



This material has been provided by Asbury Theological Seminary in good faith of following ethical procedures in its production and end use.

The Copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyright material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to finish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be *“used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.”* If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

**By using this material, you are consenting to abide by this copyright policy. Any duplication, reproduction, or modification of this material without express written consent from Asbury Theological Seminary and/or the original publisher is prohibited.**

### **Contact**

B.L. Fisher Library  
Asbury Theological Seminary  
204 N. Lexington Ave.  
Wilmore, KY 40390

**B.L. Fisher Library’s Digital Content**  
[place.asburyseminary.edu](http://place.asburyseminary.edu)



**Asbury Theological Seminary**  
205 North Lexington Avenue  
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

800.2ASBURY  
[asburyseminary.edu](http://asburyseminary.edu)

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE INDIGENIZATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN URBAN LIBERIA:**

#### **A KEY TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

#### **IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LIBERIA**

by

Isaac Chukpue-Padmore

This study was geared toward making worship more incarnational, contextual, meaningful, and relevant to the indigenous Bassa migrants in The United Methodist Church in Liberia. The Liberia United Methodist Church has largely ignored this issue since its establishment. The form of worship, materials, and worship resources imported to Liberia from the United States remain foreign to the indigenous migrants. This issue has categorized the migrants, many of whom are illiterate, as spectators in most urban, English-speaking churches of The United Methodist Church of Liberia. In this connection, the research explored and developed an indigenous worship model through which indigenous migrants of Liberia can be acculturated and assimilated into the urban United Methodist church.

The indigenous migrants need an Afro-centric experience of worship and spirituality that will enhance continuity within their rich heritage and also provide spiritual resources for their daily living. In African spirituality, worship is a highly significant factor.

The Incarnation is the theological framework for this study. The historical birth of Jesus and his life and ministry make the Incarnation a necessity in a biblical and faithful theology of mission. The Incarnation teaches that God left his throne above and came

below to this earth in order to rescue and relocate human beings. God became flesh from the very beginning for the salvation of humanity. The gospel of John witnesses to the reality of the Incarnation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, NIV). John further says, “The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This incarnational approach can be a powerful tool in leading missionaries to the aspect of contextualization. The church is under obligation to recognize the relationship between Scripture and culture and to know the difference. In contextualization, the church finds appropriate ways of communicating the gospel and of discipling converts. This process is also called indigenization. Its goal is to make the church indigenous.

In order to generate the desired outcome, interviews were conducted with the J. J. Powell and the New Hope United Methodist Churches in the city of Monrovia. The leaders of these two churches were interviewed as the focus group. The purpose of the interviews was to glean insights from participants relevant to their worship experiences and to evaluate the present worship model. The interview further identified and developed new liturgical practices and styles that are more indigenous and culturally relevant.

Since God from the very beginning incarnated himself for the salvation of the world, the church has to be obedient to Christ by doing likewise. As Christian worship is carried out, the idea of considering its incarnational, contextual, indigenous, culturally relevant, and biblical nature needs not be over emphasized.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
THE INDIGENIZATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN URBAN LIBERIA:  
A KEY TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP  
IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LIBERIA

Presented by

Isaac Chukpue-Padmore

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

William O. Gould  
Mentor

December 9, 2013

Date

Michael A. ...  
Internal Reader

December 9, 2013

Date

Milton Lowe  
Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program

December 9, 2013

Date

Tom F. ...  
Dean of the Beeson Center

December 9, 2013

Date

THE INDIGENIZATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN URBAN LIBERIA:  
A KEY TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP  
IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LIBERIA

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Isaac Chukpue-Padmore

May 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	xi
CHAPTER 1 PROBLEM.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	2
Research Questions.....	2
Research Question #1.....	2
Research Question #2.....	3
Research Question #3.....	3
Definition of Terms.....	3
Indigenous.....	3
Migrants.....	4
Urban.....	4
Worship.....	4
Ministry Intervention.....	4
Context.....	4
Methodology.....	6
Participants.....	7
Instrumentation.....	7
Data Collection.....	8

Data Analysis .....	8
Generalizability .....	8
Theological Foundation .....	9
Overview .....	11
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Biblical Foundations of Worship.....	13
The People of God Anticipate.....	15
The People Celebrate .....	16
The Definition of Worship .....	17
Worship Being the Gospel Enacted through Forms and Signs.....	21
A Theology of Form .....	21
A Theology of Sign.....	24
Content, Structure, and Style .....	26
Content.....	26
Structure .....	26
Style .....	27
Terms of Worship in the Bible.....	28
Shachah.....	28
Proskuneo.....	28
Latreuo .....	29
Avad.....	29
Yare.....	30

Hodad .....	30
A Biblical Theology of Worship.....	31
Recapitulation of the Christ Event in Worship .....	31
Actualization of the Church in Worship .....	32
Anticipation of the Kingdom in Worship .....	33
The Historical Biblical Analysis of Worship.....	33
The Patriarchs and Worship.....	34
Worship in the Wilderness (Tabernacle) .....	35
Temple Worship (Worship in Jerusalem).....	36
Worship in the Diaspora .....	37
Worship and Jesus.....	38
Worship and the New Testament Church .....	40
Worship in Heaven .....	41
The Purpose of Worship .....	43
The Benefit of Worship .....	43
The African Experience of Worship.....	44
Kinship and Community.....	46
The Spirit .....	47
Songs.....	48
The <i>Word</i> as the Scripture.....	49
Biblical Foundation of Migration .....	50
The Relevance of Migration .....	52
Contextualization of the Gospel.....	53



The Definition of Culture .....	54
The Meaning of Contextualization .....	55
Transculturation of the Gospel.....	56
Contextualization as Worship.....	57
Worship as Contextual.....	57
Dynamic Equivalent.....	58
The Significance of Culture in Worship .....	59
Culture Used in Worship for Nurture and Witness.....	59
Cultural Vehicles in Worship Necessary to See God .....	60
Worship as Transcultural .....	60
Contextualization of Christian Liturgy for the Migrated Bassa Christians .....	61
The Bassa Language .....	64
Liturgical Background of the Bassa People.....	66
Passing on the Faith Tradition .....	69
Examining Existing Liturgies of the United Methodist Church in Liberia.....	70
Language.....	72
Translation as Contextualization.....	72
Bible Translation.....	73
Inculturation of the Liturgy.....	74
Research Design.....	82
Summary .....	83
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY .....	85
Problem and Purpose .....	85

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses .....	86
Research Question #1 .....	86
Research Question #2 .....	87
Research Question #3 .....	87
Population and Participants.....	87
Design of the Study.....	89
Instrumentation .....	90
Expert Review.....	91
Data Collection .....	91
Data Analysis .....	91
Ethical Procedures .....	92
Conclusion .....	92
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS.....	93
Problem and Purpose .....	93
Participants.....	94
Research Questions.....	97
Research Question #1 .....	97
Research Question #2 .....	98
Research Question #3 .....	99
Findings of Category One.....	101
Research Question #1 .....	101
Research Question #2 .....	105
Profile of the Focus Group.....	109

Findings of Category Two.....	110
Research of Question #3.....	111
Summary of Major Findings.....	115
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	117
Major Findings.....	117
Conducting the Liturgy in the English Language.....	117
The Establishment of a Bassa Literacy Program (Bassa Language).....	119
Passing Cultural Faith Tradition on to the Next Generation.....	122
The Establishment of an Indigenous Worship Committee.....	123
Implications of the Findings.....	125
Limitations of the Study.....	128
Unexpected Observations.....	129
Recommendations.....	131
Postscript.....	132
APPENDIXES	
A. Letter of Appeal to the Pastors of J. J. Powell and New Hope United Methodist Churches.....	135
B. Letter to Participants.....	136
C. Interview Questions for Members of the Congregations and Focus Group ...	137
D. The Apostles' Creed (Translated in Bassa Language).....	140
E. The Hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Translated in the Bassa Language).....	141
WORKS CITED.....	143
WORKS CONSULTED.....	149

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to the almighty God for the great opportunities he afforded me to learn. I deeply appreciate the way God continues to lead and equip me for his ministry. My enrollment at the Asbury Theological Seminary was a blessing from God.

My special appreciation goes to all who made this project a reality. Many thanks go to Rev. Dr. John G. Innis, Bishop of The United Methodist Church of Liberia, for making the original connection with the school. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Maxie Dunnam for his inspiration and assistance accorded me in the enrollment process.

Rev. Dr. George K. Wheagba and Rev. Dr. Jerry P. Kulah provided early advice on how to fulfill the requirement at the school. Dr. Wheagba was instrumental in guiding me on how to choose and expand a topic that would be measurable and useful in the Liberian context.

I am deeply indebted to Kenneth Jackson, my former secretary, and Elijah Geeto, my present secretary, for their role in typing this work at various levels. Many thanks go to the Beeson International Leaders 2009-13 for greatly assisting me on how to work with the computer.

My heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Bill Goold, my mentor, who worked tirelessly to ensure the perfect completion of this project. His inspiration and vision for the research deserve great commendation. Dr. Goold provided me with essential resource materials for the work. All of these materials will also be used to build up a personal worship library in Liberia. My grateful appreciation goes to Judy Seitz, editor-in-chief, who worked acidulously to make this document readable.

My profound gratitude goes to my lovely wife, Annie, and our children for sacrificing more than I can imagine. Annie took care of the children and provided the necessary essentials whenever I was away for my study.

I am eternally grateful to my focus group and the participants from the two churches for their contributions, their openness, honest feedback, and helpful comments during the process. Many thanks to Mr. Adolphus Sayway who recorded the focus groups interview sessions without charge.

Let me not forget my *prophet*, James B. Kelly, and my *prophetess*, Cecelia M. Cephas, who prophetically called me “Rev. Dr. Chukpue-Padmore” before I ever thought about enrolling in any doctoral program. Since their prophecy has been fulfilled, they deserve the greatest gratitude and commendation. To God be the glory for great things he has done.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PROBLEM**

#### **Introduction**

The need for Christian discipleship and spiritual growth for indigenous people migrating from rural Liberia to the city is great. Many indigenous migrants in urban United Methodist churches are worship spectators rather than worship participants due to the worship style used by the urban churches they attend. The United Methodist Church in Liberia has been significantly Westernized. The liturgy, worship style, and form used in the majority of the urban United Methodist churches are all Western. The Westernized church has difficulty acculturating and accommodating these migrants due to traditional factors and experience. The form of worship, the materials, and the worship resources imported to Liberia from the United States remain foreign to indigenous migrants. The migrants need an Afro-centric experience of worship and spirituality that will enhance continuity within their rich heritage and also provide spiritual resources for daily living. In African spirituality, worship is a highly significant factor. Worship and life are inter-related for Africans. Worship is vivid in the African celebration, connecting them to the supreme reality (God) while maintaining their relationship with their ancestors.

If the worshipers are to experience a personal encounter with the ultimate reality and the object of worship, God Almighty, then the liturgy is not merely to be adapted. The idea of the worship witnessing to the traditions and culture of the local people remains a great question. At a deeper level, Liberian Methodists long for and seek a Christian worship form and experience that allows them to be simultaneously, authentically Christian and authentically Liberian.

Addressing a predominantly urban Hellenistic environment, the Apostle Paul utilizes the cultural materials at hand to construct Christian identity and theology. Language from the spheres of religion, philosophy, and moral teaching, metaphors from athletics, commerce, and warfare, conventions of rhetorical and letter writing, social institutions such as the household and patronage, and values such as honor and purity are drawn into the service of the gospel and mission. The gospel encounters people within their existing cultures and relationships; it speaks their language (Flemming). This study was about making worship more contextual, indigenous, meaningful, and relevant to the people. Selected pastors, church leaders, and members of the indigenous congregations in the city of Monrovia were involved in the process through interviews and questionnaires, thus yielding a concrete and tangible result. A total of fifteen leaders of the two churches constituted the focus group, while a total of fifty members made up the general sampling.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research was to explore and develop an indigenous worship model through which indigenous Christian migrants of Liberia can be acculturated and assimilated into the urban United Methodist Church.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions resulted from the purpose of this study.

#### **Research Question #1**

When, where, and how do you see God in the worship experience? (*As a Bassa Christian, how do you see the worship of Christ as it presently is?*) The Worship Practices Interview (see Appendix C) will be the instrument to be used in discussing this question.

### **Research Question #2**

What significant principles and means should be created and developed to effect the necessary changes? (*How might worship be changed to connect with the Bassa people better?*) The worship practices interview questions provided answers to this question.

### **Research Question #3**

To what extent do the pastors and leaders of the churches own and validate the changes and practices as proposed by the congregations? (*If present means of worship are significantly changed, can and will they be accepted by the Bassa leadership?*) The leaders of the church were interviewed in regard using the worship practices interview questions.

### **Definition of Terms**

Certain words need clarification, as they were central to this research. These words are defined in the context of this study. The definitions are from the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.

#### **Indigenous**

The word *indigenous* means, "Native; having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment" (592). (Indigenous in the context of this study means those native Liberians who are not descendants of the free slaves, or Americo-Liberians, who settled in Liberia in the 1800s. The majority of these people, approximately 85 percent of an estimated population of 3.5 million, do not have formal education.



### **Migrants**

*Migrants* are “[p]ersons who move regularly in order to find work” (738). In the context of this research, the migrants are the indigenous who travel from the rural areas to the city of Monrovia in search of greater opportunity and who settle there permanently.

### **Urban**

*Urban* means, “Relating to the city” (1300). The city under research is Monrovia, the capital city of the Republic of Liberia.

### **Worship**

*Worship* is an act of fellowship through which God is honored and the church members are lifted and challenged in their relationship with God and with one another. Worship is the nourishing center of congregational life: preaching, common prayer, and celebration of ordinances or sacraments (Hawn xx).

### **Ministry Exploration**

This project explored and developed an appropriate worship model for use by indigenous migrants of The United Methodist Church in Liberia. The study considered the existing model that The United Methodist Church presently uses, noting how it affects the spirituality of indigenous migrants. The study also drew from principles that lead to the indigenization of worship. The process was informed by data and information gleaned from the interviews. The final step was the validation of those principles with the leadership of the two churches involved in the study.

### **Context**

Liberia is a West African country that was founded in the nineteenth century by emancipated slaves from the United States of America. The free slaves were sent to

Africa by the American Colonization Society having multiple agendas, one of which was to Christianize and civilize the people. Some of these free slaves landed in Liberia. With them were ministers of the gospel who introduced the Christian faith to the indigenous people.

Before the country gained its independence in 1847, the Methodist Church was already functioning in Liberia. The Methodist prelates on board the ship that transported the free slaves and the missionaries sent from the United States of America established the first congregation in the early 1800s. The Methodist Church, now The United Methodist Church, has existed in Liberia since the 1820s (Wold 53). Not until 1833, however, with the arrival of the first commissioned resident missionary, Melvin B. Cox from North Carolina, was the Liberia Annual Conference formally established (Cox 17). Cox was the first Methodist missionary to serve outside of America, thus making the Liberian Mission the first Methodist Episcopal Church mission field in Africa and one of the first Christian denominations to be established in Liberia (Chapman 590). These missionaries brought with them their culture and forms of worship that did not necessarily concur with those of the indigenous people. Such forms and styles may relate to literate urban people, but the problem of how to be a part of the Westernized worship service encountered by those who migrate from the rural to the urban area is a significant one. My focus in this work was the migrant United Methodists who are now residing in urban areas, specifically Monrovia.

Of the 3.5 million population of Liberia, Monrovia previously had about 500,000 to 600,000 inhabitants. Since 2003, the end of the Liberian civil war, Monrovia's population has grown to about 1.5 million. As the political and economic capital city of

the nation, Monrovia is the nation's center of attraction, the primary place within post-conflict Liberia where the best available social services can be found and where the hope of earning a job is more likely than in any other part of the country. This information provides the reason for the migration of these indigenous peoples to the city of Monrovia. This research sampled the members, pastors, and church leaders from J. J. Powell United Methodist Church and New Hope United Methodist Church. These churches consist of indigenous migrants of The United Methodist Church who are residing in Monrovia.

