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= 흙이 니하므  
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= 가사 라서 가  
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g up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But whe  
ame up, the plants were scorched, and they witi

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# **Worship and the Formation of a People of God<sup>1</sup>**

**Charles Young-Chul Ryu**

Keynote address for 12<sup>th</sup> Korean Worship and Music Conference, August 3-6, 2009

I. The general topic given to this keynote by the conference design team is “Worship and Culture.” It is the last of the three-part keynote by three different speakers covering the three of the most important and indispensable partners and dimensions of worship: music, art, and culture.

With the growing interests in multicultural ministry and therefore multicultural worship, the question of culture enters frequently in our conversation about worship and liturgy. In this conversation, we usually focus on how we could embody different cultural expressions in worship in order more fully to represent the diverse cultural groups that are part of the church and its worship. As this is Korean Worship and Music Conference, over the course of the history of this conference, we have been increasingly mindful of how Korean cultural elements can be more meaningfully incorporated into otherwise western form and style of worship services, which in general reflect the western or European culture(s) in and through which the distinctively Christian form(s) of worship developed over its two thousand year history.<sup>2</sup>

Discerning how much of our worship that we think of as Christian or that we have inherited from the western missionaries is Christian and how much is actually of western culture, is a question that we constantly need to ask not only for and among the non-western Christians, but also for the western Christians as well if we are to worship more authentically. At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revision and writing out of the keynote on worship and culture delivered from an outline on Wednesday, August 5, 2009 at the 12th Korean Worship and Music Conference (Aug 3-6, 2009) at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA.

<sup>2</sup> Even though in church history, we tend to call the tradition of the Orthodox Church east, and Catholic and later Protestant Churches west, they are nonetheless still largely culturally European even for those churches that are geographically located in the Near East, and thus referred to as western here according to the current global sense of East and West.

however, even if we could ever actually delineate and differentiate clearly what may be authentically Christian in forms and substance of worship from the things of western culture, any effort to see whether we could then in fact create an authentically Christian worship that would fully reflect Korean or any non-western culture, or even fully multicultural global reality, would be extremely difficult, complicated and messy. Thus far, we have not been able to articulate a generally agreed, accepted or acceptable frame work with which to look at the situation, but only many important attempts at this, some of the worship services and workshops in this conference being the case in point. The task is extremely difficult precisely because worship and culture are correlative phenomena that cannot be separated from one another. Following the insight of Paul Tillich, culture is the form of religion and religion the substance of culture. As worship is the core happening of a religion, looking at the worship and its connection to the culture heightens the general character of this inseparable correlativity between religion and culture. If such is the case, then, instead of trying to extricate the pure elements of worship from the cultural specificities through which the worship concerned is formed, even though such an effort may provide us with some important insights into the issue at hand, it may be helpful and more immediately needed to look at the general relationship between worship and culture, and see what kind of dynamics in this regard is essential in the effort to articulate and practice authentic worship of and for Christian community that reflects and embodies the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ. Once we have some understanding of this dynamic relation between worship and culture, this could help us later in the concrete practices of multicultural worship or in how to bring various cultural expressions to Christian worship services more meaningfully.

Returning to the theme of Tillich mentioned earlier, if culture is the form of religion and religion the substance of culture, then this means also that religion and therefore worship is not only a cultural phenomenon happening as part of a cultural matrix, but at the same time, is also a driving force of a culture/civilization. For us who live in the current post-Christian, post-religious, secular civilization, where religion, especially mainline Protestant Christianity seems to have lost its positive and prevailing significance and influence in the society, we can much more readily accept the former implication, namely that worship still remains as one of cultural phenomena and happens as part of the cultural matrix, particularly within the sub-society and its sub-culture called Christian communities; thus, looking at the connection between worship and culture could still be beneficial for Christians. However, it probably is much more difficult for us

to boldly claim the latter part, namely, to see our worship and what religious people like us Christians do reflecting our identity as Christian as the driving force, or at least one of the major driving forces of our culture and civilization formation process. A general, implicit, subconscious assumption may be that this is something we *did* in the past, but not anymore. Moreover, the Christian communities that try to be more balanced and holistic in their practice of faith actually cringe when they see more conservative Christian groups that are more explicitly politically oriented toward the right forcing their agenda on society. We Christians of more ecumenically oriented, historic, apostolic traditions may have already largely given up on this role of religion and therefore worship as transformative force in the larger culture, society, and civilization in which our Christian worship happens.

