's subject matter."³⁵ Most importantly, White suggests new perspectives for understanding the development of worship. For example, White's reference to the important role of women in household worship is a reminder that the most influential male figures in Christian worship history did not emerge in a vacuum.³⁶ White's examination of technology and worship is more social-science than history, yet the work contains a chapter that is primarily historical, contextualizing the influence of technology in medieval Europe.³⁷

Senn's *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* also represents the recent interest in combining sociological inquiry with historical analysis in church history reviews.³⁸ The initial chapters, describing the emergence of a distinctly Christian identity from Jewish roots, highlight issues of interest in New Testament scholarship related to the Jewishness of early Christianity. Senn seeks to broaden the reader's understanding of biblical references to worship practices by providing a sociological framework. For example, Senn showed why early

³⁴ Susan J. White, *A History of Women in Christian Worship* (Cleveland: Pilgrim's Press, 2003); Bradley and Muller, 49, 74-75; Bradley and Muller called for increasing use of modern technology to explore and compare large amounts of data; Concurrently they warned against an ineffective attempted objective analysis that might be less effective than personal involvement with materials; White appears to achieve this balance.

³⁵ White, 129; Although White refers to a secondary source for exacting the number of books owned by women versus literacy, the sheer amount of resources referenced in White's review of book use by women in worship and in other sections of the book establishes an authoritative perspective.

³⁶ White, 201-240; White's explanation of the role women played in raising expectations for household worship match with Csiksentmihayi's assertion that the commonly accepted standard of excellence in a given era influences the level of individual artistry.

³⁷ Susan White, *Christian Worship and Technological Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

Christians should be labeled as a sect or cult from a sociological perspective, while acknowledging that early Christians may not have perceived themselves as participating in cultic activities.³⁹ Furthermore, Senn provided a comparison of early Christian sect-like characteristics to other subgroups in the Jewish religious system. He concluded that Christians could be compared to the Essenes, who were a sect, whereas the Pharisees and Sadducees were not sects.⁴⁰ This type of analysis in Senn's work is representative of both the sociological perspective and early church research described below.

LITURGICAL STUDIES

Liturgical researchers perhaps have contributed most to the general body of worship history data. Historically this area of research has not been of primary importance to evangelical worship historians. Certainly Webber's call to combine liturgical practice with relevant worship materials increased the level of attention given to liturgical practice among evangelical training institutions.⁴¹ However, most evangelical worship leaders tend to be fascinated merely with liturgical form or certain aspects of liturgical practice rather than seeking a thorough understanding of the historical progression of liturgical practice.

An excellent starting point for the novice researcher on liturgical practice is the *Oxford History of Worship*. This work contains a comparative analysis on recent scholarship related to the development of liturgical practice from early church practices including the possibility of Greco-Roman influence and differentiation in Jewish meal observances as contributing to a

³⁸ Frank C. Senn, *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

³⁹ Senn, 20; Senn noted several distinctions between Christian worship practices and Greco-Roman cultic practices.

⁴⁰ Senn, 10.

⁴¹ Robert Webber, *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).

variety of practices for early Eucharist celebrations.⁴² From a Catholic perspective, Metzger and Crouan recently have contributed synoptic reviews of the emergence and progression of the Roman liturgy.⁴³

To move toward a more thorough understanding of historical liturgical practice, one should consider leading journals from various denominational perspectives. The journal titled, *Liturgy*, represents a broad range of perspectives and the “aim and scope” emphasizes equipping for liturgical practice. The authors of a recent issue reflect on important recent movements in worship studies. Johnson offered an insightful review of the “The State of Liturgical Renewal.”⁴⁴ Other journals reflecting the Roman Catholic tradition include *Worship*, founded in 1926 and considered to be the leading journal published in American on Roman Catholic liturgy; *Sacred Music*, the longest sustained music journal publication in American, first published in 1874; *Questions Liturgiques*, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, and *Ecclesia Orans*. Two recent journals now being published by Roman Catholics are *Antiphon: a Journal for Liturgical Renewal*, a journal focusing on Vatican II worship practice, and *Usus Antiquior*, a broadly conceived research journal considering philosophical, theological, historical, and pastoral issues related to the Roman rite.