### **Methodology**

The research used the qualitative exploratory case study design. In order to develop an indigenous form of worship the instrument used was the *Worship Practices Interview*. The qualitative case study design was the main instrument administered to church leaders, pastors, and members of the J. J. Powell and New Hope United Methodist Churches in Monrovia. The J. J. Powell United Methodist Church has approximately 1,035 members; the New Hope United Methodist Church has about 350 members. The sample size of this work was fifty persons from the two churches. Thirty persons from the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church and twenty persons from the New Hope United Methodist Church participated in the process. The research utilized resources on African spirituality and worship. The project focused on the worship experience of indigenous migrants and how it can be used to cultivate spirituality and Christian discipleship for the indigenous migrant population in the city. I explored and described the cultural factors affecting indigenous migrants and proposed recommendations to The United Methodist Church leadership for a change that will result in authentic Christian worship, celebrating the mighty acts of God manifest in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. The methodologies

included one-on-one interviews and focus group interview for data collection. The methodology also involved comparative evaluation and analysis of findings on the subject, concluding with relevant recommendations toward indigenization of worship.

### **Participants**

The participants were the indigenous Christian migrants, fifty members of the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church and New Hope United Methodist Churches in the city of Monrovia. Specifically, they are of the Bassa ethnic group from southwestern Liberia who migrated from rural areas to the city for obvious reasons. These participants were selected through contacts with the pastors and leaders of the congregations. Letters of appeal soliciting the participation of each congregation were sent to the leadership of the churches. Each participant was also written to gain consent based on the approval of the pastors. The youngest of the fifty respondents was 36 years of age (see Appendixes A and B). This age level was chosen because they are able to articulate their thoughts fully and give authentic opinions on life experiences as they relate to rural and urban localities.

### **Instrumentation**

The first instrument was the semi-structured, researcher-designed questionnaire responded to by the fifty members of the New Hope and J. J. Powell United Methodist Churches. The items on the questionnaire addressed two of the three research questions around which the study was conducted.

The next instrument utilized in this study was the qualitative exploratory research design. In this process an open-ended interview questionnaire was constructed for the focus group made up of the leaders of the two congregations under observation.

**Data Collection**

The time frame for the survey was approximately six months. In the first two months, I met with twenty people from the New Hope United Methodist Church. In the next three months, I met with the remaining thirty people of the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church. The final month I met with those of the focus group, about fifteen persons from the two churches. The total population for the research was sixty-five people. Within the focus group was the pastor of the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church who is an indigenous person from the Mano tribe of Liberia.

**Data Analysis**

Using the qualitative design, I analyzed the responses of the interviewees. The interview included the following: a brief history of the interviewee, the original church affiliation of the interviewee, a comparison of the churches (rural and urban), and the effects of worship upon the interviewees.

**Generalizability**

This study was limited to the indigenous congregations of the United Methodist Church in Liberia. The research did not include United Methodist churches among Settler descendants. The people referred to as *settler descendants* are the off-springs of the free slaves who came from the United States of America and settled in Liberia. They found themselves into various settlements called *up rivers*. These people are also referred to as the *Americo-Liberians* whose coming to Africa was sponsored by the American Colonization Society.

The research was significant because it helped point out the limitation of the Western model of worship in the context of indigenous people. More importantly, the

work liberated the indigenous by creating a practical model specifically designed and formatted towards them. It opened new doors of opportunity for ministry with the endemic. The tool will guide the indigenous congregation of The United Methodist Church of Liberia to do contextual worship with the people.

### **Theological Foundation**

This research considered the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, as its theological framework. The advent and historical birth of Jesus Christ makes the Incarnation a necessity in a biblical and faithful theology of mission. With this concept in mind, the Incarnation is the theological framework through which this work was done. The scriptural relationship between mission and theology clearly demonstrates a unifying concept summed up in the word *Incarnation*. The Incarnation teaches that God left his throne above and came below to this earth in order to rescue and relocate human beings:

Jesus Christ emptied himself and entered society in a non-threatening status. He became a refugee; he was poor and marginalized. He learned the language and culture of the people. He developed social relationships. He worked as a common laborer. He did all of these within a period of 30 years before he began to teach and preach. (Rynkiewich, Class Notes).

This Christ, the logos, is the content and basis of mission. God became flesh from the very beginning in order to save human beings:

The *Missio Dei* emerges from the reaching-out, self-giving, other-embracing love of the Trinity for redemption and reconciliation of all things. God has called all humans into mission, specifically Israel, and now the church as agents of the King for the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. (Rynkiewich, Class Notes)

John witnessed to the fact of the Incarnation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... [T]he Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only son, full of grace

and truth” (John 1:1, 14, NIV). For the purpose of fulfilling the mission of redemption. God became like humanity. In doing mission and ministry, the Incarnation becomes central. This *incarnational approach* is a significant guide for missionaries attempting to do mission in another culture. Culture is very important; a single good or bad culture does not exist. The church needs constantly to attempt to allow the gospel to be reverent and relevant in all cultures. Biblically, the theology of Incarnation is a universal one that can be regarded as foundational theology upon which all Christian theological concepts are based. The theology of the Incarnation is important:

It is the process whereby we are guided by the power of the Holy Spirit to seek God’s revelation in African Culture. In short, by looking at African traditional religions as a whole, by looking at the proverbs, myths, songs, rites, customs, symbols, prayers, sermons, invocations, dramas, and dances, we may come to the realization that surely, “in many and various ways, God spoke to our fathers and mothers by the prophets.” (Heb. 1:1; Kulah 59)

The Incarnation will help teach people to observe, recognize, and find out the relationship and connection between African traditional religions and Christianity. The Incarnation makes contextualization a necessity.

Contextualization of the gospel is another important step in the *missio Dei*. Paul Hiebert suggests that the next step in mission is to empower local Christians to become a hermeneutical community equipped to do the work of critical contextualization (104-12). A significant mission of the church is to recognize the relationship between Scripture and culture and to know the difference. Such recognition will be helpful in the propagation of the gospel in any given culture:

Contextualization has to do with finding appropriate ways of communicating the gospel and of discipling converts. For God to invite people to faith in Jesus Christ, God must be able to communicate that invitation in symbols, metaphors, words, and deeds that convey God’s

intentions to a local population. Every culture, indeed every generation, deserves a fresh reading of the gospel in their language and the context of their culture. (Rynkiewich, Class Note)

Theologically, the Incarnation is the foundation of contextualization. In dealing with his people, God related to all on a personal basis. He knew their names and even spoke the language they could understand. If Christians are to conduct mission, their attitude and approach have to be free of threat to the people. Believers are to express the gospel in words and deeds comprehended and accepted by indigenous people groups.

This action is one of the elements that makes the church indigenous. An indigenous Church is a church that is culturally a part of its own world. The witness and ministry of such a church have to be relevant in meeting the needs of its people and the world around it. The physical aspect and structures of said Christian community are to be suitable for the culture.

Considering the characteristics of an indigenous church and the way the gospel reached African soil through missionaries, indigenization has sometimes been given a low priority. Over the centuries, too often missionaries have ignored the vibrant and fundamental traditional African religious heritage. The African heritage has not been interpreted in positive terms. Today's task calls for a new direction that requires various steps.

### **Overview**

This work contains five chapters. Chapter 2 reviews related literature. Chapter 3 deals with the methodology. Chapter 4 contains the research results. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and conclusions.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE

#### Introduction

In the first chapter, I discussed the limitation of the Western liturgy of the United Methodist Church adapted in Liberia and the need for the church to rethink inculturation and indigenization, which give rise to cultivating the spirituality of the indigenous migrants. Since the establishment of the church in the nineteenth century by missionaries, the church has continued to use worship styles and forms that are significantly foreign to people who are illiterate, especially those of the Bassa tribe who migrated from rural areas to the city of Monrovia. For indigenization to be a reality, the theological framework to be used as a yardstick is the *Incarnation*. The Incarnation was the theology of mission that Jesus and the early Church used in spreading the gospel.

This chapter provides an overview of worship from biblical, theological, historical, and traditional African perspectives. The concept of worship from biblical times to the present is expounded upon in this part of this document. This portion of the study also discusses the importance of culture, inculturation, contextualization, and intentional indigenization of the gospel and worship in this present age for the indigenous migrants in Liberia. This process will cultivate the kind of spirituality needed for the Bassa people and thus lead towards becoming faithful participants rather than passive spectators.

## **Biblical Foundations of Worship**

The language of worship in the Scriptures is important to consider. The goal of this section is to know what the Scriptures reveal about worship. This process will begin by discussing some basic biblical themes in worship.

**Biblical themes in worship.** Throughout Scripture God always initiates a relationship with humanity. The first example is that of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. Further, the book of Exodus demonstrates the liberation of the children of Israel. Then in the New Testament, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ largely expressed the principle of God taking the first step towards humanity. In each of these events, God established a covenant relationship with Israel and the church. God expects Israel to respond to his initiative through an obedient authentic worship:

This story of God initiating a relationship and of the people responding in faith is not only the story of salvation and redemption, but it comprises the very essence of worship. What lies at the heart of worship is God's continual movement toward the peoples of the world and the continual response of the people of God in faith and obedience. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 19)

The two-way relationship between God and humanity shows how worship is closely knitted with the theme of salvation. The most important theme of the salvation story of worship is that God initiates a relationship; secondly, the people of God respond to God's initiative.

**The covenant nature of biblical worship.** The covenant is an important concept in the relationship between God and Israel. This agreement between God and his people was very unique. God expressed his commitment to the covenant and Israel's responsibility in these simple but great words: "I will be their God and they will be my people" (Jer. 31:33; Gen. 7:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 29:10-13; Ezek. 37:27). In this covenant,

“the Lord agreed to be the God of Israel, and Israel agreed to worship and obey the Lord” (Webber, *Worship Old and New* 22). In the process, God demands total loyalty from the people of Israel: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:1-2). God provided the terms of the covenant, referred to as the Ten Commandments, including other regulations of the Book of the Covenant:

God gave specific instructions for worship as part of his covenant, not only in the directions for constructing tabernacle and consecrating the priesthood (Exod. 25-31), but also in the detailed description of sacrifices and offerings in the following Chapters of Exodus and Leviticus. Through sacrificial worship on specific occasions, God’s people were to offer their tribute to the Great King. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 23)

Worship is the medium through which Israel was to maintain its identity as a people of God. In worship, Israel always remembered and celebrated its relationship with their God. This covenantal nature of worship was present throughout Israel’s history.

The theme of the covenant in the Old Testament is seen in the New Testament. God’s covenant with Israel is not limited. God in Jesus Christ also made covenant with the Church, but this covenant has a significant difference:

The difference is Jesus Christ. Israel was not able to keep the covenant. But in the new covenant, Jesus does for Israel and for the church—for us and for everyone what we cannot do for ourselves. He keeps the agreement. He fulfills the covenant. And in his absolute obedience, death, and resurrection, he establishes for us and for all people an eternal relationship with God. Nowhere is this truth more clearly expressed than in the book of Hebrews. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 24; see esp. Heb. 8)

From all indications, biblical worship is rooted in an event and is based on a covenant. God took the first step, which then requires the response of God’s people.

**The response of the people.** The salvation event and worship are both initiated by God as seen in the covenant that God made with the people of Israel. This initiative is

also seen in the work of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humankind. God acted first and expects the people to respond. According to Robert E. Webber, “the people respond by remembering, anticipating, celebrating, and serving.” (*Worship: Old and New* 27). All of these concepts are related to worship.

**The people remember.** Quoting E. H. Van Olst, Webber states, “The theme of remembering (*anamnesis*) is central to biblical worship. The people of God remember his saving deeds by telling and acting out the story of redemption” (*Worship: Old and New* 27). This remembering has to do with God’s mighty act of redemption demonstrated in favor of the people of Israel. The people of God always remember the saving acts of God. In the Old Testament, the idea of remembering God’s miraculous saving acts is the foundation to biblical worship (Deut. 6:21-25).

The concept of remembering God’s saving deeds, which was fundamental to Old Testament worship, is equally fundamental to New Testament worship. “Preaching as in the Kerygma tells the story of redemption (Acts 2:22-26), and the Lord’s Supper is an act that the church does in remembrance” (1 Cor. 11:24; Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 28).

### **The People of God Anticipate**

The religion that is purely rooted in the Bible goes beyond remembering. Biblical religion is indeed a religion of promise. The promise began with the covenant that God made with Abram, but the promise goes beyond this Abrahamic covenant to include all other covenants. Genesis 12:7 states that the promise was the land given from God to Abram and his descendants. God said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” Israel was assured of possessing this land following its release from bondage in Egypt. In

Exodus 6:8, God said to Moses, "I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession, I am the Lord." Based on this promise, the people of Israel have always anticipated occupying the Promised Land.

To the Christians, this promise is looked at in a different and new way. The promise of the land in the Old Testament has always been considered as a type of the promise of the new heavens and the new earth, the kingdom of God. Baptism is an initiation into the new kingdom. The church is part of the kingdom on earth, and the Eucharist is a continual renewal of the initial foretaste of God's kingdom (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 28). All Christians look forward to this reality. When this hope is fulfilled, a celebration follows.

### **The People Celebrate**

Embedded in the idea of remembrance is the concept of celebration. In any celebration, the past event is not forgotten. In most cases, people gather to celebrate because of the past event. Additionally, the celebration brings the past event into the present. Some media such as story, song, drama, and feasting allow the past events to be remembered and celebrated.

The Old Testament worship festivals have a unique characteristic. They were worship festivals of celebrations. They remembered the past, made the past contemporaneous, and were characterized by story, song, drama, and feasting. Both the Jewish Passover and the Christian Eucharist are great dramas of God's saving deeds. They are not mere rituals to be repeated in a bland sort of way but the epicenter of faith and worship, which the people of God celebrate through sacred acts of recollection and

remembrance (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 28). In worship, the people celebrate because God has done some great things for them in the past; therefore, worship brings the past into the present in a special way.

### **The Definition of Worship**

Worship means many things to many people. However, worship has a central point and a central focus. That focus is the resurrected Christ. Worship of Christ distinguishes Christians from other organizations in the world. Worship is what makes believers a people set apart. Worship gathers people as a community. Through worship people enter into the church and express their gratitude to the object of worship, God Almighty. Ralph P. Martin gives an expanded definition of worship:

Worship comes from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*. This later developed into *worship* and then into *worship*. It means to attribute worth to an object.... A deeper meaning is found in the horrific title "His worship the Mayor," by which we dignify the first citizen of our town or city as a person who deserves special esteem and respect. In the Marriage Service of the Book of Common Prayer the prospective husband's promise is "with my body, I thee worship"; a pledge of utter loyalty and devotion to the bride, who is worthy of this in his eyes. If we may elevate this thought to the realm of divine-human relationship, we have a working definition of the term worship ready-made for us. To worship is to ascribe to Him Supreme worth: for He alone is worthy. (10)

Worship is a divine act that touches many dimensions of the worshiper's total being. The human person experiences a special encounter through which the glory of God, the Word of God, and the grace of God are unveiled, thus enabling the worshipers to respond in songs and prayers of celebration.

In worship and everything else in Christianity, ranging from creation to final eschaton, God takes the initiative. God's initiative is always through his gift of grace. The point is worship starts with God. Christians cannot worship without the Holy Spirit.

Worship is a response to God's action through the power of the Holy Spirit. J. D. Crichton notes that because God always takes the initiative, Christian worship is best discussed in terms of response. In worship, God reveals and we respond. This statement is true of the whole of liturgy, including praise, thanksgiving, supplication, or repentance, Eucharist, baptism, or liturgical prayer throughout the celebration of the church year. If so, worship must be seen in the context of saving history, which is the record of the divine initiative (9).

The human response comes in word, song, gesture, and other forms that give glory to God. The worshipers are glorifying God in worship. The worshiper is responding to God's action through praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. Through this process, God draws humanity into a unique relationship with himself. The result of the relationship is forgiveness, grace, and new life. The response is loving service and witness to God's gracious revelation.

In worship one seeks and encounters a union with God. According to James F. White, this encounter draws the worshipers out of their "normal consciousness" in order to attain a greater awareness of God (20-24). The worshipping community is made up of people who declare the worth-ship of the Lord and Maker.