Nevertheless, not only one cannot understand worship apart from the culture in which this worship takes place, but also that the reverse is in fact still and will always be true as well. One cannot really understand the culture apart from the worship that the people in that culture practice or celebrate. This is true not only for the sub-culture within the boundary of the efficacy of the religion concerned or, in our case, Christian worship, but also in the case of the larger, general society vis-a-vis its civil religion, i.e., apparently religious nature of a society or a nation and their quasi-religious worship services such as seasonal festivals, civic ceremonies, political rallies, athletic events, media blitz, and most importantly the routinized normalcy of wars. In fact, until the advent of modernity only several hundred years ago, the civic and religious spheres largely coincided with one another in the most parts of the world. Even now, the line between the two is, more often than not, quite blurred. For an important and revealing example, the ubiquitous presence of the national flag in the sanctuaries of Christian worship in the United States (and probably only in the U.S.), whether Protestant or Catholic, often on or very near the altar, underscores the close connection and this blurring of identity between civic and religious realms. Any theologically acute pastors serving small town congregations in the U.S. would notice that the happenings in the churches and in the town often blur from one to the other. It is indeed sobering to pause and reflect seriously whether in fact Christianity in the United States of America may have become less of the authentic Christianity but more of the civil religion of the American Empire using Christian languages and symbols.

Culture is what people do in and through which they express, experience, learn and transmit values, over time creating a distinctive knowledge or cognition complex of a tradition of a people

or a historical era/epoch, in turn forming the members of that society in a particular way. We could add to this definition generational, geographical and gender as well as any other socially and culturally meaningful variables.<sup>3</sup> Worship understood as liturgy (leitourgia)<sup>4</sup> is also what Christians do, in and through which their highest values are expressed, experienced, learned and transmitted, and over time creating a distinctive tradition of wisdom and identity as Christian. The English word “worship” is said to have come from “worth-ship” probably for this reason. The 1951 classic by H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, a historico-typological study of the relationship between Christianity and culture, therefore may and can be recast not only as its intended study of the patterns of relationship between religion (in his case, Christianity) and its surrounding culture, but also more pointedly as the study of the relationship between Christian worship and the worship in and of the civil religion(s) of the surrounding culture(s). In short, which God do we really worship, and how should be the relation between the Christians who worship God in Jesus Christ and the god(s) of the civil religion(s)? The members of the community of Christian worship are also simultaneously the members of the empire with its values and its worship-equivalent socio-cultural-economic-political mechanisms for the maintenance of these values, which are not necessarily always compatible with the authentic Christian worship and its values, even though the church history shows much confusion between these divergent and incompatible values. Bluntly put, as Roman Empire was Christianized from Constantine on, Christianity was in turn imperialized, and even after 1700 years and changing empires, we are still having difficulty overcoming this imperial impulse. History of worship and liturgy reflects this struggle as well. Different forms of worship and the kind of sensibilities embodied in a certain given worship reflect that theology-ideology of the place of this worshipping community in the empire, or the surrounding culture/civilization with varying degrees and forms of imperial impulses.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is my own summary definition of culture that I have formulated for the purpose of this keynote. I acknowledge that there is nothing original about this, and many expert theorists of culture said similarly and much better.

<sup>4</sup> “leit” from “laos” (=people) and “ourgia” from “ergon” (=action, work), thus, liturgy literally means “work of, by and for the people” and was used in civic context of Greek/Hellenistic civilization before the church adopted it for her ministry.

<sup>5</sup> Over the last decade or so, my reflection on the relationship between Christian identity and empire(s) led me to come up with a new concept and call “imperial impuse/urge as original sin.” I am hoping to be able to write somewhat systematically on this theme in near future.