One way evangelicals can add to this body of research is by studying the “liturgy” of the Free-church tradition. While seemingly an oxymoron, informal observations reveal that even non-liturgical churches adhere to some recurring patterning of events in their worship services.

⁴² Oxford History of Worship

⁴³ Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy: The Major Stages* (The Order of St. Benedict: Collegeville, MN, 1997); Dennis Crouan, *The History of the Future and Roman Liturgy* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2005).

⁴⁴ Todd E. Johnson, “The State of Liturgical Renewal: A Vision Unread?: Introduction,” *Liturgy*, special issue, 26, no. 4 (July 2011): 1-3, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0458063X.2011.586576?journalCode=ultg20>.

The forms, format, and “flow” in free-church worship services say much about a given church’s theology and level of pragmatism.

This field of liturgical research in the free-church tradition virtually is unexplored yet is needed greatly.⁴⁵ The study of free-church liturgy will help liturgical scholars better understand the American-Evangelical tradition as well as help Evangelical scholars, seminary students, and local church ministers better evaluate their own worship traditions and practices.

EARLY CHURCH

With the exception of hymnology, the area of historical study currently receiving the greatest degree of attention in evangelical worship studies is early church worship practices. The zeal to understand first-century worship stems from the evangelical desire to be biblical in all aspects of Christian devotion. At least four distinct research orientations have contributed significantly to this area of research over the past few decades: musicologists, church historians, theologians, and New Testament scholars.

In relationship to early church worship practice, the most scholarly writing by music historians appears to rely heavily on at least one of the other two categories referenced above.⁴⁶

McKinnon provided an excellent review of first through fifth century worship studies in the New

⁴⁵ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); White has contributed significantly to the understanding of Evangelical Worship practices and has provided a starting point for liturgical-type inquiries as related to the free-church tradition.

⁴⁶ James McKinnon, “Christian Church, Music of the Early,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell, vol. 5 (New York: Grove, 2001); McKinnon’s bibliography includes several liturgists, reflecting his review of the first five centuries of church music; Maxwell E. Johnson, “The Apostolic Tradition,” In Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Johnson explained that Dix’s generally accepted view of a single line of evolution between Synoptic Gospel accounts of the Lord’s Supper to later liturgical developments has been refuted; The importance of New Testament scholarship and early church historical inquiries thus increases to offer a more complete picture of first century worship practice.

Grove Dictionary of Music. His bibliographic list would serve as an excellent starting point for anyone interested in pursuing this specific era of worship history.

Two challenges remain regarding the contextualization of first century worship practices. One challenge relates to that which preceded the emergence of Christian worship and the other challenge relates to that which followed. Exploring that which preceded the emergence of Christian suggests an investigation of Jewish worship practices, which lies outside of the scope of this review.⁴⁷ Just as the New Testament scholar seeks a careful balance between the Jewishness of Jesus and the distinctiveness of the Christian movement, so the early worship researcher seeks a difficult balance between the Jewishness of early church worship and the distinction of the selfsame practices.

The challenge in moving from first century worship practice to second century practice and beyond is found by determining the degree of connection between early church worship practice and the codification of liturgy by the third century. The writings of the Church Fathers prove helpful in this regarding, reflecting thoughts on worship just after the New Testament period.⁴⁸

Another influential group in terms of early church research is church historians, particularly liturgists. They offer important explanations regarding the connection between first century practice and third century patterns. Johnson provided a concise review of the debate regarding the exact influence of the apostolic tradition of worship on later practice. Johnson

⁴⁷ Curriculum revisions within the last decade reflect an increased interest in Jewish worship practices; The updated Doctor of Musical Arts at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary includes a class titled, Music of the Biblical World; the class is taught by an Old Testament archeologist and a music professor.