As said earlier, the worship of God is a distinguishing characteristic of Christians. In the history of Israel, those called to serve Yahweh were considered to be members of the assembly (Num. 16:3; 20:4). The existence of Israel depended upon Yahweh. God showered his love, mercy, and providence upon Israel, so they respond in worship. Recognizing the fact that God is the source of humanity's existence and identity, he is worthy of worship. William Temple beautifully expresses this idea:

Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the nourishment of the mind with his truth, the purifying of imagination by his beauty, the opening of the heart to his love, the quickening of the conscience by his holiness, the surrender of the will to his purpose, and it is all of this, gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable. (13)

In this sense, worship is considered as total devotion and surrender to the God upon whom one's total existence is dependent. This God is the source of being; therefore, he is worthy of worship. This worship becomes the individuals' response to God in praise and adoration as well as a joyous self-dedication for his unique actions towards humanity. God is recognized as a covenant-making God from the very beginning. God initiated a relationship with Abraham, which was later confirmed with Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants, promising to make them into a great nation. They were to possess the land of Canaan and be uniquely blessed by God, so that all the peoples on the earth might be blessed through them (e.g., Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-8, 12-16; Peterson 25).

For John A. Mackay, worship is a *response* made to God and its essence is in awakening religious sentiment or putting oneself in a religious mood. Mackay indicates that whatever the response may be, feeble or decisive, the worship is to a reality other than those doing the worship and that reality comes to seek and call the individuals. To respond to this reality—the God who initiates this relationship—and to be aware of God's approach, to be receptive to God's presence is to cross the threshold of the house where God dwells (109). This act is what makes worship an experience. In the African context, encountering God is a by-product of the act of worship. An African theologian states that: "Worship as a whole is a person's experience of God who is loving and kind. It is characterized by spontaneity, free expression and corporate reverence" (Nihamburi 20).



This concept is the kind of worship experience for which the indigenous migrants wish. They long for an experiential worship where they have freedom and opportunity to express themselves in their indigenous language with full participation of the entire congregation. The indigenous people wish neither for a worship that is excessively programmed nor void of spontaneity. In the African worship experience, full participation and spontaneity are important. Thomas Long expresses this concept well:

The most profound statement that can be made about us [Christians] is that we need to join with others in bowing before God in worshipful acts of devotion, praise, obedience, thanksgiving, and petition. What is more, when all the clutter is cleared away from our lives, we human beings do not merely need to engage in corporate worship; we truly want to worship in communion with others. (17)

Worship is a human activity directed toward God. Humanity longs for satisfaction in this context. In this connection, John I. Durham writes of John Calton, a renowned scholar and an insightful liturgist:

Worship, John said, is a thirsty land crying in a light of being kindled; a drop in quest of the ocean; a voice in the night calling for help; a soul in awe before the mighty of the universe; a flow into eternity; a man climbing the altar stairs to God—a God coming down; men turning the whole personality toward God in and for himself; the ascription of worth to God; the optic nerve of the soul. (10)

The most important thing about Christian worship is the experience in which one encounters God and his gift of grace. In Christian worship the worshipers express praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and confession, thus opening the way for forgiveness and union with God. Acceptable Christian worship is an indispensable activity of the church. A time will come when all other activities of the church will cease, but worship will endure in heaven. Worship, therefore, can be compared to the everlasting love of God.

### **Worship Being the Gospel Enacted through Forms and Signs**

As has been established, worship is done by the people of God as a way of responding to God's initiative and celebrating the Christ event. Christian worship involves certain forms because worship is something that is acted out. Worship has to do with an enactment of the gospel. The forms enacted are the representation of signs and symbols of a spiritual reality. In Christendom, the worshiper communicates spiritual reality through forms because one cannot easily comprehend certain spiritual things. These forms, however rudimentary and basic, are signs and symbols of a relationship with God (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 85).

#### **A Theology of Form**

Three theological doctrines contain the basis of form. These are the doctrines of creation, revelation, and incarnation.

**Creation.** Scripture and Christian theology affirm that God is the creator of the world. Christianity further affirms the goodness of creation as the act of God, the creator. However, others reject the idea that God is the creator of the world. One such group is the Gnostics. For the Gnostics, creation is not an act of Yahweh; rather, creation was the result of the creative act of an evil god. The Gnostics recognized two gods, good and evil:

The good was spirit and immaterial; the evil god was fleshly, and material.... [T]rue spirituality denied the material (flesh) in order that the immaterial (spirit) could eventually return to the pure spirit god from which it came. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 86)

The result of this view is a denial of the truth that a spiritual reality could be made through a material expression. In other words, the Gnostics do not accept the fact of the Incarnation. The implication is that the Gnostics reject all material signs of spiritual reality.

The teaching and practice of the Church emphasize and recognize certain material signs of spiritual reality. One such material sign in Scripture is *water*. In Scripture water is an important means of passage from one state to the next:

Water is the symbol of God's creativity and a sign, therefore, of passing from one stage to another: The people of Israel were brought through the waters of the Red Sea to Mount Sinai and passed through the waters of the Jordan to the Promised Land. In the early Church, water was part of a passage rite into the Church. Consequently, when Christians were baptized into Jesus through water, this represented a spiritual passage from one condition to another. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 86)

The importance of water in the practice of worship from the very beginning to the present needs not be overlooked.

In Christianity, the idea of inner experience and outer sign is taken seriously. Christianity has a strong teaching on visible forms as signs of spiritual reality. Baptism is the sign of an inner reality. Quoting Tertullian, a late second-century theologian, Webber writes, "It is not to be doubted that God has made the material substance which governs terrestrial life act as agent likewise in the celestial" (*Worship: Old and New* 86). While God is the Creator of the material, he can also be known in and through it. The material, through the power of God, reveals and declares God who made it.

The Eucharist sparks another debate. The Gnostics denied the Incarnation; therefore, they "reject the view that Jesus was signified in the forms of bread and wine" (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 86). The Gnostics do not believe that the elements of bread and wine could be the sign of Jesus' presence in the worshiping community. This view is against the doctrine of the Church. Against the Gnostics view, Ignatius, the early second-century bishop of Antioch, made this statement:

They hold aloof from the Eucharist and from the services of prayer, because they refuse to admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior

Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which, in his goodness, the Father raised from the dead. (qtd. in Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 86)

The view and belief of the Gnostics on the Eucharist contradicts the teaching of the Church. In the gospel, Jesus was clear on the issue that the bread is his body and the wine is his blood. Therefore, whenever Christians partake of the Eucharist, the presence of Christ is experienced.

**Revelation.** The doctrine of revelation is the second theological ground for the use of physical form as a way of communicating spiritual truth. In Psalm 19:1, God reveals himself through the nature of creation: “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handwork” (Ps. 19:1). The psalmist testifies that one can know God through God’s creation. The apostle Paul states that God uses the creation to reveal himself to the people of the world. This view is expressed in these words of the apostle:

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, been understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Rom. 1:19-20)

Further, historical events show that God reveals himself. God makes himself known to his people through his action. According to Webber, “[T]he central action in the Old Testament is the Exodus, and the central action in the New Testament is the Cross” (*Worship: Old and New* 87). These special actions of God are packed with symbolic references.

Another way God reveals himself is through the institutions of worship. Patterns of worship in the tabernacle and later the temple are laden with symbolic language. The exact architectural floor plan, the use of gold and other precious metals, the colors, the

rituals of sacrifice, the presence and organization of the priests, the sacred days, and hours—all of these were physical signs of a spiritual reality (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 87). The principle that earthly forms may communicate eternal truths is a realistic one because the Scripture is clear on this point.

**Incarnation.** Another point for a theology of form is the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Incarnation teaches that God used creation (the body of his son) as the instrument of salvation. This teaching suggests that “the physical creation—including the body as well—has a place in worship” (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 87). When a worshipping community adequately uses certain things of creation, that community may signify eternal realities:

The entire experience of worship is a symbolic meeting with God in which the eternal covenant established by Jesus Christ is reaffirmed in the physical action of worship. Here Christians proclaim by word and rite Christ’s death and resurrection, and they respond in faith with praise and thanksgiving. For this reason, worship necessitates forms and signs. Because humans wear a body and live in a physical world and communicate through language and symbol, there can be no such thing as bodiless, orderless, signless worship. (87-88)

The spiritual worship of the church is presented to God through material form. Worship as a meeting between God and God’s people contains specific rules and order that are not to be ignored. Worship is the process of following the sequence of God’s work in history because worship is an enactment of the gospel story. Worshipers are to praise God in offerings, singing of all kinds, prayers, confessions, and creeds because worship demands response.

### **A Theology of Sign**

Sign may be defined as language that communicates more than what is seen by the eye (J. White 145). Sign shows one thing and yet another is understood. One good

example is the cross. In viewing a cross, the death and resurrection of Christ is understood. In this sense, “sign can be considered as an *action*—it reveals something by putting us into contact with an invisible reality and by the power of the Spirit creates within us a longing for that which cannot be seen” (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 88).

The use of appropriate symbols in worship is necessary. A symbol is a medium that relates to the object to which it refers and serves the subject who beholds it. A symbol in Christian worship signifies supernatural reality. Thus, a cross represents the event of Jesus in history. Gestures, such as bowing or raising the hand, signify the worthiness or greatness of God (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 89). Jesus himself used symbols such as the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Eucharist. All of these are ecclesiastical symbols that include acts and rituals surrounding confirmation, reconciliation, marriage, holy orders, and other rites that are appropriate for the church through which participants are engaged in the worship of God.

The purpose of the symbol is to function like a parable, both revealing and concealing. The device reveals its meaning to the believer but conceals its meaning to the unbeliever. Because worship is for the believer, teaching the believer the meaning of the action so that the work of worship will be done out of faith as directed to the glory of God is important (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 90).

As the subject of forms and signs is concluded, readers are to remember that they are not ends in themselves but are concrete and appropriate contexts in which authentic and intentional worship takes place. Sign always serves as a verbal indicator that communicates some basic message. Signs convey a specific religious meaning. Every member in a particular religious tradition grows up in learning the language of that

tradition's system of sign. Additionally, in a religious tradition, symbol as an object represents some reality other than itself. Symbols serve to remind the believers of the central realities of the faith.

### **Content, Structure, and Style**

In talking about authentic Christian worship, Christians are to note and always remember the cardinal issue of context, structure, and style. These elements are very important in discussing worship.

#### **Content**

The content of a particular form of worship is very important. This research asserted earlier that the foundation of worship is the biblical story of God initiating a relationship with fallen humanity. Considering this premise, the content of worship is summarized thus:

In worship we remember that stories of Abraham, our "Father in the faith," the patriarchs, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the covenant at Mount Sinai, the establishment of Israel under the monarchy, and the call of the prophets to return to the covenant. Christian worship supplements these stories with the accounts of the birth, life, death, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the founding of the church and the return of Jesus Christ to destroy evil and establish the new heavens and the new earth. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 149)

These stories and their interpretation constitute the essence of worship. When Christians lose sight of this fact, then worship is lost. In short, the content of biblical and Christian worship is the story of God's redemption and salvation. If Christians remember, proclaim, enact, and celebrate this story, then worship will take place.

#### **Structure**

The structure of worship tries to address the question of order that will make the biblical story clearly heard and experienced. In dealing with this subject, one main source

to draw upon is the tradition of the early Church. In the early Church, the acceptable step to worship had four acts. The two most central acts of Sunday worship were the service of the Word and the service of the Eucharist—the apostolic teaching and breaking of bread. Through Word and Eucharist, the early Church proclaimed, enacted, and celebrated the gospel story. Early Christian worship also included singing, baptism, creeds, benedictions, doxologies, tongues, prophecies, and ministry (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 100).

Four basic acts of Sunday worship are seen from the models of the early Church. These acts included assembling the people, Scripture readings, preaching, breaking of bread and pouring wine, along with prayers of thanksgiving, and sending the people forth. These four acts are accomplished through a sequence of songs, Scriptures, and prayers that proclaim, enact, and celebrate the gospel, and a sequence of congregational responses that help them experience the gospel (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 150).

This structure of worship is very useful in nearly all worshipping communities. The task is to be able to identify, clarify, and modify the four acts that make up this structure so that they can be culturally relevant.

### **Style**

The style of worship is the manner in which the four acts of worship unfold:

In some churches the style of worship may be formal and classical in its artistic sense. In other churches the style of worship may be very formal and draw on a contemporary artistic taste that may include gospel, country, or folk music or some other relevant cultural idiom. Some churches create a style of worship that is highly intimate, encouraging people to cluster in groups for response to the sermon, for prayer or for ministry needs. Other churches create a style of worship that is strong in theater, encouraging participation through sight, sound, taste, and smell. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 151)



The congregation's challenge today is to be bold in creating its own style of worship. The objective of this style of worship is to make the worshipers comfortable. The worship style serves as an encouragement to the worshipers to participate fully. The worship style also serves as a medium through which the nature and personality of the worshipping community are expressed.

### **Terms of Worship in the Bible**

The Bible does not contain a clear, specific definition of worship. However, the biblical writers do use terms from which one can draw the implied meaning of worship. These terms are helpful in constructing the definition of worship of Yahweh.

#### **Shachah**

*Shachah* is the primary Old Testament word for worship. *Shachah* is translated as *bow down*, to *prostrate* oneself, to make *obeisance*. *Shachah* is used of Abraham when he was going to offer Isaac (Gen. 18:2), of Solomon in the New Jerusalem Temple (2 Chron. 7:3), of the psalmist in prayer (Ps. 95:6). *Shachah* is also used when Micah bows in adoration before the Great King (Mic. 6:6). This virtue of bowing consists of acknowledgement of the supreme excellence of God as the Creator. *Shachah* shows the believer's total dependence on him in every respect (Exod. 20:1-3; Ndyabahika 56).

#### **Proskuneo**

In the Septuagint, *proskuneo* is a Greek word used extensively for worship. It denotes some form of *prostration* of the body, rendering homage and offering worship to the king of glory. Abraham prostrated in *proskuneo* before God (Gen. 17:3), Abigail before David (1 Sam. 25:23), and Ezekiel in the plain when the glory of the Lord stood before him (Ezek. 3:23). In the New Testament, *proskuneo* is often used to describe the

action of those who bow before Jesus as a sign of respect and adoration (Matt. 8:2; Mark 5:6). Persons exercising *proskuneo* prostrate themselves or adopt some kind of reverential attitude in his presence, before and after the resurrection (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:5). They involuntarily and unconsciously declare the respect they owe to Jesus (Bauckham 324).

### **Latreuo**

*Latreuo* can mean to serve for reward; the word can also mean to work for others with no intent to receive reward, irrespective of whether the person who serves is a slave or free. In the Septuagint, the word is strictly in a religious sense. This concept is what H. Reisenfeld calls “a preparation evangelical” of Christian worship (96). The Lord told Moses that the actual purpose of the Exodus from Egypt was for the children of Israel to go and serve him in the wilderness (Exod. 3:12; 7:16). Religiously, God was to be worshiped in fear (Exod. 10:2), in love (Exod. 11:1), and in keeping the commandments of God. Worship is not an option but an imperative in which the believer is to serve God alone (Exod. 20:1-3). The perspective offered by the use of these biblical words—*shachah*, *proskuneo*, and *lateruo*—is the practical expression of faith and ministries that encourage faith and worship acceptable to God. The destiny of God’s people is to worship the Holy One and give him wholehearted service with an appropriate sense of reverence (Ndyabahika 58).

### **Avad**

The Hebrew word signifying worship—*avad*—literally means *to serve*. In the Exodus account, God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of bondage from Egypt for the sole purpose of serving God. Exodus 3:12 states, “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” This concept describes

the people worshipping God with gladness. The psalmist expressed this view in Psalm 100:2, which says, “[C]ome before him with joyful songs.” This concept is also related to the Greek *latreuo* earlier discussed. Such expression demanded the worship of God with all of one’s heart and soul. Worship is, therefore, not only an inner heartfelt response of thanksgiving; it also indicates a life totally committed to serving God (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 30).

### **Yare**

The New Testament equivalent for the Hebrew word *yare* is *phobeomai*. These words talk about the awe and respect with which the people of God are to approach him. Scriptures say that to fear God and to have reverence and respect for him is to obey his voice (1 Sam. 12:14), to walk in his ways (Deut. 8:6), to keep his commandments (Eccles. 12:13), and to turn away from evil (Job 1:1; Prov. 3:7). The idea of fearing God was widely practiced in the early Church as well (Acts 9:31; 13:16).