Taking the locution from *Christ and Culture* by Niebuhr mentioned above, out of the six possible patterns of relationship between Christianity and culture that he delineated, I take the last one, “Christ the Transformer of Culture” as the appropriate frame work to understand worship and its relation to culture in present context.<sup>6</sup> Even though Niebuhr described/developed a conversionist model with this apt phrase, “Christ the Transformer of Culture,” I would approach this process of transformation less as that of conversion, for the conversionist talk still rings imperialistic overtone given the colonial expansionism that the western churches participated in and shared with the western nations, but more as that of “incarnation” of the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the culture where Christian worship happens. When we Christians worship authentically, not only are we transformed, but the culture/society in which we worship and live will also be transformed by our life, practice, ministry and witness in the larger culture/society, not necessarily always as the dominant and hegemonic cultural determinant, but as critical and indispensable salt and light for the “life abundant for all” in that society, indeed as the seeds of the Kingdom of God planted in the fields of culture and society, a lot like what we find in the Parables of Seeds in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 13, which are the Biblical foundation for this year’s (12th) Korean Worship and Music Conference: “Seed and Fruit, the Reign of God.” If we take seriously the implications of what we generally define as worship, and still believe in its efficacy rather than merely repeating a certain religious ritual, then the second part of Tillich’s religion and culture correlativity in the way that I have interpreted and used earlier, namely, religion (here Christian worship) as driving and transforming element/force of a culture/society by providing the substance for that culture becomes clearer, tenable, and in our case as Christians, a Gospel mandate. This keynote is in a way an effort to recover this aspect of worship life that transforms the culture, in a uniquely Christian way with Christian sensibility that would be quite different from the way changes are usually brought about in and by an empire or its contemporary equivalents.

II. What then is worship for Christians and what happens when the people called Christian worship? -- to them and in turn to the surrounding culture in which they live, move and have their beings. Moreover, how does our understanding of worship in this particular culture change

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<sup>6</sup> The other five types by Niebuhr: Christ against Culture, The Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox. I am not interpreting or critically engaging with Niebuhr, but only taking the certain locution from him and the imagination such a locution provides for this article.

when we enlarge the location of the culture in which this particular worship takes place to the global, planetary level *without* thereby losing the meaning of worship as something that has been transmitted through the long history and tradition of Christian worship, but always concretely expressed through this particular local faith community concerned?

As defined earlier in conjunction with the definition of culture, worship is “what Christians *do*, in and through which their highest values are expressed, experienced, learned and transmitted, and over time creating a distinctive tradition of wisdom and identity as Christian.” Worship is *the* central, *sine qua non* identity forming act-action-activity-event of the people called Christian. If we do not worship God in Christ, we do not exist as Christian at all. Actually, without worship we cannot possibly exist as Christian at all.<sup>7</sup> Even though there can be many different kinds of worship of God in Christ, including personal worship during the devotional time or prayerful and worshipful work and life as worship, it is the congregational worship especially on Sundays as the representative worship of and for the community of the people called Christian that forms the primary basis of our discussion here. Sometimes not-so correctly referred to as the public worship of Christian, this Sunday congregational worship is the central communal celebration of the people called Christian. The worship of God in Christ is the celebration of the “community” that the Christian church is. It is not and cannot be “public” in the sense of something happening in civic realm as that which is of the same civic, public realm, even though it is the public face of this faith community in the said public civic realm in which the worship takes place. The age old adage that we Christians are in this world, but not of the world is an important relevant insight here. The congregational worship happens in the realm that often overlaps with the public and civic realm, but is not and cannot be of that public or civic realm. Simultaneously, it is not and cannot be “private” in contrast to this public realm, thus, in the sense that it is a “private” matter, as unfortunately religion in our time is often relegated to. Christian worship is and happens as “communal” happening and celebration of this Christian