⁴⁸ Calvin R. Stapert, *A New Song for an Old World: Musical Thought in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007); Stapert, a music historian, offers an excellent review of the early Church Fathers' thoughts on the relationship of worship and music.

concluded that multiple influences eventually “converged at certain points” to form a consistent liturgy.⁴⁹ In relationship to the Eucharist, Johnson showed how Gregory Dix’s pervasively influential work on the singular influence of the apostle’s Eucharist eventually was refuted by evidences of distinct influences on the formation of consistent Eucharistic practice.⁵⁰

At least one evangelical theologian significantly impacted historical studies in worship and contributed specifically to early Christian worship observations. Robert Webber, perhaps more than any other figure in the latter half of the twentieth century, encouraged a renewed interest in historical worship practices among worship practitioners. In *Worship Old and New*, Webber drew important conclusions regarding the theological significance of particular developments in worship history.⁵¹ One should note that Webber did not approach important eras in biblical or Western worship as typical historians of his era. Rather, Webber tended to form theological conclusions when conducting historical reviews.⁵²

The most potentially fruitful research for future early church worship studies is being produced as the *Third Quest for the Historical Jesus* continues to emerge. Both liberal and conservative scholars involved in recent historical Jesus research are interested in contextualizing the historic Jesus in an accurate first century picture of Palestine and specifically Galilee.⁵³ Such an analysis obviously includes an investigation of first-century Jewish worship

⁴⁹ Maxwell E. Johnson, “The Apostolic Tradition,” in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 44.

⁵⁰ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1945).

⁵¹ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1994).

⁵² Historians commonly describe George Frederick Hegel’s approach to history as a synoptic review that assumes a progression toward the ultimate fulfillment of history. This procedure was largely rejected in the 20th century, although some aspects of the approach are clearly appropriate for believers in the sense that Christ reigns sovereign over history until the eschatological fulfillment of Christ’s return.

⁵³ Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 14-15; Witherington explained the practical importance of further exploration into the cultural context in which Jesus lived, noting recent interest in the subject that was distinguishing the Third Quest from the Second Quest at the time his work appeared.

practices. One of the primary contributors to the *Third Quest*, Ben Witherington III, recently has demonstrated an interest in worship theology and practice.⁵⁴ Witherington's contributions are written primarily on a practical level. However, because of his extensive research on first-century Jewish culture, references to the influence of the synagogue, though found within a relatively light writing approach as compared to Witherington's other works on early Christian practice, cannot be ignored.⁵⁵

Hurtado and Smith, also New Testament scholars, have contributed significantly to discussions on first century worship in their respective books on the subject. Hurtado's review of early Christian worship rightly places worship at the center of current debates on the historical Jesus, noting documentation of Jesus worship in the first century as an important aspect of early perceptions of Jesus' identity.⁵⁶ Bradshaw's most recent publication on early church worship practices will encourage a lively discussion of the nature of the Eucharist in the first century.⁵⁷ Worship researchers will be served greatly by seeking dialogue with leading figures in New Testament scholarship.

HYMNOLOGY

⁵⁴ Ben Witherington III, *We Have Seen His Glory: A Vision of Kingdom Worship* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

⁵⁵ Witherington, 47-50; This particular example from Witherington's recent book was chosen because the influence of the synagogue is sometimes questioned by early church worship scholars.

⁵⁶ Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 39; Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999); see also James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus: The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 29-37; Hurtado has been involved in a lively scholarly debate with Dunn regarding the extent to which New Testament texts clearly reveal that Jesus was worshipped; notice that Hurtado's persistence in scholarship in this critical area of first-century worship is actually apologetic in nature.

⁵⁷ Paul F. Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship: A Basic Introduction to Ideas and Practice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 41-49,

In the nearly five centuries since Luther wrote his first hymns, congregational singing has become a primary (in many cases, *the* primary) form of corporate worship for Protestant and Evangelical congregations. Similarly, hymnology has become the dominant field of study for Evangelical worship researchers.

To explore the current state of historical research in hymnology, the researchers created a list of important hymnology texts, studies, and resources and then classified that list in two ways. First, the authors divided the list into subcategories: *General Hymnology texts, Early Church Hymns, Catholic Hymns, Lutheran Hymns, Psalmody, English Hymns (18th-19th centuries), Early American hymns, Folk Hymns/Sacred Harp, 19th Century Gospel Hymns, Twentieth Century “Hymn Explosion”, Praise and Worship, Black hymnody, Baptist hymns, Pentecostal/Charismatic hymns, and World Hymns/Ethnodoxology*. Because this journal is written by and primarily intended for Evangelicals, genres of hymnody that are of greatest pertinence and interest to Evangelicals are given emphasis.