### **Hodad**

The meaning the Hebrew word *hodad* conveys is “to give thanks.” On many occasions the Psalms call people to “give thanks to the LORD, for He is good” (Ps. 136:1). This word conveyed more than mere gratitude. It meant, “to make confession,” in the sense of affirming the Lord as God (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 30).

One can safely say that worship concerns the totality of a person in a particular or definite place. The whole of life has to be involved in worship. These terms also clearly connote that the worship of Yahweh, God, is indeed a physical act, involving the whole being.

Worship is the time for the people of God to encounter him through submission and commitment. The true worshipers listen to hear from God. Worship is an affirmation of who God is, what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do. In Christian worship, people are responding to God's actions towards them. Worshipers are giving their total selves, including praise, thanksgiving, worth, and adoration, to God. God gives the opportunity, through his grace, to experience his presence. A two-way communication between believers and God is involved in worship.

### **A Biblical Theology of Worship**

Theologically, through worship, the life and spirit of God are communicated to the true worshiper. In worship the actions of the Gospel are experienced. As Webber says, “[I]t is most appropriate to think theologically of *worship as the Gospel in motion*” (emphasis; *Worship: Old and New* 65). This idea of worship as the gospel in motion becomes the major theme for biblical theology of worship. Through worship the Christ event is reenacted by the people who gather in the name of Jesus. Worship being the gospel in motion has three distinctive theological implications for today's understanding. In this regard, worship is the recapitulation of the Christ event, the actualization of the church, and the anticipation of the kingdom.

### **Recapitulation of the Christ Event in Worship**

To recapitulate simply means to *sum up* or to *repeat*. In worship a summing up of those events in history constitute the source of the church's salvation. Christian worship brings to remembrance the gospel story:

In worship, we rehearse the Gospel story. We rehearse the Creation, Fall, Incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, and the consummation of all things. Therefore, our worship, whether baptism, preaching, or Eucharist, proclaims Jesus Christ and his saving reality again and again. In this

action a recapitulation takes place on three levels: in heaven, on earth, and in our hearts. (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 67)

The heavenly worship is an everlasting worship of the Father because of the redemptive and finished work of Jesus Christ. Because of this “one sacrifice” of Jesus (Heb. 10:14), all God’s children will take part in the heavenly worship (Isa. 6; Rev. 4-5). In the Apocalypse, specifically Revelation 5:6-9, heavenly worship goes beyond humanity to include the whole of creation and the saints. Interestingly, the main focus of the worship (here or in heaven) is the Lamb. In worship participants recall the Christ event that accomplished their redemption, and they offer their praise and adoration to the Father through the accomplished work of the Son (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 68). In Christian worship followers are retelling the Christ event. In all of this worship experience, their hearts are to be offered to God. The Apostle Paul was clear on this issue when he said, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Rom. 12:1). The worshiper has to totally surrender to the Lord, the object of worship. This act will create a deeper relationship with God.

#### **Actualization of the Church in Worship**

In the Old Testament, Israel is considered the people of God or the assembly of God. The responsibility of this assembly was to worship Yahweh. Israel as God’s people became actualized through the worship of Yahweh.

The church is an assembly gathered for worship. The church is the people of God on earth, gathered or assembled in the name of Jesus. The Christ event defines the nature of this assembly. Therefore, “the church may be defined as the ‘people of the Christ event’” (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 69). Thus, when believers come together, the church, as the people of the Christ event, becomes a reality. One can say, “Here is the

church,” or, “Here are the people who belong to God,” as a result of the Christ event. In this way the church is actualized (69).

### **Anticipation of the Kingdom in Worship**

Since worship concerns the Christ event, worshipers are to be cognizant of the eschatological hope for the consummation of the work of Christ. In worship they remember the work of Christ and his death and resurrection and, at the same time, remember that he will come again. The Church believes in an eschatological hope where the powers of sin and death will be completely destroyed. Therefore, in worship believers raise a prophetic voice against the powers and express their hope in the future completion of Jesus’ triumph over sin and death. This anticipatory note of worship is expressed in *Word and Sacrament* (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 70).

The focus and the meaning of worship are found in the actions of Christ on our behalf. We cannot authentically worship without Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Historical Biblical Analysis of Worship**

In considering the issue of contextualization of worship involving indigenous forms in which the worshipers fully participate, I shall now consider biblical characters and people groups and examine their worship dynamics. As noted previously, a covenantal relationship between God and God’s people exists, which does not change. However, in the worship process, depending on the time and place of the worshipping community, the forms of worship change dramatically in order to suit and fit different contexts. Worship forms also change as the experience and perception of God’s people change relevant to God’s continuing revelation. The indigenous migrants are under God’s covenant like others. This practice was the same with God’s people in the past. The idea

for a biblical-historical analysis of the past is relevant to the migrant groups coming from rural areas to Monrovia.

### **The Patriarchs and Worship**

In the time of the patriarchs, sacrifice was the way in which they expressed their worship. A reading of Genesis gives some biblical insights on the subject. Genesis 4:1-7 states that Cain and Abel respectively offered burnt offerings of fruit and animals to Yahweh. Genesis 8:2 states that after the flood, Noah offered a sacrifice to God. In place of Isaac, God provided a ram, which Abraham offered as a sacrifice to God on the mountain, as recorded in Genesis 22:1-19. Genesis 26:23-25 mentions how Isaac built an altar for the Lord at Beersheba. In Genesis 35:1-7, Jacob built an altar at Bethel.

Based on the covenant that God made with the patriarchs, they responded in offering sacrifices to their God as a form of worship. God made covenant with those people. One of the several ways in which God's covenant was sealed and ratified was through sacrifice—demonstrated through obedience and worship. This covenant indicates God's holy promise to his people. The covenant also indicates God's integrity as he always fulfills his side of the agreement to the fullest. One way Israel maintained its identity was through worship. Webber reinforces this idea when he writes, "Through Worship, Israel was to maintain its identity as the people of God, for it was in worship that Israel continually recalled and celebrated its relation to their God" (*Worship: Old and New* 22-23).

In worship, the patriarchs honored, praised, obeyed, and adored God. Marvelously, the psalmist expresses joy and praise before God. God's people are instructed in Psalm 95 to praise God, to be joyful, to give thanks, and to be humble.

Worship under the covenant is an individual's response to God's act out of God's initiative. David Peterson writes:

Acceptable worship under ... the covenant is a matter of responding to God's initiative in salvation and revelation, and doing so in the way he requires. In particular, we need to take seriously the extraordinary biblical perspective that acceptable worship is something made possible for us by God. (19)

At the time of the patriarchs, a covenant was a preexisting political format used between city-states and individuals to maintain peaceful relations. Thus, God established relationships with the patriarchs through a culturally familiar medium.

### **Worship in the Wilderness (Tabernacle)**

Immediately following the exodus, the history of Israel shifted; they became a nomadic people. Exodus chapters 20-40 reveal the expansion and confirmation of the existing covenant. Considering other details, the tabernacle became the locus of the new worship life of the wandering people of Israel. During the nomadic period, the tabernacle was born as a portable sanctuary, a tent of meeting, which, under Moses' supervision, was erected in the wilderness to house the Ark of the Covenant and the throne of Yahweh (Willimon 9-10). This Tabernacle was understood to be the place of God's presence. Here Yahweh *tabernacled*, or *tented*, with Israel. Yahweh told Israel these words about the Tabernacle:

There I will meet with the people of Israel... I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am [Yahweh] their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. (Exod. 29:43-46a)

At this point, daily offerings done by the priests on behalf of the nation and festivals including the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles were some of the annual worship celebrations. Additionally, Israel carried out sacrifices during this period.



Worship for ancient Israel meant to *draw near*. The people of God needed to draw near to God's presence. God's real presence in the Tabernacle lay at the heart of the covenant. The Tabernacle was erected in the center of the camp so that God's presence could become a permanent, living reality:

Yet, not only was God to be present in the corporate worship, but the whole of life was to be lived out in the presence of God. The thundering refrain often repeated in the Old Testament—"I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 18:2)—encompassed all of life. The Gospel of John, moreover, alludes to all of the life of Christ in terms of the Tabernacle image: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (tabernacle) among us" (John 1:14). (Liesch 23)

God expects his people to draw near to him, and he will continue to draw near to them. James 4:8a says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you." God expects his people to be close to him for an intimate relationship.

### **Temple Worship (Worship in Jerusalem)**

From a nomadic people, David united the northern and southern tribes into one nation and made Jerusalem the political and religious capital city. David reestablished a Tabernacle in Jerusalem where the Ark of the Covenant was placed. David further established Zion as the center of Israel's religious life. The national festivals were observed in Jerusalem. A temple cult of priests was developed. As worship became located in a particular place, the worshipers came to see themselves as citizens of a blessed, established kingdom. This new form of worship evolved before the Ark at Zion.

Following the death of his father David, with Yahweh's permission and specific instructions, Solomon constructed the first temple (1 Chron. 28:12). The temple became the center of worship. Peterson writes, "Like the tabernacle, the temple was to represent God's rule over Israel and to be a reminder of His special presence among them, to bless

them and make them a source of blessing to the nation”(43). The Temple was very important to Israel because it was a special place to meet Yahweh and adore him.

### **Worship in the Diaspora**

During the exilic period, Israel lost the temple worship. This period gave rise to another major shift in worship. Historically, the temple had been destroyed; the Ark was no more. Israel had been defeated, and the strong and educated as well as religious people were captured and deported to Babylon as slaves. At this point, Israel still believed that Yahweh was bound in a geographical area in Jerusalem. They held this belief so firmly that the Psalmist asked, “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” (Ps. 137:4). The people of Israel, now in exile, were concerned about how to worship their God in a strange and faraway land. This situation had to be addressed:

The most common hypothesis is that synagogue gathering arose during the exilic period after the destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C. With the Temple’s destruction and dispersal of the Jewish people, a new form of worship and community life was needed. The synagogue arose to meet the needs of the times. (Willimon 14)

Two great Jewish ideals were attached and carried out in the synagogue: education and worship. First and foremost, the synagogue was a school; on the Sabbath and other holy days, a place of worship. In the synagogue many Jews saw the study of Scripture and offering of prayer rather than sacrifice as the heart of worship. Even with the destruction of the last temple in AD 70, the synagogue (gathering place, assembly, congregation, meeting) became the principal religious institution (14).

The basic unit for a synagogue was a minimum of ten men who gathered for prayer. Worship in the synagogue basically consisted of chanted prayers, forms of praise, reading of the Torah, and rabbinical instruction. During this period, the synagogue

became the religious center of the local Jewish community, wherever that community was geographically located (Webber, *Worship: Old and New* 131-37).

God is the initiator of all things, and he commanded Israel to worship him in response to his acts of faithfulness toward them. Indeed, Israel worshiped God, beginning with the patriarchs to their descendants. However, evidence shows that Israel's worship changed as the people themselves changed. At different phases of their history and specific locations, the forms of worship changed. However, the heart of worship remained the same: revelation, response, and remembrance of Israel's covenantal relationship with God and the faithfulness of God to his covenant with Israel.

### **Worship and Jesus**

The reading of the gospels tells how Jesus worshiped in the temple and the synagogue. According to Luke's account, Jesus was brought to the temple as a baby where he was presented and dedicated. As a boy, Jesus was taken to the temple in Jerusalem because he grew up in Nazareth (Luke 2:22-52). Jesus started his earthly ministry at age thirty. During this time, Jesus also went to the temple. In John's narrative, Jesus was in the temple for the Feast of the Tabernacles (John 7:2) and for Hanukkah, or the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22). Matthew tells of Jesus' confrontation with the money changers (Matt. 21:12) and his criticisms of the temple sacrifices (9:13). Jesus was familiar with all religious traditions, practices, and worship embedded in Jewish culture. He worshiped weekly in the local synagogue (Luke 4:16). Jesus "had the opportunity to teach, to heal, and to debate informally with the scribes and other leaders of the people" in the synagogue (Matt. 4:23; 12:9-14; 13:54-58; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:44; Peterson 111). Jesus did all of these acts to show that the gospel can be communicated

culturally. Jesus is the example of cross-cultural discipling. Mathias Zahniser considers this authentic point:

Cross-cultural discipling finds its model in Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Just as the God of glory became a Palestinian builder's son, so the message he introduced to the world took the shape of its cultural vehicle. God adapted to a human culture.... Because Jesus adopted, we can confidently be adapted. Cross-cultural discipling is about adapting to culture. (25)

The coming of Jesus ushered in a new reality beyond his earthly culture. Zahniser describes this reality: "In Jesus, God took the full plunge of involvement with humans in their culture. The intimate Ultimate became ultimately intimate in Jesus" (162). The coming of Jesus brought in the very presence of God as well as a new, spiritual cultural context—the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). Though the kingdom of God was inaugurated in the midst of an existing culture, it called people into a new reality and with a new life and ways of worship. As God's son, Jesus invited his hearers to become citizens of the kingdom and to worship the Father through a relationship with the Son (Rains 24).

True worship will be experienced by a new community—the kingdom of God—a community of disciples who give their lives to Jesus and are now called true disciples of Christ, born again of water and the Spirit. The people of this new community are not defined or identified by tribe, ethnicity, or geographical location. They are people enabled by the Spirit to worship the Father through the Son.

Christian worship (worship in spirit and in truth) did not destroy the old worship; rather, the new worship fulfilled and completed it—a tangible response to the New Covenant, established by God in Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:17, 19, 26-28).

## **Worship and the New Testament Church**

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost initiated a spontaneous worship that has particular relevance to this discussion of contextualized worship. The Spirit gave to each the ability to communicate God's deeds of power in the particular languages of those different cultures. Acts 2:42 tells that the first group of Christians in Jerusalem "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." The four elements specified in this verse can be considered a primitive liturgical sequence, implying that their meetings regularly involved instruction, [table] fellowship, then the Lord's Supper, and prayers (Peterson 152). In the verses that follow, especially Acts 2:44-47, is a brief portrayal of the apostles' community life as a whole. This passage describes a wide range of behavior of persons whose bodies have now replaced the bricks and stones, formally the dwelling place of Yahweh. He, God, now in the Spirit of his Son, Jesus, has changed location. As a result, as *living temples*, their lives were radically changed. They did at least nine things: performed miracles and wonders, met regularly, shared everything they owned (radical love), sold their belongings and distributed them to the needy, worshiped at the temple each day, met in homes to reenact the Lord's Supper, shared their food with joy and generosity, praised the Lord, and loved people. At this point, they did not have a *church* worship.

As the movement spread beyond Jerusalem, Christians worshiped in the synagogue and the home, until tension with the Jews led to worship occurring entirely in the home, as described in 1 Corinthians. Much of the early Christian worship drew from synagogue worship, including readings from the Hebrew Scripture and commentary and singing. Progressively, new elements, new hymns, creedal statements, baptism, and the

Lord's Supper were added. The early Christians also withdrew from the temple practice of sacrifice, believing that Jesus was the once-for-all sacrifice made for the sins of the world (Heb. 10:1-18). As the young Christian church came to include increasing numbers of Gentiles, worship forms evolved to reflect those of the synagogue less and less (Webber, *Ancient-Future Time* 103-05). During this time, worship took on cultural forms that were appropriate for that particular context. The Jewish practices were not imposed on the Gentiles. When attempts were made to do so, the Jerusalem Council took appropriate steps that provided a concrete solution (Acts 15). In the New Testament Church, the Gentiles, having received the same gift and power of the Holy Spirit, like their fellow Jews, also worshiped in Spirit and in truth.

### **Worship in Heaven**

Christians are rightfully concerned about the praise of God in heaven. The account of John in Revelation 19 gives some clues. The passage says, "The twenty-four elders and the living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne," and they cried, "Amen, Hallelujah" (Rev. 19:4). The words *Amen* and *Hallelujah* are important and powerful because they gave direction in knowing what worship—heavenly worship—is truly intended to be.