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<sup>7</sup> Even though it is my own formulation, much of this segment on the definition and meaning of worship, especially its status as *sine qua non* Christian identity forming soteriological act-event, is a result of having taken the year long course, “Liturgia: Corso Base (A Basic Course on Liturgy)” at Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music (of Vatican City) in Rome, Italy during the academic year 2008-9, taught by Prof. Salvatore Barbagallo, based upon his own lecture notes, some of which were given out to the students in the class. The formulation and the basic idea of this section emerged and developed as a by-product of the process of attending the lectures, reading Prof. Barbagallo’s lecture notes, discussing and debating with him in the class, sometimes disagreeing on certain aspects of his positions, to the extent that I could understand him as the course was taught in Italian, and my command of Italian was limited. It suffices to acknowledge that there was a definite influence of Prof. Barbagallo on the direction of my thought.



faith community, reflecting their highest values and their ultimate concerns as Christian.<sup>8</sup> This is true even when we are engaged in so-called “personal” devotional, as there cannot be a private worship from a Christian perspective, which is distinctively of faith “community.” Every worship is communal in nature, whether congregational and corporate or individual and personal in outward form. In other words, the communion of saints is central to this communal celebration of the people called Christian.<sup>9</sup>

In this communal happening and celebration, worship is usually understood as “encounter” between the Holy God and the people of God. The worship as the bearer and transmitter of values and as the identity forming act-event happens precisely because of this “encounter” between the Holy and the people, and the resulting encounters among the people and with God’s creation because of and in the context of this holy encounter between the divine and the mundane. The worship that Christian communities celebrate then are regularly occurring instances of such encounters, thereby forming an important example of what John Wesley called “the means of grace.” Unlike some other human religious experiences of divine-human encounters that became part of the total depository of human life on this earth, the encounters with the Holy One for the Biblical religion like Christianity are not events for, in and of the encounters themselves. In other words, these encounters are never meant to be just for the transcendental or mystical union with God-reality per se, even though certain religiosity in us would display a strong propensity for attachment to such experiences. Rather, these encounters are always the occasions for and related to the specific and concrete divine purposes on the human historical plane. This is so even in the more mystical expressions/experiences that the church tradition(s) accept as part of the constituting substance/content of their tradition(s). Every divine-human encounter recounted in the Bible and in the tradition(s) that the church maintained, is an event of establishing a specific and concrete relationship between God and God’s people. To be more precise, people become the people of God through this encounter or the series of encounters. This is true even when the encounter is between God and one specific individual, for this individual then becomes a representative of and/or a catalyst for the people with whom God is establishing the specific relationship which always has to do with God’s saving acts in history. It always happens as part

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<sup>8</sup> This idea of worship not being public or private, but communal even when it is personal is definitely learned from Prof. Barbagallo’s emphasis in the course mentioned in the footnote 7.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the private baptism that some families ask for is directly against the very nature of Christian worship. It cannot even be established without the presence of the faith community that welcomes the new believer and covenant together to nurture him/her in this faith.

of the narrative of God's promise(s) to the people of God and God's faithfulness in fulfilling them. It is God's call of the people of God to join God in God's faithfulness in fulfilling the promise to save them. The worship that we regularly plan and celebrate is an act-event choreographed or curated for such a specific kind of encounter between God and the people of God that is put in a liturgical frame work, i.e. an encounter transposed onto the liturgical plane. People meet God in worship; they become the people of God; this people of God then have the specific callings and vocations for God's purpose, and become the collaborative agents in and for God's redemptive acts of intervention in history.

Now, one more specificity about "Christian" worship as a regularly happening distinctive form/event of divine-human encounter for the providential and consequent salvific intervention of the Creator-Redeemer God in history. It is something very obvious but often too obvious that we miss it, or sometimes we are not even aware that we missed the mark on this. For the people called Christian, the salvation history of God that is celebrated in this worship which is an encounter, is specifically of God's saving acts "in and through Jesus Christ." The reverse in logic and temporal sequence would actually be truer: it is thanks to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his promise to be with us in Spirit and to return at the end of the time (that is, when the future of the new possibilities that have become reality and a real possibility in history in and through this Jesus Christ becomes fully actualized)<sup>10</sup> that we are able to worship the God in Christ, encounter the God in Christ in this worship, and become a specific kind of people of God called Christian, that are born, formed and nurtured through this Christian worship.