The researchers then classified the items in the list by research process. By classifying and emphasizing the *types* of studies rather than simply counting the number of studies in the field, the researchers hope to reveal which areas of hymnology have been well-researched and which have been under-researched or, in some cases, ignored. Four levels of research process were used in this study:

Level One: *Foundational Research*

Level Two: *Historical/Descriptive Research*

Level Three: *Intra-disciplinary Research*

Level Four: *Inter-disciplinary Research*.

Level One, or foundational research, is research that pertains to the collecting, preserving, and classifying of primary sources. Level Two, historical/descriptive research, involves interactions with primary sources in order to determine “who, what, when, where, and why.” Level Three, intra-disciplinary research, examines relationships within the field of hymnology. Level Four is inter-disciplinary research into how something in the field of hymnology relates to, compares with, or influences something outside of the field. To use a metaphor, inter-disciplinary research compares apples to oranges, intra-disciplinary research compares apples to apples, historical/descriptive research is a description or history of apples, and foundational research is a barrel of apples waiting to be studied.

Level One: Foundation Research in Hymnology:

Examples of source documents in hymnology include hymnals, historical writings on hymns and hymn singing, first person accounts of hymn-related activities (including hymn singing, hymn writing, hymnal compiling, etc.), and source recordings of congregational singing. The most obvious source material for hymnologists are hymns themselves. While hymnals and hymn books abound by the thousands, there is a great need for organized, scholarly hymn collections for hymnological research. Very few of the content areas examined in this study had any kind of comprehensive anthology. One notable example of a scholarly hymn anthology is *American Hymns Old and New*, which contains a broad sampling of historical hymns arranged by both century and denomination.⁵⁸

The research area of hymn-related writings has been underexplored. There is a great need for well-researched collections of historical writings on both congregational songs and

⁵⁸ Albert Christ-Janer, Charles W. Hughes, and Carleton Sprague Smith. *American Hymns Old and New*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

congregational singing. The best example of this type of Level One study is David Music's *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Materials*.⁵⁹ *Hymnology* includes brief snippets from a diverse range of important hymn-related documents including the *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*, the preface to Watts' *The Psalms of David, Imitated*, and the autobiography of Ira Sankey.

Level One researchers are tasked with the preserving, translating, compiling, classifying, and publishing of both historical primary sources and a wide variety of contemporary sources including internet articles, blog entries, emails, podcasts, YouTube videos, and tweets about hymns and congregational songs. The future of source document collection, preservation, and publishing is the internet. In the past, the limitations of traditional publishing made printed collections of primary sources difficult and impractical. Recent advances in internet technology now allow hymnologists the opportunity to create ever-growing, up-to-date, and collaborative collections of source materials. One such resource already in progress is the North American Dictionary of Hymnology (DNAH). The goal of the DNAH project is to catalogue every North American hymn and hymnal printed between 1640 and 1978.⁶⁰ DNAH's database presently includes over 5,000 hymnals and 1,000,000 hymns.

⁵⁹David W. Music, *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Materials*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996); Although not exclusively about hymnology, another exceptional example of this type of source document collection worth noting is James F. White's *Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992). White's text primarily focuses on historical documents that highlight non-musical aspects of Christian worship.

⁶⁰"Dictionary of North American Hymnology Overview and History" (http://www.hymnary.org/DNAH_Overview) (accessed August 20, 2011.) For a more detailed history of the DNAH project, see Paul R. Powell. "The Dictionary of American Hymnology on CD-ROM." (*Journal of Religious & Theological Information*; 2001, Vol. 4 Issue 3, p. 89-97), and Peter W Rehwaltdt "Another Step Forward" (*Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song*; Winter 2007, Vol. 58 Issue 1, p. 6).

While DNAH represents one giant leap forward into the future of hymnology and is a helpful resource to current researchers, it is not the final collection of source materials that hymnologists in the future will need. An ideal hymnological source material collection would be a cross between DNAH, CCLI's "SongSelect," Google Books, and Wiki music sites like the International Music Score Library Project (IMSPL). This future resource could be an ever-growing virtual library of hymns, hymnals, audio recordings, sheet music, primary sources, and scholarly writings that can be updated collaboratively by researchers across the world.

Level Two: Historical /Descriptive Research:

The vast majority of present hymnological research is historical or descriptive. Level Two research in hymnology includes hymnal companions, collections of hymn stories, biographies of hymn-writers and hymn-related figures, and historical or descriptive analyses of hymns and congregational singing. At least one Level Two study has been conducted in every subcategory that is included in this classification of current hymnology resources.