As Robert W. Bailey points out, *Amen* in Greek literally means *So let it be*, or *So be it*, *Lord*. Christians use the word to express simultaneously the joy of knowing God through salvation in Christ and the assurance of being possessed by and belonging to Christ. Saying, *So let it be*, to God involves a submission to accept the will of God and to commit oneself to the purpose of God. Saying *amen* means that putting oneself at God's disposal as an ultimate offering to him.

*Alleluia* is a Greek word that translated the Hebrew word meaning, *Praise Yahweh* or *Praise God*. *Alleluia* is the aspect of worship that recaptures the awareness that in God's presence is joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. As Christians know joy in the fellowship of God, so they experience assurance of the victory of God through genuine worship. Christians are convinced that through the empty tomb of Christ at the resurrection, he overcame. In spite of struggles, pains, hurt, and seeming defeat, God assures believers that they have overcome and are more than conquerors when they know, love, and worship. Therefore, all living things that have breath will worship the Lord in heaven.

More so, John gives the description of the final, ultimate context for all Christian worship—the throne of God. All God's people will be gathered before this throne worshipping God (Rev. 7:9-15). This is the day for which all faithful and born again Christians yearn, a day when all God's people from everywhere, all generations and all creatures, will assemble before and around the throne of God for the sole purpose of common worship. True contextualization will definitely take place as during the day of Pentecost. The styles and forms of that worship are not fully disclosed yet. The biblical imagery speaks of all God's children gathering together, in white robes of victory with Palm branches in their hands, prostrating, singing, and shouting before the throne of God. At this point, the church triumphant will be visible in unity. That time is yet to come. The present forms of worship are enacted within a given cultural context. The Scriptures imply that this practice is true for every generation.

### **The Purpose of Worship**

Through the experience of worship, the need for God is either satisfied or escalated so that the worshiper continues to depend on the worship experience to put him or her in God's presence. Moreover, worship reveals values, brings ethical insights, aids in solutions to problems, releases spiritual energies, renews the zest of life, unifies life around a central purpose, creates a sense of fellowship with all humankind, and enlists worshipers in the building of a Christian social order (Payway 39).

Worship brings the human before God and helps transform that person for mission to the world on behalf of God. Worship is important to all people because it "meets the need of human beings for the point of reference, for inward transformation for his/her nature and for true humanity" (Durham 10). Ultimately, the transformation that worship brings is not just for an individual but for the entire community and society.

### **The Benefit of Worship**

Humans do specific things directed to God through worship:

Through worship we gain a vision of God. We interpret life and work under God, and we dedicate life to God. We give our tribute to God in worship, acknowledging His holiness and providence. In worship, we remember God's mighty acts in our behalf, affirm our faith, and Celebrate God's grace in making us persons of worth, able to come before him....  
Worship provides the occasion for seeking restitution to God through confessing our sins, asking and seeking forgiveness, and dedicating ourselves afresh to Him. Worship also offers the opportunity for us to experience rich communication with God and with others. (Bailey 18)

In worship Christians make a declaration saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5:12). Worshipers emphatically announce that blessing, honor, glory, and power be unto him who sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever. Believers express



loyalty to God through worship. The worshiper knows the Lord and that he is God (Ps. 46:10; 100:3; Hos. 6:3).

Worship connects the worshipers with God. This act of connecting is the most important benefit for those who worship the Lord. Worship provides the unique opportunity to be more aware of God's abiding presence and his desire for humanity to connect deeply with him as the people worship (Rains 62). Indigenous Liberian migrants are thirsty for such a connection. When worship becomes authentically culturally indigenous, it then has the power to transform and equip the indigenous for faithful Christian discipleship.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, worship helps keep believers' focus on God in an unimaginable way. They are given strength and renewed power as well as vitality to face life's challenges. Worship also develops within the worshiper a sense of dedication and commitment to God. Our adoration of God in worship is accompanied by our commitment to God in joyous self-dedication (Mackay 113).

As Christians experience authentic, transformational worship, their spirits encounter the Spirit of God in a unique way. The human encounters the Divine in a way that allows God who is also Spirit and "not the mere totality of all things, but active, purposive, loving spirit, to become the controlling reality in our human spirit (Mackay 113). Moreover, through worship the worshiper becomes reconciled to God and humanity.

### **The African Experience of Worship**

The way Africans understand personhood significantly shapes Africans' theology of worship. For Africans, communion, community, and/or kinship are taken very

seriously. In the African context, to live is to worship, and to worship is to live. This comprehensive view of worship closely parallels the post-Exodus Hebrew mind. All of life is oriented around worship. This paradigm needs an adequate liturgical expression in Africa. More broadly, the worshipers can safely say that worship is not confined to a particular building or day but is a lifestyle. Many Africans believe that worship equips and enables them to live.

Professor John S. Mbiti indicates that Africans know how to worship God in various ways and through different acts, depending on the society. Some African societies have only a few occasional acts of worship, including sacrifices of animals and offerings of food items as communal acts of worship. Sacrificial items offered include cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, dogs, and even human beings. For others, sacrificial offerings include food stuff, such as corn, fruit, millet, cassava, vegetables, and even money. Anything one possesses may be sacrificed or offered to God. Worship may be directed to God or to the spirits and the living dead, which the African frequently sees as intermediary between God and humanity. The meaning of sacrifices and offerings is to establish an *ontological balance* between God and humankind. Otherwise, people take the risk of experiencing suffering and misfortunes where that balance is upset. To the African mind, prayer is the common act of worship. Individuals may pray to God, but often the head of the household prays on behalf of his people (58-74).

In addition to prayer, other acts and expressions of worship are done through proverbs and bodily gestures, such as song and dance, in which people express their religious ideas, feelings, and wisdom. Mbiti makes an important observation about African people and others:

They have no creeds to recite; their creeds are within them, their blood and in their hearts. Their beliefs about God are expressed through concrete concepts, attitudes and acts of worship which may include different signs and symbols. (67)

Africans see themselves as a people called and chosen by God in a covenant relationship. Therefore, the African worship has a dynamic nature, containing and covering the whole of nature and life:

“African” worship is necessarily dynamic, incorporating the entirety of creation’s experience. As human beings our expressions of worship are informed and shaped by our environments—including that which is ecological, cultural, socio-political, historical and contemporary. (Kakoma 10)

Consequently, the African experience of worship is summarized in key principles of kinship and community, Spirit, songs, and Word.

### **Kinship and Community**

From an African perspective, living in isolation is taboo. To the African, being fully human means that one belongs to a family or community. At birth, Africans believe that when a person descends from heaven, he or she enters a town inhabited by human beings. The implication is that society is the context of human existence. One’s humanity is defined by a sense of belonging. In order to be considered a human being in Africa, one has to participate in and prove a sense of community. This sense of kinship and relatedness is a strong force, taken seriously in traditional African life. The sense of kinship includes humanity and nature. Through the kinship system, one can understand and interpret God’s total creation. In the kinship system, everybody is related to everybody else. This relationship extends in every direction, horizontally and vertically. In this system, the African adage, “I am because of them,” is taken strongly. The life of the African is dependent on the others. In other words, an African would say, “I exist

because of my grandparents, my parents, brothers and sisters, my village, clan, county, and country.” The meaning of this statement is that the individual exists as a part of the community, the corporate whole. The actions of the individual towards God have a corporate meaning and consequence. A cardinal point in the understanding of this African view of community is the adage, I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am. Therefore, worship is considered most meaningful when worship is corporate.

### **The Spirit**

African Christians believe that whenever they gather for worship, the worship is the work of the Holy Spirit. Their worship is characterized by offering praise and thanks to God in and through Jesus Christ. The Word of God feeds them through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives Africans the power to express their community and individual belief. The spirit has a special place in the life of the Africans.

The Africans who have been converted to Christianity have high degree of respect and reverence for the Holy Spirit. African believers know the power of the spirit in all of life.

Paul Payway clearly pointed out that:

African Christians give a high place to the Holy Spirit because, culturally, they are a spirit people: Africans believe in the presence of the spirits within the cosmos—spirits of the deceased, ancestors, evil spirits, and a supernatural spirit, which is basically attributed to God. All of these spirits possess some kind of power—power to bless, to make crops to yield, to make the barren bring forth children, and even to curse people when they fail in their moral obligation to their family, community, the cosmos, and Ultimate Being. (Payway 45)

One of the major reasons why Africans do libation is that they consciously attempt to avoid offending the spirits. Considering this experience, Africans seek for a constant

indwelling and presence of the Spirit when they come to faith in Christ. They lean on the Holy Spirit for the role he plays in their supernatural formation. Africans yearn to worship in spirit and in truth. They naturally consider invoking the Holy Spirit as a vital part of their worship. This process is carried out through praise songs, collective congregational outbursts, prayer, silence, and exhortation. The process, they believe, brings fuller liberation. To the African, the Apostle Paul's statement, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17), holds natural, special significance.

### **Songs**

The songs Africans sing in worship are considered vital. The major vehicle through which the Spirit is invoked is the song. Songs help usher in the Spirit's presence in a dramatic way. A significant portion of the service is given to singing songs of praise and victory. For Africans, a singing church is a Spirit-filled church. Through the singing of songs, praise and thanksgiving go to God for his blessings. The living presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of African Christians is naturally and most fully expressed through singing. Further, the congregation sings together as a way of sharing their solidarity with each other in their daily struggles. As Africans sing, their daily experiences are shared, their testimonies heard, and their courage and perseverance fostered. The song does another important thing for the Africans. It initiates the dance of life:

This dance of life is repeated several times during the worship service. It occurs during the song of praise, during the offertory as people bring their offerings forward, and to welcome the newly baptized as members of the household of God. The dance may also occur at the end of the service as the choir and congregation dance forward to greet the pastor(s) and any visitors in attendance. Whenever the dance of life occurs, it is accompanied by the various instruments and congregational singing. (Arhin 40)

To Africans, singing and dancing in worship is a celebration of life as a whole.

### **The *Word* as the Scripture**

In African theology, the Word is given a special place. The Word becomes the peak of worship because God speaks through the Word and here his revelation is heard. The Old and New Testaments are read and heard. The sermon affirms and completes what previously took place in the songs, dances, and prayers. The sermon is a moment when God's convictions, challenges, and call to total surrender and holiness are conveyed to the community of faith. Warren W. Wiersbe writes about the innate power of the Word:

The Bible is written for the heart as well as for the head; otherwise it would not be saturated as it is with poetry, symbolism, and just about every literary device that capture the imagination and emotions. After all, preaching deals with real life, the life in the world and life in the pew, and it takes imagination to build that bridge from an ancient book to a modern need.... When Jesus wanted to help people stop worrying, he did not give lectures on Hebrew and Greek words. Instead, He talked about birds, flowers, and robbers. He appeals to the imagination of his listeners, gripped their hearts, and then instructed their minds. (123-24)

The Word of God enables Africans to live. The Word gives them inner strength and boldness. Worship is vital to all global Christians. Worship is in response to God's gracious act from the very beginning of creation and will continue till the end of time. One important point to remember is that when worship is biblically accurate, authentic, and also culturally relevant, transformation and Christian discipleship will occur. Christian worship requires appropriate contextualization, inculturation, and indigenization.

### **Biblical Foundation of Migration**

The Bible conveys many important accounts concerning migration. These accounts tell how families, nations, and people groups migrated from one place to another. Beginning in the Old Testament, the Bible contains many examples of migration. The earliest is that of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to an unknown place. In Eden, Adam and Eve were living in a sweet and special fellowship with God with all the benefits attached thereto. Because of their willful disobedience, God drove them out of the garden. At this point, Adam and Eve started to migrate from the presence of God. Their story shows that from the very beginning human beings have been migrating—moving from one place to another in search of a place, a greener pasture, better education, security, and serenity.

Another major story of migration concerns Abram's father, Terah, and is recorded in Genesis 11:31-32. The purpose of the family's migration is not clear in the text. Their move was from Ur to Canaan. Upon arrival in Haran, Terah, the head of the family, chose to remain there. Following the death of Terah, Abraham, his heir, under the guidance of Yahweh, completed the journey, as recorded in Genesis 12.

Another type of migration, individual migration, is recorded in the journey of Jacob. Jacob and his household left their hometown for Egypt for the survival of what would later become the nation of Israel. According to Genesis 46, this move was due to a great famine. Importantly, prior to the migration, God in his providence opened the door for Jacob's sons and their families to live in peace in Egypt by placing Joseph (one of the Israelites) into a sociopolitical position.

The book of 2 Chronicles relates another story of migration. The book talks about how Jehoiachin and his people were captured. War is the purpose of this migration, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:11-21. During this period, Zedekiah and Israel were defeated. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple were burned down. Zedekiah and Israel were taken to Babylon as captives. This migration was a time of exile against the will of the people. As exiles, they suffered humiliation, flogging, and all forms of human degradation to the point that their God was mocked. In Psalm 137, the psalmist speaks for the exiled Israelites now sitting by a river in Babylon and weeping as they recalled Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God. However, God in his love and mercy reassured them of his presence and providence. The prophet Jeremiah encouraged the exiles to settle down in order to put their lives together. Furthermore, they had a mission in this alien nation. They were to pray for the welfare of Babylon. The reason was that the welfare of Babylon would benefit the exiles.

The story of migration is not unique to the Old Testament. The New Testament also speaks of the concept. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is the first New Testament story of migration. The Gospel of Matthew 2:13-23 records that when Jesus was born, Herod, the ruling king, was perplexed and insecure because of the angel's announcement that a king would be born in Bethlehem. Against this background, Herod decreed that all males two years old and younger must be executed. God instructed Joseph and Mary to migrate to Egypt. They obeyed God. Jesus and his earthly parents lived in Egypt until the death of Herod. The family migrated. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus became refugees in a foreign country.



The next migration is that of the Jews and believers placed in the Diaspora because of the persecution of Emperor Nero. The Epistles of both James and Peter were written to encourage (from the French word *encouragier*, meaning *to put a heart into*; Payway 21) the exiles. James and Peter encouraged the migrants or exiles to see their exilic lives as a way of having their faith tested and not inhumane, barbaric, or satanic as they might appear (Jas. 1:3). Their migration became the means of spreading the gospel of Christ to the world.

Another interesting migration is that of John who was forcibly exiled to the island of Patmos by the authorities of his day. John's exile occurred because of his faith. The good news is that while John was in exile, God, through an angel, visited him. He saw an awe-inspiring vision and recorded God's message in the book of Revelation. Throughout Scripture, migration has clearly taken place.

While the reasons for migration and even exile may vary, the constant is God's preferential involvement with his people. In their various localities, God consistently worked with them. This principle is a lesson for today. Relationship continues between God and those in migration or exile.

### **The Relevance of Migration**

From a theological standpoint, in the midst of migration God remains the God of the exiles. His presence is clearly assured to them. As the people of Israel travelled in the wilderness, the glory of God was with them. They experienced this glory through his presence. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night manifested the presence of God (see Exod. 13:21-22).

For God to convince the exiles of his presence in their midst, he sent the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. God's presence gave them more courage for worship and celebration.

Another significant theological point is that exile holds great potential for clarifying and enhancing identity. The biblical exiles were a people identified by their *faithful culture*. In other words, readers can define their identity by their faith. Their faith knitted them with God to the point that no one or nothing could separate them from God. Paul the Apostle, in addressing the Roman Christians, was clear on this issue:

Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or sword? As it is written, "For thy sake we have been killed all day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us. (Rom. 8:35-37, RSV)

The foundation of this faith community was firmly established on the love of God, demonstrating why its members could live their daily lives under any condition and circumstance. This faith is also rooted in the spirituality of Liberian migrants. As established, "God loves the exiles [migrants] no matter what they experience, and if this God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then the [Bassa Migrants] and other exiles can relate to the biblical exiles" (Payway 23). Migrants today should learn from the experience and practices of the biblical exiles for their own good. The experience of those in the past could be a great lesson for the people today.

### **Contextualization of the Gospel**

Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian Church. Biblically, worship is always linked to the celebration of God's mighty acts and his gracious gifts of creation and salvation. Further, through worship the people are strengthened to live in response to

God's grace. The contextualization of the gospel and worship is a necessity in the African Church in general and the Liberian United Methodist Church in particular.

Contextualization is a critical challenge and issue to the migrated Bassa people of Liberia.