Actually, it is in this worship as the communal celebration of God's saving act in Jesus Christ that this salvation history continues. In and through Christian worship, the Christian community celebrates the originating encounter between God and human beings in Christ the Emmanuel as God's decisive, sufficient salvific act in Jesus Christ. Christians continue to have encounters with God as they participate in Christian worship, which is often symbolic and metaphoric reenactment and remembrance (anamnesis) of the original Christ event, as was, is now and is to come. This worship is simultaneously an eschatological prolepsis of the completion of the salvation history whose sure victory was decisively won on Calvary and on the First Easter morning. In short, Christian worship is God's salvation narrative in and through Jesus Christ on a

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<sup>10</sup> This way of looking at the eschaton as the future completion of the possibilities brought out by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is influenced by Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, tr. from German by James W. Leitch, (SCM Press, New York, 1967)

liturgical plane, which involves and results in the people called Christians, who encounter God that is experienced specifically in “Christian” way, thus being called out with specific vocation “as” Christians in this world. Thus, Christians would continue to gather together in the name of Jesus Christ, remembering his words and acts, break the bread together and share the cup, until, with Jürgen Moltmann, the future of this Jesus Christ is fully realized, and the salvation of God in Jesus Christ is completed.<sup>11</sup> When Christians stop worshipping God in Christ authentically, the salvation history as Christians understand it would cease. As long as Christians continue to gather, even two or three “in the name of Jesus Christ,” the salvation history in Christ continues, and the future of Jesus Christ as the eschaton of this salvation history still holds its truth and hope.

Understanding Christian worship in this way would give us the following redefinition with four interlocking vectors.

Christian worship is a soteriological event

- in which Christians encounter God by participating in the symbolic/metaphoric enactment/re-enactment of salvation narrative, revealed by God throughout history, and specifically through Jesus Christ, in the faith in the promise of the presence of Christ when we gather together in his name; [*Encounter*]
- resulting in the formation of a people of God called Christians, as individual and as a community, resulting in the birth/creation of “new being” and new community that is a part of the universal people of God, a community of priests and prophets for God’s ministry and mission; [*Identity and Formation*]
- in turn engendering a new life pattern and new culture in the lives of individual Christians and of the Christian community, characterized as a community of love, justice, peace and radical hospitality, living out their identity as God’s witness and representative in the world, as salt and light of the world, as “the seeds of the Kingdom of God,” (Matthew Ch.13); [*Vocation*]
- thereby transforming the culture in which they live both locally, nationally and globally, as they embody in all aspects of their lives in the world the core Christian values learned and nurtured in this worshipping community, and constitute a community with specific missions in the world, and faithfully witness the Gospel

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<sup>11</sup> op. cit.

even to martyrdom, as they resist the empire, so that the world will come to reflect the Christ incarnated in social holiness, and all in the world will get to have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10). [*Mission*]

It is not for the self-actualization and fulfillment of individual religiosity that we Christians worship, but as Alexander Schmemmann put it, our worship is “for the life of the world.”<sup>12</sup> When we worship authentically, the world will have life. When we don’t, they won’t.<sup>13</sup>

III. This is not really a new definition or characterization of worship. Everything that was discussed above has been said before. This has been only an effort to underscore what is most basic, obvious and essential about worship as there is a need to remind ourselves of such definitional basics due to the identity crisis that the mainline Christians are going through nowadays. Given the understanding above of what worship is and what its dynamic relationship to the culture in which the worship takes place can be, what then would be some of the implications for us Christians as we prepare, participate in and lead our worship services?

First of all, our questions that guide our evaluation of worship need to be aligned along the line of the definition above, along all four vectors. Usually when we design worship and lead and then evaluate it, it is usually along the performance criteria. However, the authenticity, thus meaningfulness of a worship does not depend on the technical observance of the liturgical details, not on the excellent execution of all aspects of worship elements, even though these have certain importance and I for one always encourage the pursuit of excellence in liturgical design and execution, but rather on whether the encounter in the worship was authentic or not. Given the renewed understanding of worship, unless the question of this authenticity is raised at all levels and all stages of worship, we will not necessarily have experienced a meaningful worship, even with technically flawless execution of the worship, the kind of mistakes that worship services in many excellent, specialized worship institutions fall into. Since the worship is an encounter in the context of communal celebration, the overarching question in reviewing and evaluating worship therefore needs to be: “In what ways have we the people had authentic encounters with God in this worship?” And those who are designing and leading worship services need to ask