Recently updated editions of classic hymnology texts, *Let the People Sing, A Panorama of Christian Hymnody*, *An English-Speaking Hymnal Guide*, and *A Survey of Christian Hymnody*, are among the best sources for the general history and practice of hymnody. A few recent outstanding examples of historical research in specific subcategories of hymnology include Music and Richardson's *I Will Sing the Wondrous Story*, Ogaspian's *Church Music in America: 1626-2000*, and Schalk's *The Music of Early Lutheranism*.

Several of the categories in this study have multiple outstanding Level Two studies. A few, most notably English hymnody, have been studied to the point of saturation. Three categories that largely have been ignored are Praise and Worship, Pentecostal hymns, and world hymnody/Ethnodoxology. Aspiring worship researchers would be wise to focus their efforts on

these under-researched areas. Both informal observations and formal research confirm that Praise and Worship rapidly is replacing English hymnody and American gospel hymnody as the dominant form of congregational song in American Evangelical churches. Yet there seems to be a reticence among current hymnologists to research the history, music, performance practice, or theology of Praise and Worship and its Pentecostal predecessors. If hymnology is to remain viable and valuable, researchers must commit time, energy, and attention to the congregational songs and worship practices that are most common in today's churches. In addition, twenty-first century worship researchers have good reason to lead the way in the new field of ethnodoxology; greater understanding of congregational singing in non-Western cultures will help missionaries, worship leaders, and hymn-writers better meet the unique needs of those people groups.

Finally, historical Level Two studies can be used as Level One source materials. For example, H. Leigh Bennett's famous assessment of Watts' famous 1719 psalter, *The Psalms of David, Imitated* in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* originally was historical and descriptive research but is now more valuable as a primary source that sheds light on late-nineteenth century popular opinion of both Watts and his psalm paraphrases.⁶¹ One of the more creative uses of a historical Level Two study as a primary source is Richard Arnold's use of *The Dictionary of Hymnology*. Arnold used Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* to determine which hymns should be included in his anthology; *English Hymns of the Nineteenth Century*. He speculated that because the *Dictionary of Hymnology* could only include a finite number of entries, hymns that are

⁶¹ H. Leigh Bennett, "Psalms, English, XV:Watts's Version" in *Dictionary of Hymnology, rev. ed. 2 vols.*, ed. John Julian (London: J. Murray, 1907; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1985). Bennett states in his description of Watts' *Psalms of David, Imitated* that "there is a want of restraining reverence about it; and the turgid epithets and gaudy ornament dishonor the simple grandeur of the original."

mentioned in Julian must have been among the most popular and widely sung hymns of that era, and were the most worthy of inclusion in his anthology.⁶²

Level Three: Intra-Disciplinary Research:

Intra-disciplinary research examines the relationships within a field. Examples in hymnology would include comparisons of hymn writers, hymn texts or tunes, genres, singing styles, hymnals, etc. Admittedly, the lines that distinguish Level Three and Level Four can be blurry. One reason for this is that many recent hymnology texts contain a mixture of Levels Two, Three, and Four. Another is that Level Three research is often implicit rather than explicit. A classic example of both these blurring factors is Bailey's *The Gospel in Hymns*.⁶³ Bailey's work is primarily Level Two: a history and evaluation of various hymn-writers and their hymns. In his evaluations, he made implicit comparisons of both hymn-writers and their respective hymns. While, for example, Bailey does not compare the hymns of Watts and Wesley *explicitly*, he compares them *implicitly* by using the same criterion to evaluate the hymns, theology, and legacy of both men.

Three excellent examples of Level Three research in hymnology are Stapert's *A New Song for an Old World*, Gordley's *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity*, and Davie's *Psalmody as Translation*. Davie's article explores the theological implications in the psalm settings of eighteenth century hymnists Isaac Watts and Christopher Smart. He also makes a case that the psalm "paraphrases" of Watts and Smart should be viewed as translations since both authors

⁶² Richard Arnold, ed. *English Hymns of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), xi.