The issue of contextualization presents unique and special challenges in the African worship of God in Christ. African Christians have suffered greatly from missionaries who too frequently denounced traditional practices. Historically, the culture of the Africans was considered irrelevant to the gospel propagated by missionaries. Africa is rich in ethnic, cultural, and spiritual diversity. In this regard, Africa makes a vital contribution to the whole of world Christianity.

### **The Definition of Culture**

Eugene A. Nida gives a brief but inclusive definition of culture: "All learned behavior is socially acquired, that is, the material and nonmaterial traits which are passed on from one generation to another" (28). Culture exists through all areas of life—individually and communally in a society, and they are not immutable but are constantly morphing. Abba G. Karnga defines culture when he says, "[T]raditional culture means the systems of beliefs and practices about the people, about the world around them, and about ultimate realities" (13). African culture has ritual that speaks of the most profound experiences of human life and reflects the belief of the people.

If one is to understand and make sense of a person's behavior, then gaining understanding from the context of the person's life is important. Context is significantly important to avoid wrong conclusions about behavior that, out of context, might otherwise be considered as immature, out of place, illogical, and even satanic and

barbaric. Without a contextual clue, one may be judgmental. Judgmental conclusions too often hinder the spreading of the gospel. Skillful, proper contextualization is needed and vital to prevent and avoid such hindrances.

### **The Meaning of Contextualization**

Contextualization is the movement from one's own cultural context to another's context in order to communicate effectively. In this paper, the specific issue of contextualization is the gospel. In the communication process, contextualization is necessary in order for the message to be clearly understood by the recipient. In other words, one has to perceive the recipient's worldviews and, subsequently, define, adopt, and apply the message to the receiver's context. One needs, therefore, to adopt temporarily the worldview of prospective respondents (Hesselgrave C-44).

The concept of contextualization cannot be overemphasized but must be employed with caution. In other words, culture must not be equated automatically with the gospel. At the same time, one must be careful not to offend people culturally, which may result in people resisting the gospel. A contextualized gospel, however, should rightfully, by its nature, offend sinfulness and solicit the right response from people (Whiteman 3).

Wherever the principle and practice of contextualization has been ignored, the spreading of the gospel and evangelization has been greatly hindered. Some early missionaries had the form of religion, though unintentionally they promoted their culture on the mission field. During this era, the Christian values of the kingdom of God were frequently not taken seriously because the cultural forms, through which these values

could have been communicated and received, were too frequently discouraged. All cultures have forms through which the gospel may be communicated.

Patricia Suess rightly says that in evangelism, the gospel has to be relatable:

Culture as an environment, constructed and dreamed up by social groups, and as a project for life always relates to the particular world in which these groups live and which constitutes their identity. Therefore evangelization must always start from a reading of these concrete projects and from the spheres of communication offered there. If the Church is to show and communicate the love of God, it must renounce a universal code and a literal translation of it. It must experience its metalinguistic irrelevance and universal speechlessness in a long process of inculturation and become capable of new language which is contextual and culture-specific. (241)

The gospel will be more relevant, understood, and embraced by its hearers if critical contextualization is rightly practiced. Accurate contextualization is the vehicle through which the spiritual truth of the kingdom can be applied to local custom if the truth is to be fully experienced by those living within culture.

### **Transculturation of the Gospel**

Relating the gospel to the culture requires some process. This process involves transculturation, which seeks to convey what was true then (the core values, the meanings of God and his intended kingdom so that it can be true now and experienced anew. The practice of transculturation in Bible interpretation, translation, communication, theologization, church, evangelism, and Christian conversion is important. If theology and gospel are true, they certainly have to be true across cultures. Their meanings have to be viable and applicable cross-culturally, transcending time and space. *Ethnotheology* (the study of theology and anthropology, God and humanity widely across cultures) is to be upheld. When this concept is taken seriously, the people will have valid understandings of God and his workings in their lives.

The triune God is not limited to one race, nation, or culture. God transcends all. The gospel is for all people at all times in all places. The task of evangelism is to be intentional in getting to know the intended people very well. The gospel will consistently be miscommunicated if the communicator of the gospel does not intentionally and actively take into consideration the vital cultural components of evangelism.

### **Contextualization of Worship**

Worship is always done in a given local cultural setting. This important fact accentuates the dynamics between worship and multiple cultures of the world. In developing a dynamic and effective worship model for migrant Liberians, one has to recognize the relationship between Christian worship and culture. In the process of worship contextualization, some dynamics are involved.

### **Worship as Contextual**

Worship that lacks the element of contextualization will not achieve its biblical goal. As noted earlier, Jesus, the object of our worship, was born into a specific culture of the world. The mystery of his Incarnation becomes the model and the mandate for the contextualization of Christian worship. This fact was recognized by the Christian community, specifically, the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture. Considering the importance of this issue, this world body held a consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1996. The study focused on the biblical and historical foundations of the relationship of Christian worship and culture. The final result of this study was the production of a document called, "The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture" (1996). This statement is important because it talks about worship and culture in dialogue:

God can be and is encountered in the local cultures of our world. A given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are or may become consonant with the values of the Gospel, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christianity. Contextualization is a necessary task for fulfillment of the church's mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be evermore deeply rooted in diverse local cultures. ("Nairobi Statement" 2)

The United Methodist Church in Liberia has a task to take contextualization seriously as it proclaims the gospel in contemporary society. This concept remains a challenge.

### **Dynamic Equivalent**

One outstanding and useful method of contextualization is dynamic equivalence, which involves re-expressing components of Christian worship with something in a local culture that has equal meaning, value, and function. Dynamic equivalence goes beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be "conceded" and re-expressed in the language of the local culture ("Nairobi Statement" 3).

The dynamic equivalent elements of Christianity ensures that the truth, meaning, and value of the gospel be transmitted accurately and received by local cultures ("Christian Worship" 24-26).

In this process of application, the first step is to examine the liturgical *ordos* (basic shape) regarding its theology, history, basic elements, and cultural backgrounds. Second, those elements of the *ordo* and their meanings should be determined. Third, those components of culture that are able to re-express the gospel and liturgical *ordos* in an adequate manner should be studied. Fourth, the spiritual and pastoral benefits people will derive from changes should be considered ("Nairobi Statement" 4). Still in this process, creative assimilation should also be studied. This process involves the inclusion of pertinent components of local culture to the liturgical *ordos* in order to enrich its

original core. The new elements from local culture can be added. The biggest challenge in this process of contextualization is that “the fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected” (4). This process does not call for the inclusion of everything from the culture but does reveal the importance of those elements that are of the same nature as the liturgical *ordo*.

### **The Significance of Culture in Worship**

In every culture some form of worship is expressed. Frequently, worship forms also express cultures. One can therefore discern a culture’s worldview in its worship forms. In other words, a direct link occurs between worship and culture. Through the Incarnation, Christ entered culture. All worship of God-in-Christ is transacted within culture.

### **Culture Used in Worship for Nurture and Witness**

Worship and witness are the two pivotal functions of the church. Worship itself may be a form of witness; it may also nurture character formation for witness. Worship and evangelism are inextricably linked together in the New Testament. Pastors are to be cognizant of the influences and effects culture may have on worship and how cultural forms are used in worship. In order for worship to be authentic and evangelistic in nature, it has the challenge of addressing and appealing to the day-to-day concerns of the worshipers.

Worship and witness go hand in hand in the Church. When evangelism properly flows out of the church’s worship, the church is enabled to fulfill its purpose. Authentic worship requires an understanding of culture.



## **Cultural Vehicles in Worship Necessary for Seeing God**

Worshippers encounter God in worship. Through this encounter, the conversion of unbelievers may take place. Worship and evangelism are closely connected.

The forms found in all cultures provide cultural vehicles that, when employed, increase the effectiveness of worship. Patrick R. Kiefert clarifies that one cannot possibly worship God without worship forms:

Many believe that a liturgical form is more of an obstruction than an asset to encounter God. In private devotions that might be the case, but if we want public worship, there must be a vehicle. To presume that there can be an immediate relationship with God without “outward things” as ritual, (art, form, symbols, etc) is simply to ignore the logic of giving oneself. The point of the liturgy is to receive God’s self. The recipients are not private individuals relating to God in their own cozy way; they are the corporate body of the church that experiences God’s presence through public worship, the means by which God gives God’s self. The most basic and important question that we must ask, then, as we plan whatever liturgy or rituals we use must be whether the worship elements are vehicles for God’s self-giving presence in the community. (61)

The mission of the church may be significantly hindered if those present do not understand the worship experience it offers. Likewise, when appropriate cultural forms and practices are ignored, worship may be perceived as shallow. The task of the church is to discern and determine how Christ can be best proclaimed in and through cultural mediums that engender faith and lasting belief.

## **Worship as Transcultural**

The resurrected Christ who is worshiped is not limited to one culture. Jesus Christ operates in all cultures. The transcendence of Jesus beyond all cultures is an outstanding factor for the Church and its missionaries:

In the mystery of his resurrection is the source of the transcultural nature of Christian worship. The fundamental shape of the principal Sunday act of Christian worship is shared across cultures: the people gather, the Word

of God is proclaimed, the people intercede for the needs of the church and the world, the Eucharistic Meal is shared, and the people are sent out into the world for mission. (“Nairobi Statement” 2)

A close look at the Christian calendar or the Church year (Advent to Epiphany) and the church’s major creeds (one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Eucharist) reveals that while they may be expressed differently by different cultures, their meanings and fundamental structures are shared globally by the vast majority of Christian believers.

In an effort to contextualize, serious attention has to be drawn to key elements such as liturgy, language, gesture, music, art, and architecture. When properly and fully considered and understood, they greatly increase the possibility for worship to be understood, owned, rooted, and propagated in the local cultures.

#### **Contextualization of Christian Liturgy for the Migrated Bassa Christians**

Before considering the contextualization of Christian liturgy for the migrant Bassa Christians, I will briefly review the root of the Bassa people in Liberia. According to information gathered from Rev. Dr. Abba G. Karnga, a Bassa minister of the gospel and scholar, the Bassa people have their original roots in Ethiopia. Referring to a legend narrated by Elder Geahqui Duputie Sawah, the Bassa people originally migrated from Ethiopia to the Grain Pepper Coast of West Africa in the sixteenth century. Before the independence of Liberia, the Bassa people were already considered one of the twenty-eight tribes of Liberia at the time. They had a humanistic form of government. Their basic religious concept was monotheism (2).

Research reveals that the Bassa people are among the oldest surviving ethnic population in Liberia. Bassa people are part of the Kwa (or Kru) linguistic group, which incorporates other coastal and interior peoples, including the Belle, Dey, Grebo, Krahn,

and Kru. The Kwa are primarily coastal peoples. Their sociopolitical structure is decentralized, resulting in smaller villages, towns, or enclaves. Bassa people live life to its fullest, focusing less on material goods and more on the spirit. Bassa artisans include wordsmiths, musicians, entertainers, farmers, diviners, blacksmiths, and smelters (Davis and Safiyah 57).

The name *Bassa* represents the land, language, and the people. The name for the people was originally *NaO nyon* (people who say). The other name was *Gbo-nyon*, a synonym of *NaO nyo*. Legend states that this name was later changed when a chief, whose nickname was *Rock*, because of his warring strength, ensured that none of his subjects would be sent or sold to slavery. As a result, each time he traveled, a large entourage followed him to protect him as well as themselves. When other people saw them coming, they would say, “Father (*Ba Sorh*, literally, *Father Rock*) and his people are coming.” The name *Bassa* came to represent this chief and his people, and they have since dropped the name *NaO-nyon* and adopted *Bassa* as their official name (Karnaga 7). Approximately one million Bassa people are in Liberia and in exile. The Bassa people can be found in the following counties: Grand Bassa, Rivercess, Margibi, Montserrado, and in some parts of Bong and Nimba. Interestingly, almost every county in Liberia hosts a Bassa community. Karnaga observes that “animism, transmigration, and herbalism” define Bassa supernatural beliefs (7). Bassa people believed in some supreme being before Christianity dominated. Diviners or herbalists, sometimes a medicine man or woman, teach the beliefs. Bassa diviners fall into two groups: the *Hwion* and *Hwe-nyon*, depending on how each performs. The *Hwion* uses herbs to heal the sick and the afflicted. The *Hwe-nyon* uses herbs to do evil or harm. While people see the former diviner as

generally good, they see the latter as wicked, fearful, and, therefore, evil. The Bassa people have a twofold medical institution: the institution of leaf and herb doctors, and the institution of wizards and geniuses (59).

The Bassa family lifestyle is simple. Their educational philosophy is interpreted by their cultural school system. Their elders direct the judiciary and discipline of the people. As time passed, some of these people migrated from the original county to urban Monrovia.

The major goal of this work is to envision, develop, employ, and offer an indigenized liturgy in which the migrated Bassa people in urban Liberia United Methodist churches will participate. Numerically, the United Methodist Church in Liberia is expanding with amazing rapidity. The central problem is that the liturgy is largely foreign to the indigenous that migrated into the city. The liturgy, to a large extent, is still Western. The congregations in which the migrated Bassa people worship are not adequately considering the Bassa religious and cultural life. The need to redeem worship from its cultural subjugation cannot be overemphasized. The contextualization of the Christian liturgy calls for a proper recognition of the African culture in general and the Bassa culture in particular. The present state of the liturgy of the urban United Methodist churches offered to indigenous people needs to be reviewed. A skillful contextualization of Christian liturgy, if done well, may provide the avenue for the church to meet the spiritual needs of the indigenous people (Bassa) and at the same time make Christian liturgy more relevant in their context.

Mbiti's advice for Christian missions in Africa is timely: "Energy, effort, wisdom, and grace should now be concentrated on Africanizing Christianity in our

continent, for until we do that, Africans may well have to face the risk of dechristianization” (431).

### **The Bassa Language**

Bassa is a tonal language employing five distinct pitches or tones. Bassa is among those languages, within the larger linguistic family, in which a single sound may carry up to five distinct meanings, depending on the specific pitch or tone employed. Bassa people utilize three regional dialects; each differs slightly from the other in culture. The principal characteristic the people use in differentiating among these groups is linguistic dialect. The three distinct dialects are the Mahnbahn (principally spoken in Margibi County), the Gi Gban or Gibi (spoken throughout most of the Grand Bassa and Bong Counties) and the Nebuen Xwini (spoken mainly in Rivercess County).

During the 1920s, an alphabetic script, subsequently known as *Vah*, evolved into a type of writing called *Vah Creedeh* or signal writing. The script developed to notate *Vah Creedeh* was perfected and taught by a Bassa physician, Dr. Thomas Narvin Flo Lewis. Lewis earned his doctorate degree from Syracuse University in 1910. He owned and utilized a typesetting machine, manufactured in Dresden, Germany, between 1915 and 1920, to produce Bassa primers. These primers served as first and second grade textbooks for *Vah* schools in the town of Buchanan, located in Grand Bassa County. Lewis founded the first Bassa school in Buchanan to teach the Bassa alphabet to young students there.

Students wrote the newly developed Bassa alphabet on slates, using charcoal. The writing could then be easily erased with a leaf known as *yan*. By the early 1940s, people began to write the *Vah* alphabet symbols with pencil. The original writing used a

boustrophedonic style (alternating direction between right to left and left to right), but the alphabet has been written from left to right since the 1960s (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

33	∩∧	tz	↗↘	gg	σσ	ss	σσ	77	↗↘
ehnil n	kah k	say s	fah f	mbe mb	yeeay t, ð	gah g	dii d	kpah kp	jauh j
bo	↘↗	oo	oo	yy	zz	vv	oo	zz	ll
whah hw/xw	wah w	zau z	gbu gb	udau "d	chay c	uwuu hw	tau t	bah b	yu y
王王	77	££	nn	oo	oo	oo	εε	<<	σσ
yaayin h	pah p	uwada r/l	ah a	auh ɔ	oh o	uuh u	aay e	eh ε	lih i

Source: "Bassa Language."

Figure 2.1. The Bassa (Vah) alphabet and its phonetics for vowels and consonants.

	a	ɔ	o	u	e	ɛ	i
high	ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ
grave	ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ
mid-low	ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ
drag	ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ
double	ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ

Source: "Bassa Language."