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacrament and Orthodoxy* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1963)

<sup>13</sup> This is one important meaning of the keys of the heaven that Jesus gave to Peter, “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19)

continuously: “how can we help the people encounter the Holy more authentically?” It is of critical importance that in this question of authenticity of encounter, something of all four vectors of the definition above needs to enter the reflection, lest we fall into the confusion of emotional self-absorption as the inspiration of the Spirit. Unless the encounter leads us into the direction of the new being-new community-new vocation-new mission and witness in the world, in short the formation and renewal of the people of God called Christian, we need to go back to the drawing board again, and again and again and again.

Second, in this process of focusing on authenticity along with liturgical excellence, it is important to re-discover the etymological meaning of the word “leitourgia” beyond common parlance of “liturgical” as in the rubric of worship of high churches.<sup>14</sup> Worship is the labor of the people of God beyond the confines of worship liturgy itself. Yet, even in the liturgy itself, it needs to become “the labor” of the whole people of God in the faith community concerned. It needs to be authentically the celebration of and by the Christian faith community concerned in such a way that it is not the performance of the worship leaders (including the musicians) that the congregation gets to enjoy it one way or the other, but the concept of the congregation, “the assembly of the people of God” in worship liturgy would include everyone. The congregation is not the entire worshipping community minus the worship leadership as often used as such in the written orders and rubrics, but the whole assembly of the people that are worshipping. The worship leaders are part of the assembly that is worshipping, and it is the whole assembly that worships God and encounters God in this worship. In short, everyone brings something to the worship itself, and provides the substance of the worship celebration. Thus, another important question by the worship leadership is: “Did everyone participate in the worship meaningfully?” as the encounter happens as the people of God “participate” in the worship. As I wrote somewhere else, we can push this logic to the limit and envision worship where there is literally nobody in a given worship that is simply there passively observing, but everyone is somehow involved in designing, preparing, and leading the worship service.<sup>15</sup>

Multicultural question can be taken up in this regard as well. As people of God come together to bring something of themselves, they bring their cultures. It is not the show-casing of different cultures that makes worship multicultural, but these cultures are brought in as means of

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *op. cit.* p. 25 et in passim.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Ryu, “Multicultural Sensibility and Liturgical Sensitivity: A Preliminary Reflection on Multicultural Worship” in *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching & the Arts*, Volume 41.2:10-16 (November, 2007)

celebrating the experiences of God's saving acts in the communal life of the church.<sup>16</sup> In principle, there is no culture or cultural elements that cannot be utilized for worship meaningfully and authentically; simultaneously, there is no culture or cultural elements that is so completely Christian that it does not need rebirth and transformation. If we are using Niebhur's typology, we cannot have "Christ of the Culture," creating an illusion of complete synthesis between the culture and the Gospel; in such a case, it soon becomes the Christ under the captivity of the culture. The crisis of the mainline Christianity by the way is that it has been too close to this situation as it played the role of the dominant cultural group in the history of U.S.A., and we are having difficult time celebrating our identity and vocation no longer with that hegemonic status in the culture. Korean Christianity as a fruit of the American foreign mission and as basically a translated version of American Christianity, they share the same fate and conundrum as their mother church communities in the U.S., only with a time lag. It is important to acknowledge that there cannot be a complete cultural synthesis without residue of the Gospel (with Moltmann), while at the same time the Gospel loses relevance without a certain meaningful cultural synthesis (with Tillich). Once again, the worship is in the culture, but not of the culture.

Third, as we celebrate and remember the saving act of God in Jesus Christ in our worship services, the worship becomes the life and reflects our lives in the context of the salvation narrative. Sunday services continue the Salvation History of God through Jesus Christ, more specifically, in the Paschal Mystery, or more broadly in the announcement-preparation-birth-life-death-resurrection-ascension-continuous presence through Spirit of Jesus Christ. Every Sunday as people encounter God in worship, they experience the Easter Hope in the context of Good Friday of our daily existence. In each worship service, the reality of "God with us" is encountered, proclaimed, experienced, and "celebrated." People remember, and thus can remember as a people of God.