⁶³ Albert Edward Bailey. *The Gospel in Hymns*. (New York: Scribners, 1950).

inject their personal interpretations and theological biases into their psalm settings.⁶⁴ Stapert's text explores the writings of the early Church Fathers and compares and contrasts their differing opinions of what types of music should be permissible in congregational worship.

In doing so, Stapert addresses not only the forms of congregational singing in the early church but also the relationship between the theory and practice of congregational singing both then and now.⁶⁵ Perhaps the most creative research of these three is Gordley's text. In *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity*, Gordley conducts Level Three research on a grand scale by comparing how various ancient cultures, including ancient Jews and early Christians, used corporate songs in worship settings as teaching tools.⁶⁶

The imaginative combinations and comparisons of various elements within the wide field of hymnology (even those that seem on the surface to be only remotely related) is an excellent starting point for venturing into new scholarship. Practicing transferrability in hymnological research creates a climate of transferability with students in encouraging their recognition of connections between historical practice and current practice. For example, a comparison of colonial American disputes over congregational singing (New Way vs. Old Way) and the "worship wars" of the 1980's-2000's could help worship leaders better understand how changes in congregational singing style affect congregants. A comparison of the ancient practice of

⁶⁴Donald Davie. "Psalmody as Translation" (*Modern Language Review*, Oct 1990, Vol. 85 Issue 4, p817-828).

⁶⁵ Calvin R. Stapert, *A New Song for an Old World: Musical Thought in the Early Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007).

⁶⁶Matthew E. Gordley. *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity: Didactic Hymnody Among Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians*. (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

troping and the recent trend to add newly composed choruses to older hymns could help worship students better understand both practices.⁶⁷

Level Four: Inter-Disciplinary Research:

Level Four research is the newest form of historical research that is being conducted in the field of hymnology. Most of these studies have been written in the past ten years. Many of these are comparisons or “cause-and-effect” studies concerning either hymns and theology or hymns and their native culture. Though still a relatively small segment of hymnology, inter-disciplinary studies increasingly are becoming a substantial portion of the overall research output in hymnology.

Three recent texts that employ an inter-disciplinary approach to hymnology are *Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody and History in North American Protestantism*,⁶⁸ *Sing them Over Again to Me: Hymns and Hymnbooks in America*,⁶⁹ and Mouw and Noll’s *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*.⁷⁰ Each of these texts is a collection of essays on the relationship between Protestant hymns and various aspects of both the Evangelical and American cultural experiences. In an essay in *Wonderful Words of Life*, Crookshank explores the profound impact of Isaac Watts’ hymns on the early American church. Watts’ hymns became the musical accompaniment to the first Great Awakening. His hymns also had a direct effect on the rapid growth of church choirs in colonial-era America. Crookshank also points out the lasting impact of Watts’ hymns on both the musical styles (both

⁶⁷ Gregory A. Woodard, “21st Century Hymn-Troping,” (blog), www.incarnationalworship.wordpress.com, (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁶⁸ Edith L. Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll, eds. *Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody and History in American Protestantism*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008).

⁶⁹ Edith L. Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll, eds. *Sing Them Over Again to Me: Hymns and Hymnbooks in America*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006).

sacred and secular) and religious practices of African-Americans.⁷¹ In the same book, Schneider writes on the relationship between hymns and missionary activity in the nineteenth century. He explores how popular opinions of foreign missions often were shaped by “missionary hymns.” Schneider writes that these hymns often contain themes of military conquest and American/anglo superiority.⁷² American missionaries often reinforced those ideas when they taught American hymns to foreign converts.

A key benefit of Level Four research is the interaction it creates between scholars and students of various fields of worship research. As each of the sections of this article has endeavored to show, historical worship research cannot exist in a vacuum; it must draw on research and expertise from other fields. Interaction between theologians and hymnologists will benefit both camps. Theologians can gain insight into how to better disciple Christians and evangelize non-Christians through congregational song while hymnologists and worship leaders will be challenged to examine more clearly the theological content in both worship songs and popular worship practices.

⁷⁰ Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll, eds. *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

⁷¹ Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank. “‘We’re Marching to Zion’: Isaac Watts in Early America.” in Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll, eds. *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004) 17-41.

⁷² Robert A. Schneider. “‘Jesus Shall Reign’: Hymns and Foreign Missions.” in Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll, eds. *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004) 69-95.

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