**Figure 2.2. The five linguistic tones/pitches in composition.**

### Liturgical Background of the Bassa People

Among the Bassa people, liturgy is the core form of religious expression. The Bassa people naturally and spontaneously express their beliefs through liturgy. C. I. Ejizu sees liturgy as the classical sphere in which what is believed is expressed in sacred drama (71). Prayers, songs, and other forms of liturgical expression come from and, therefore, animate the inner religious experience and faith of the worshiper.

Liturgy, *leiturgia*, may be described as the way in which a particular people group approaches a deity in worship. Liturgy thus becomes a means by which worshipers express themselves, especially in a congregational setting, before a deity. Liturgical actions serve to assure worshipers of communion with the deity. Liturgy is a means by which the human soul finds a link with the deity who is worshiped (Idowu 26).

The basic religious concept of the Bassa people is monotheism. This concept existed even before the coming of Christianity in Bassa land. Though the word *church* was not known, the Bassa people were involved in worship. They went to the rocks, the

trees, and the streams where they worshiped the God of their ancestors commonly called the *One Big God*. This God, in the Bassa vernacular, is known as *Gii Vehnehn*, *Boh Naah-be*, or *Gedepaul Vehnehn*. These various names of God refer to the Supreme Being, the God Almighty whom the Bassa people worshiped before the coming of Christianity. This research is referring to the monotheistic religious life of the Bassa people before Christianity when it talks about the Bassa traditional religion.

In the Bassa traditional religion, written liturgy does not exist. Bassa liturgy is oral. However, the liturgy is preserved from generation to generation by the cultic officials who perform their duty with diligence in keeping the tradition. These cultic officials are keenly aware that liturgical, ritual mistakes in public worship of the deity might cause his (the deity's) anger. The Bassa Christian has a great and very rich spiritual background that the church cannot safely ignore.

The liturgy in the Bassa traditional religion is uncomplicated, lively, and colorful, influenced by the cultic and spiritual needs of the people for whom the liturgy was developed. Its language and references are Bassa.

Similar to that of other liturgies in other African cultures, Bassa worship consists of the following rituals: invocation, prayers, offerings, music, dance, and messages of wisdom delivered by the priest. Congregational worship takes place on fixed days of the year, normally at the shrines, the abode of the divinities.

During congregational worship, the priest acts as the intermediary between the deity and the worshippers. The priest mediates the wishes of the deity to the devotees. Through prayer, the petitions of the people are presented to the deity. The prayer consists



of invocation and petition and is the medium through which the worshipers communicate with and make supplications to the deity they worship.

In the invocation, the first part of the prayer, the officiant calls upon the name of the deity to listen to the petitions of the devotees. Here the object of worship is mentioned by personal name. Attributes are cited with praise. The belief is that “when the praise names of the deity are mentioned or eulogized, the deity will be moved to pay attention to the devotees and heed their requests and wishes” (Awolalo 101). Whenever praises go up to God, he moves in a special way to respond to the worshipers.

The Bassa believe that no one comes or stands before the chief (deity) empty-handed. Offerings are made in accordance with this statement. Chickens, chicken eggs, white chuck (clay from the river that is made dry), rice, cassava, and palm oil are dominant ritual symbols representing the highest cultural gifts of the Bassa people. These gifts represent purity and prosperity. While presenting the offerings to the deity, the priest invokes the divinity, mentioning the same name of God—*Abba Gedepaul Vene* (lit. Our Big Father, God). Other divinities then come and accept the offering. During the process, the Almighty God is called upon to take the offering. God is recognized as the God of the ancestors. In the prayer, the names of ancestors are lifted. The prayers of the people are said extemporaneously, not scripted. Interestingly, the petitions largely depend on the current material and spiritual needs of the people.

Music and dancing are also important elements of the liturgy. The Bassa people have deep love for music and dancing; therefore, they naturally play an important role in their liturgy. Ritual dances are not merely random movements or emotional responses to the rhythm of the music. They are symbolic and are often reenactments of the sacred.

Music may be quiet, loud, solemn, or exciting, depending on the kind of worship in which it occurs. Music may also be limited simply to singing, or to singing accompanied by the clapping of hands. Musical instruments may accompany the singing or the music may simply be instrumental. The faith and religious sentiments of the devotees are communicated through the songs.

With the coming of Christianity, the Bassa Christians still sing songs to God. The songs are based on biblical theology as understood and interpreted by the Bassa people. The worshipers' feelings of sorrow, joy, and thanksgiving are expressed in songs they have composed. The songs in congregational worship enhance and promote emotional and physical participation, and they lead to ecstatic experience.

Once the prayers, petitions, singing, clapping of hands, and dancing are done accordingly, the results are fruitful and prosperous. As no one comes before the deity with empty hands, so no one leaves the deity without an ecstatic result.

### **Passing on the Faith Tradition**

Bassa Christians hold their Christian faith in high regard. Though humble in spirit, they are profoundly grateful to be included in the Christian community, the family of God. They deeply believe their Christian faith helps them live a more meaningful life. Bassa Christians see their faith in Christ as the inspiration and motivation towards becoming the very best they can be. For Bassa Christians, Christian faith is their means towards building a better world. Since Christianity is always lived in a given cultural setting, in this case the Bassa culture, Bassa Christians believe that Christianity can be helpful to their descendants. Consequently, Bassa Christians strongly desire their Christian community to continue to grow, both in numbers and in vitality and depth. This

idea is important in the present and also in the future. Therefore, they believe that passing the faith tradition on to the next generation transcends mere desire; passing the faith is a necessity. This process of passing the faith on to the next generation involves two vital issues:

There are two issues to consider in the question of passing the faith. The first is the issue of religious continuity-how do we insure the religion [faith] we practice, the religion that is meaningful to us, will continue to be practiced in the future? The second is the issue of religious education for our children-how to insure they learn the skills to navigate the challenges of life and the values to do so virtuously and ethically? (Beckett)

Why is passing on the faith tradition very important to Bassa Christians? From the very beginning the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have taught their followers the importance of transmitting religious identity from one generation to the next. In the same way, the Bassa people stress the passing on of the faith tradition to their younger generations. Bassa Christians are deeply concerned that their young people have and retain a vital Christian faith to guide them as it has guided their elders.

### **Examining Existing Liturgies of the United Methodist Church in Liberia**

Liturgies presently used by local congregations of the United Methodist Church in urban Liberia that are predominantly Bassa are inadequate to meet the cultic and spiritual needs of Bassa-speaking worshippers. These liturgies were not originally designed for the Bassa devotees. Therefore, they did not take into consideration the cultic and spiritual temperaments of the Bassa people. These indigenous Bassa people have been deeply religious in their own way, before the introduction of Christianity in Bassa land, long before their migration into the urban city areas. A careful examination of liturgies in current use by the United Methodist Church of Liberia will clarify that those liturgies

were based on the needs and spiritual temperaments for whom they were constructed.

The Bassa people were only later made to accept them as Christian liturgies.

*The United Methodist Book of Worship* articulates the Methodist liturgy and theology well for whom the liturgy was originally written. The liturgy is spiritually deficient for indigenous Bassa Christians. The spiritual and cultic deficiencies of the *United Methodist Book of Worship* are clearly rooted in its origin. Largely prepared for Westerners, not Africans, these deficiencies become even more of a problem when applied to indigenous Bassa Christians who have no formal education. The idioms and phraseology, as well as the references, of the *Book of Worship* clearly reveal the fact that its origin and application was not for the Africans. As time progressed, the *United Methodist Book of Worship* surfaced in Liberia and then was applied to indigenous congregations.

Bassa Christians like to pray extemporaneously, presenting a litany of petitions to God, whom they worship. Many of the prayers in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* are stereotypical and do not accurately reflect the material and spiritual needs of Bassa Christians. The prayers of the *United Methodist Book of Worship* are repeated each Sunday, year in and year out. The form does not take into consideration the varying needs and conditions of the worshipers.

The people feel much more at home when the liturgy is indigenous. Their concept of indigenous, spontaneous prayers, and the use of their indigenous songs, accompanied by local musical instruments, will serve as a more effective map to the contextualization of the liturgy. The continued use of a liturgy not originally prepared for the African may extinguish the freshness of Christianity among the indigenous Bassa Christians.

Authentic, biblical Christianity does not change. It remains one faith, one baptism, one Lord. When Christianity is expressed in foreign terms, the goal of having positive impact on the people may not be accomplished. Therefore, the modes of expressing the sacred content of Christianity such as music, language, architecture, and dress may be modified and adapted without serious harm done to the contents of the gospel.

### **Language**

Language used in worship is very important. The first way to stress the importance of language in worship is to make sure that traditional, liturgical, theological, and biblical terminology is not foreign to the indigenous people. This process calls for a thorough examination and accurate translation of the vocabulary of worship that will be culturally appropriate.

Secondly, considering the vernacular of the people is important. To this end, some of the church's traditional language can be adapted. The church has to look for language to express the ancient tradition better. The liturgy must bring symbols and meaning into fresh language, connecting with contemporary feelings and sensibilities. The use of foreign language in worship may become detrimental to the faith.

### **Translation as Contextualization**

Because the liturgy used in the Liberia United Methodist Church is largely in English, the need for adequate translation is highly significant if Bassa are to be reached. In order to meet the true spiritual needs of the Bassa migrants better, the translation of the Bible, the hymnbook, the liturgy, and significant Christian literature is very important.

## **Bible Translation**

Many people understand Bible translation as a major tool of evangelism or church growth. Bible translation goes beyond evangelism and church growth. James Maxey articulates a broader, more comprehensive view of Bible translation: “Bible translation has been a means of forming and sustaining a community’s identity and, at times, of liberating a community from oppressive dominant structures” (173). Through Bible translation, the community of faith will have the Word of God in their own language.

Bible translation can be rightly viewed as contextualizing theology. Bible translation is not a mere technical discipline; rather, it is a theological enterprise and a metaphor for forms of inculturation. In addition to playing a role in evangelism and church growth, Bible translation is also “an activity of identity building and maintenance, as well as a means of liberation for communities” (Maxey 175). When people hear and receive the gospel message in their native language as a result of Bible translation, the end result is more often a faith response that leads to liberation and freedom in Christ. The concept of contextualization has always been central to Christianity, from the very beginning of the faith. The concept accentuates the relationship between faith and its context, whether it is the context’s socioeconomic structures or its cultural traits of language, traditions, and cosmological assumptions (175). Translation contributes to the hearer’s fuller and more accurate understanding of God’s activities in the world, including liberation. True biblical liberation includes cultural and theological liberation. The result is an affirmation of the identity of people as God’s people. In the context of this study, the Bassa migrants are the case in point.

Conducting liturgy in the English language, which is foreign to the worshippers who are unable to read the English language, suggests to me that the indigenous worshippers are oppressed. They need and merit fuller liberation, which comes through Bible translation. Doing the liturgy in English for people who cannot read and write may be viewed as a type of linguistic oppression by the church. While Western languages, English in particular, are good and useful in their context, one has to be careful if they are to be the only medium through which biblical theology may be accurately conveyed and applied.

### **Inculturation of the Liturgy**

The need for inculturation of liturgy in the context of Bassa Christians in Liberia cannot be overemphasized. The position of Bishop P. A. Sargpong is helpful: "If Christianity's claim to be universal is to be believed, then it is not Africa that must be Christianized, but Christianity that must be Africanized" (412). This statement is intended to create the conditions for the fullest participation of all people in Christian worship.

**The definition of inculturation.** In the African context, inculturation is closely related to indigenization, incarnation, and contextualization. Inculturation is the process of incarnating the gospel within a particular cultural context. More specifically, inculturation is a process by which people of a particular culture become able to live, express, celebrate, formulate, and communicate their Christian faith and experience of the Pascal mystery in terms (linguistic, symbolic, social) that make the most sense and better convey life and truth in the social and cultural environment (Healey 412). Inculturation goes beyond adaptation. In adaptation, people are made simply to accept what is

presented without cultural consideration, but inculturation considers the local culture in light of the gospel and sees how the gospel can be made relevant to the hearers. In inculturation, incarnation is considered—that is (in the case of Africa), truly African expressions of Christianity are created and propagated. In the process, the imposition of any different culture is absent, and the appropriate and relevant elements of the receiving culture are considered. In Africa, African Christianity is needed. Joseph Healey quotes Pope Paul VI on the issue:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not use their language, their signs, and symbols; if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. (413)

The good news of Jesus Christ is communicated through the experience of the African people themselves within their local environment and life situation (413). In a unique way, God revealed himself to the African people. This revelation necessitates the consideration of their experience as the people of God.

**Inculturation of Christian worship.** The idea of creating the necessary conditions for everyone to participate fully in Christian worship that is culturally relevant needs to be given priority if the Church is to fulfill its mission. Historically, the Church has considered the adaptation of Christian worship to all cultures and customs as a way of inclusion and soliciting full participation of all. This process has originated various concepts such as *inculturation*, *indigenization*, or *assimilation*. All of these concepts refer to the idea of modifying Western rituals to include and address local concerns on the mission fields. Susan J. White comments, “Inculturation has been a process by which the insights, attitudes, and practices of indigenous cultures and traditional patterns of worship are creatively combined to give birth to new forms of Christian liturgical expression”



(159). While Christians believe in one God, one Spirit, one baptism, and one church, the fact remains that all Christians everywhere cannot adequately and meaningfully worship the same way. People are different from one context to the next.

In the earliest Christian communities, the idea of inculturation was real at work. The New Testament writers, intentionally or not, are much more general than specific concerning one single blueprint for Christian worship. Christian worship has always been inculturated within local conditions and forms of expressions (J. White 160). Christian worship carries with it an adequate reflection of the heritage and religious situation of a particular worshipping community. Bassa Christians who migrate from one place to another rightfully wish to retain their cultural identity; at the same time they desire to be assimilated into the larger Christian community.

Many people coming to a new country naturally desire to retain their linguistic and cultural identity and a sense of connection to their native heritage. This need can be expressed as a desire to feel at home in Christian worship. A significant component is finding a form of worship that reflects their national, tribal, or ethnic origins. In this form, “[t]he style and tempo of music, the amount of congregational response and movement, the choice of images and analogies, and the use of visual materials and instruments can all provide significant cultural cues in worship” ( J. White 162). The challenge of the church is to identify the appropriate form that will not be foreign to the Bassa worshipers.

The Incarnation of Jesus may be seen as the basis for a theology of inculturation. Jesus Christ was a Jew within the Jewish culture. During his life time, Jesus used Jewish language and style. Jesus participated in the Jewish meal throughout his life by eating bread and drinking wine. Jesus attended Jewish worship. Inculturation was at the heart

of Jesus' ministry. The Church has the challenge of developing an inculturation theology that works to merge African structural history rightfully with the heart of the gospel message, God's salvation initiative in Christ. In this model, salvation is in Christ and no other (Acts 4:12), but, in addition, Christ is incarnated in Africa and not elsewhere.

**Inculturation and transformation.** When worship is inculturated and indigenized and at the same time authentically Christian, it will definitely bring about spiritual formation that leads to transformation. In other words, inculturating the good news in a meaningful way will encourage, challenge, and lead the local participants towards a change of hearts and minds through the power of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation gives rise to Christian transformation because "the goal of spiritual formation is to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ" (Greenman and Kalantzis 25). In the book of Romans, Paul says, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). The apostle also points out, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Participating in a Spirit-led and Christ-centered worship has the power to transform now and in the time to come. Transformation is possible now, but it will be consummated in the end time. Transformation has an eschatological nature as stated in 1 John 3:2: "[W]e know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Quoting Richard J. Foster, Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis state, "[T]he goal of the Christian life could be summarized as our being formed, conformed, and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ" (25). The message of salvation has to be culturally and theologically

relevant. One important fact is that an authentic transformation does not take place in isolation. The transformation of heart, mind, and spirit can be satisfactorily experienced in corporate worship:

Spiritual formation involves personal spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, confession, fasting and biblical meditation as well as corporate participation in the congregation's shared life of worship, fellowship and teaching. The ecclesial practices of prayer and the Lord's Supper (or Eucharist) have a special prominence among the "means of grace" that God has appointed to strengthen our faith. (26)

Spiritual formation (transformation) can happen in the community of faith (the ecclesial or church gathered) because Christians belong to one another as parts and members of the body of Christ. The Church then is considered as the communal context for mutual nurturing, encouragement, mentoring and accountability in the journey that leads to Christ-likeness.