An interesting question is from what vantage point of God's saving history on human historical line we do and can we remember God's saving acts in Jesus Christ? Different traditions within Christianity seem to focus on a certain point in the salvation narrative in Jesus Christ as a predominant reference point. According to how it appears to this United Methodist pastor at a cursory look, the prevailing mood of the mass at a typical Roman Catholic Church is

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

that of the pre-dawn on the Easter morning as celebrated in the Easter Vigil. A very clear reference to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our salvation, somewhat somber and sad, and on the crucifix, Christ is still on the cross, and rarely becomes a full celebration of the Easter. In contrast, the Protestant churches' dominant emotion is that of Easter Day, celebrated in what is known as the Second Service of the Day of Easter. Christ is risen; the sanctuary is bright as day. Not only the tomb is empty, but the cross is also empty of the body of Christ. The real sacrifice of Christ for our salvation is proclaimed and is an important theological reference, but not really a visceral, felt experience in their typical worship. In the meanwhile, Pentecostal and evangelical churches exhibit the mood of the Pentecost Day, and really celebrate the excitement of the presence of the Spirit now; yet, their worship usually lacks a clear reference or felt-experience of the Paschal mystery and the historical direction of the salvation narrative.<sup>17</sup>

Of course we need all points in the salvation history of God in Jesus Christ. Yet, in the era of post-Christendom, the ecumenical cooperation, globalization, accompanying global economic and environmental crises along with the resulting degradation of human dignity for the vast majority of the people on earth, I believe that when we come together to worship God, we need to remember God's salvation from the point of the Eschaton. It is the prolepsis and the remembrance of the omega point of God's salvation history that is needed for the identity and the vocation of Christians in this world at this point of history. By standing in faith with God in Christ from the Eschaton, we remember afresh the Advent, the Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost. Remembering the future of Jesus Christ<sup>18</sup>, we find our identity, vocation and place in the salvation history of God.

Fourth and the last point that is also the conclusion. Worship forms the people of God, and it is the formation of the people of God through which God's saving grace moves toward its eschaton as God says time and again, "I shall be your God and you shall be my people." In the world where there are so many problems, destructions, wars and the like, trying to create an authentic worship community feels like such an insignificant thing, a small thing, indeed, only a mustard seed. Faithfully creating authentic worship and worshipful environment and opportunity, continually and continuously, often appears to be like missing the mark, as they are only

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<sup>17</sup> My experience with the Orthodox Church's worship is so limited, I really cannot make any statement here other than that it appears that temporal time in salvation history is not as important in their service, rather a certain transcendental realm to which the worship transports the people.

<sup>18</sup> Again, the expression by Moltmann in the opus cited.

ceremonies while there are much more important things to do, and the human history seems move on its own course independent of what Christians do and don't do. But, if a mustard seed is planted and cared for both by God and by us, it grows so that the birds in the air can rest in its shade. We will be able to provide the place of radical hospitality and meaning, an oasis in the desert, and people who drink from our hospitality will be transformed as well. The formation of authentic community of love through authentic worship may very well be the most important vocation we can be called to fulfill.

We believe "as Christian" that becoming an authentic Christian community centered on regular worship of God in the saving grace of Jesus Christ that is open and caring, is one most important and indispensable condition for the salvation of the entire humanity.

The worship experience of the people of God becomes the seed planted in their lives, in the life of the community, and the Christian worship of Christian community is the mustard seed planted in the world. Even though we do not yet have the full manifestation of God's love and justice on human historical plane, if we plant the seeds with the faith in the full realization of the eschaton of the trajectory of God's saving acts in Jesus Christ, though we don't know how they grow, but, God grows them. When it is a time for the harvest, according to God's eschatological time and plan, we become part of the laborers for the harvest, and "all" can celebrate and rejoice. We are called to fulfill this sacred call, every Sunday, week in, week out. May the blessings of God be upon us as we worship God in Christ faithfully.