When indigenous elements are brought into Christian worship and used in light of Christian principles and ethics, those elements might connect the worshipers with Jesus Christ in a special way. As Byron E. Anderson says, "By glorifying God, the worshipper is both edified and sanctified; a person learns about the gospel, is formed, grows in holiness, and is equipped for ministry and mission in the world" (73-74). This benefit can only be achieved if the worshiper understands and knows what he or she is doing. If the worship is culturally relevant and authentically Christian, the end result to a large extent will be transformation. If relevant inculturation takes place, worshipers would be enabled to participate more fully and intelligently in their worship of God.

Contextualization is a necessary force for transformation. Transformation will take place if a change occurs in the way worship is done presently that renders the indigenous Bassa worshipers spectators rather than participants. George Barna points out

that “leaders often remind us that what got us where we are is not the same stuff that will get us where we want to go, so we must change” (41). If transformation, which also has to do with spiritual transition, is to be a reality, the idea to alter routines and approaches purposefully has to be given adequate attention. The church has the challenge not to be comfortable and complacent with the way worship is being done.

The Scripture calls on all believers to be continually transformed through the renewing and reshaping power of the Holy Spirit, but transformation cannot be fully effected if the people remain foreigners in the worship service. Through inculturation, Christ becomes *native* to or incarnated in a particular culture, thus helping to transform that culture. Without inculturation, Christ remains an outsider or a foreigner to a culture rather than becoming a citizen, and then he cannot redeem the culture itself.

The goal of inculturation and contextualization of the gospel is not merely to proclaim the gospel using cultural elements for the sake of using them but that the people should be able to receive and act responsively and effectively upon receiving the gospel. The apostle Paul was clear on this idea in his ministry. As Greenman and Kalantzis clearly point out,

His (Paul’s) aim was that the proclaimed good news would be received and would enact an effective work, at the deepest level of the human spirit, shaping the hearts and minds of people so that the new life of Christ, given by the Holy Spirit, would so animate their character and conduct that they would truly become “like Christ.” (9)

Paul had this goal in mind for all Christians. Considering this goal, Paul preached the gospel the way he did. Paul was everything to everybody for the sake of the gospel. Paul was cognizant of the type of contextualization that would make the people personally experience Christ to the point that Christ would be “formed” in them or “until they take

the shape of Christ” (9). The apostle was deeply concerned about the transformation of the people through the power of the gospel. In Galatians 2:19-20, “Paul is clear that becoming like Christ (being transformed) means being conformed to the crucified One and therefore living a ‘cruciform’ life” (9). When individuals are being formed in Christ, they are considered transformed persons; as such they have to “walk in the Spirit” and “live in the Spirit” (Gal. 5: 16-20). The transformed person begins to bear the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5: 22-23). Every transformed believer is expected to walk by the Spirit.

For believers, this walking by the Spirit remains a constantly renewed mandate and a continuous exertion. Thus, for Paul it is the Christian’s responsibility to allow the Holy Spirit’s transforming work to take full effect in our daily lives. (Goodman and Kalantzis 10)

Throughout the New Testament, Christians of every age and tradition are challenged to live a transformed life.

Doing a worship service that is indigenous and contextual as well as authentically Christian will lead worshipers in determining to live in accordance with biblical standards. A contextually relevant Christian worship service will help the worshipers to identify their giftedness, to grasp the call to use those gifts for kingdom growth, and to initiate a lifestyle of service to God and others. This transformation leads to spiritual formation and faithful Christian discipleship.

**African liturgy.** A brief survey on the true African liturgy is helpful in establishing its recognizable identity. Alex Chima describes this issue beautifully:

A wonderful and celebratory expression and experience of the Christian faith, arising from the culture, life experience and felt needs of Africa, using the African’s liturgical sense in signs, words, and feelings: African liturgy should include ritual, symbolism, emotion, spontaneity,

improvisation, music (song, dance, musical instruments), poetry, stories, dramatization. These are some of the gifts Africa has received and is invited now to bring with pride and gratitude into its Christian worship. (280-81)

Africa has rich and divine gifts that could be considered in the liturgical process.

Inclusion of the appropriate elements of the culture will bear unique witness to the incarnated God. Sargpong describes the integration of the religion and life in Africa:

To the African, religion is like the skin that you carry along with you wherever you are, not like the cloth that you wear now and discard the next moment.... His role in worship is active and meaningful. He knows what to do, and when and how to do it, with whom and where to do it—without being prompted. For him, worship is not a dreary duty to be gone through and quickly finished with.... Therefore the African sings, drums, dances when the need arises, even talks and converses, but he also prays reverently. He takes part in worship with his body and soul, mind and conscience—his whole being. (141)

These descriptions call for the liturgy to have African face, flesh, and blood. This process calls for a genuine and well thought-out creativity as opposed to mere adaptation.

**The indigenization of liturgy.** While to a larger degree contextualization, inculturation, and indigenization may have some similarities in practice, this study briefly focuses on *indigenization*.

Indigenization is not new to Christianity, but it does have special significance to the liturgical practice of Christian worship. From the establishment of the church to the present, worship has experienced a transformational process. The transformation of the liturgy is an important task of the church. This task can be accomplished if the church will carefully distinguish between what forms are essential for Christian liturgy and ones that are not. The Africanization of worship depends largely on creating and developing forms of worship that contain African cultural and sociopolitical realities as well as

orthodox Christian tradition. Theological considerations are to include decisions related to the integrity of a liturgical practice within the nonnegotiable gospel.

**Selective indigenization.** Indigenization of the liturgy in the African context does not imply the acceptance of the whole of traditional African culture. The point is to use only those traditions, concepts, and practices that have significant religious or cultic meaning appropriate to Christian worship. Perpetuating these concepts that have no significant meaning and application will be dangerous to the Christian faith. Care must be taken to affirm the good elements in African traditions. K. A. Busia in agreeing with John Pobee, says, “While we affirm what is good in African culture, we also wish to warn against accepting everything en masse and as useful in the process of adaptation. Some elements may have to be modified or even rejected” (Busia iii). Serious and concrete dialogue between the leaders of the church and the indigenous leaders might determine which indigenous elements would be considered to represent and convey accurately their biblical faith in order to avoid syncretism. Specific criteria for selection has to be established. The nature of that process of selection is one that will be best accomplished by African Christians closely guided by historical Christianity and the Scriptures. Admittedly, this task will not be easy; however, in order to minister to indigenous migrants in Liberia and perhaps even to other parts of Africa faithfully and effectively, this direction is essential for The United Methodist Church of Liberia.

### **Research Design**

This project made use of qualitative, exploratory research design. In this project, I rely on the views and experience of the participants in order to achieve the desired goal.

This decision is appropriate because the work is qualitative in nature. As stated by John W. Creswell

[A] qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conduct the inquiry in a subjective; biased manner. (46)

In this research, I heavily depended on the leaders and members of the J. J. Powell and the New Hope United Methodist Churches for the needed information. As a part of the requirement in qualitative study, I developed “qualitative research questions, conducted on-site interviews [presented my] observations, and analyzed data for themes” (50). This qualitative work is an exploration of the worship experience of the indigenous migrants of the two churches under discussion.

### **Summary**

Heretofore, this study has dealt with the etymology of worship in general and its relationship to Christian worship as a whole. Various biblical terms of worship have been briefly considered followed by a detailed articulation of the biblical and historical foundation of worship, taking into consideration the theological basis of worship as well. In this regard, the study emphasizes that God is the prime object of worship and humans are responding to God’s initiative as a result of God’s unconditional grace extended towards them.

The study then elaborated on the African experience of worship from a religious and cultural point of view and related the same to Christian worship. In this process, some relevant concepts and terms, such as contextualization, indigenization, and inculturation, as they are connected to the gospel and worship were introduced. The study



observed that these concepts could be considered as meaningful characters to Christianity if worship is to have a positive impact on indigenous migrated United Methodists in urban Liberia, especially the people of the Bassa tribe. This chapter also included a brief discussion of the unique nature of indigenous African worship. It also considered the liturgy and religious life of the Bassa people and how their liturgy can become useful in Christian worship to increase and enhance fuller participation and spirituality.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

This research is a qualitative, exploratory case study designed intentionally to focus on the worship experience of the indigenous Bassa migrants of the United Methodist Church in Liberia. The study was done out of deep concern and discontent over the Westernized worship style and liturgy that has significantly hindered the full participation of the indigenous people in United Methodist worship services in urban Liberia, especially in the capital city, Monrovia. While the majority of these indigenous people, particularly those of the Bassa ethnic group, are professing faithful Christians, the fact is that most of them remain spectators in the current worship services due to the nature of the liturgy used. The liturgy, worship style, and form are largely Western, greatly increasing the difficulty of the migrants to be fully accommodated in their desire to worship God.

Since the establishment of the Liberian United Methodist Church in the 1800s, the church has been using worship forms and worship resources imported from the United States of America. A critical evaluation of this liturgy reveals it to be largely foreign to the Bassa indigenous migrants.

Since the birth of the Liberian United Methodist Church, the need for Afro-centric experiences of worship and spirituality designed to enhance the continuity of their (Africans') rich spirituality has been great. This study was developed out of concern that the liturgy was merely being adapted and was not witnessing to the traditions and culture of the local people. In other words, the worship being offered to the migrant Bassa in

urban Monrovia significantly falls short of a culturally inclusive theology, which is the medium through which the gospel has spread since the first century. This research was geared toward making worship more incarnational, contextual, indigenous, meaningful, and relevant to the indigenous Bassa migrants in the United Methodist Church in Liberia. The Liberian United Methodist Church has largely ignored this issue since its establishment. This issue has categorized the migrants, many of whom can't read and write the English language, as spectators in most urban (English speaking churches) of the United Methodist Church of Liberia.

The purpose of the research was to explore and develop an indigenous worship model through which migrants of Liberia could be acculturated and assimilated into the urban United Methodist Church.

### **Research Questions and/or Hypotheses**

In an effort to fulfill the purpose of the study, three research questions guided the process and provided the foundation for data collection and analysis.

#### **Research Question #1**

When, where, and how do you see God in the worship experience? The question provided the avenue and framework for evaluating the present worship model of the United Methodist Church in Liberia in light of its liturgy and style as well as its impact (cultural factors affecting the indigenous people in worship) on the larger Bassa migrants represented by those responding to Research Question #1. The semi-structured worship practices interview was the instrument used in discussing this question.

**Research Question #2**

What significant principles and means should be created and developed to effect the necessary changes? The purpose of this question was to identify and develop new liturgical worship styles and practices that are more indigenous to enhance the deeper Christian formation of the migrants in ways that are more culturally relevant. The instrument used in this process was the analysis of the worship practices. Additional insights were provided by the respondents' responses to the research items built around this question in the larger questionnaire. Pastors are under obligation to find ways that the United Methodist Church can reach indigenous migrants, thus acculturating and assimilating them into the life of the church.

**Research Question #3**

To what extent do you the pastors and leaders of the churches own and validate these changes and practices as proposed by the congregations? The question mainly focused on the end results of the changes (i.e., spiritual growth, Christian discipleship, and faithful stewardship). These changes will be practical to the extent to which the people understand and fully participate in the worship services that are culturally relevant. The focus group was comprised of key leaders from the churches that were interviewed and completed responses to this question. Through this process, the indigenous will more fully participate in the worship.

**Population and Participants**

The first and primary participants were thirty members of the John Jackson Powell United Methodist Church and twenty members of New Hope United Methodist Church, each located in the city of Monrovia, Liberia. I selected these individuals to

participate in a semi-structured worship practices interview. An open-ended questionnaire was constructed for each participant.

The United Methodist Church in Liberia is organized into twenty districts and one circuit. The Liberia United Methodist Church includes the entire nation. The Bassa tribe is the largest of the various tribes that identify with the Liberia United Methodist Church. The Bassa tribe comprises six of the districts within the Liberia United Methodist Church. The participants of this study consisted of sixty-five persons from these six districts who then migrated from the rural areas to urban Monrovia. These people continue to speak their local Bassa dialect.

The English language is the official language in Liberia. The questionnaire was developed and constructed in English. Each line of the interview questions was translated into the Bassa dialect because the participants can't read and write the English language. As a result, the findings became more indigenous and more culturally relevant.

The minimum age range established for participants was thirty-six years. All the members and leaders selected met this age requirement. The justification for this age range is that culturally, people in this group are considered to be mature adults. I selected persons capable of providing valuable perspective and life experience in rural settings and urban settings. The selection of the participants was based on random sampling. Since the local church is the root and strength of the general church, the selection of these local members and their leaders and their participation in the survey mainly represented the general view of the larger population of the Liberia United Methodist Church and the denomination's leadership. In an effort to ensure security, credibility, and anonymity, I omitted the name of each participant from the questionnaire form.

### **Design of the Study**

This study utilized the qualitative, exploratory research design. The research reviewed the worship practices of The United Methodist Church in Liberia as well as the cultic practices of the Bassa people and the impact these practices have had on the religious life of the indigenous Bassa migrants. The study identified the participatory obstacles the Western worship liturgy has raised for the indigenous Bassa migrants. The study further pointed out the need for inculturation and indigenization of the gospel into the liturgy so that the indigenous Bassa migrants may be more fully involved in the worship services, thus increasing the possibilities for deeper, fuller Christian formation.

I took several steps to realize the intended goal and designed outcomes. The first step was to review related literature relevant to the study. In this process, a brief review of worship in general was done. A descriptive review of worship practices in The United Methodist Church of Liberia was taken into consideration as well. Further, a review of the worship in the larger context of African traditional religions was also considered with specific emphasis on the Bassa tribe in Liberia.

In order to attain the desired results consonant with the purpose of the project, some interviews were conducted with members of the J. J. Powell and New Hope United Methodist Churches in the city of Monrovia. These interviews focused on the worship experience of the indigenous migrants and how these experiences could be used to cultivate their Christian formation, thus leading them into deeper faith and practice as Christian disciples. The interviews were twofold. First, a researcher-designed questionnaire was conducted with fifty members of the two congregations. The second interview was conducted with the leadership of each of the two congregations as the

focus group. These interviews were used for data collection. The study then evaluated and analyzed the findings against biblical and theological precepts on the subject, thus arriving at appropriate, relevant recommendations.

A focus group session was held with pastors and church leaders from each congregation. This one-day exercise took place at the New Hope United Methodist Church in Paynesville, a barrio in Monrovia, where leaders from each church congregated. The main purpose of the focus group study was to evaluate the present liturgy of The United Methodist Church in Liberia in the context of determining its advantages and disadvantages. Particular emphasis was given to the role of the Church in providing meaningful, relevant worship experiences to indigenous migrants. The study participants were pastors, lay speakers, lay leaders, and worship leaders from the two congregations. They are all of the Bassa tribe, persons well versed in the Bassa tradition and also familiar with Methodism. A questionnaire guide was developed for the focus group study.

A total of fifteen persons, seven male and eight female, participated in the focus group study I facilitated. The focus group consisted of four pastors, two lay leaders, seven lay speakers, and two worship leaders.

### **Instrumentation**

The first instrument was the semi-structured, researcher-designed questionnaire completed by the fifty members of the New Hope and J. J. Powell United Methodist Churches. The items on the questionnaire addressed two of the three research questions around which the study was conducted.

The next instrument utilized in this study was the qualitative, exploratory research design. In this process an open-ended interview questionnaire was constructed for the focus group consisting of the leaders of the two congregations under observation.

### **Expert Review**

For the credibility of this work, the dissertation committee at Asbury Theological Seminary reviewed and validated the research questions and the instruments used in this project. With the approval of the expert review panel, the validity of this work is authentic.

### **Data Collection**

Information relevant to the study was gleaned from several sources, in phases. The first source of data collection was appropriate resource materials (e.g., books, scholarly papers) written by experts and authorities on the subject matter. Those materials (from both print and electronic media) were carefully selected, read, and digested. Another source of data collection for this project was the interview conducted with leaders of the two churches that have significant numbers of indigenous migrants in Monrovia. A final source of data collection was the interview conducted with fifty members of the two congregations under review. Six months were required for this exercise. The participants met in phases.

### **Data Analysis**

Considering the qualitative, exploratory research design, I constructed open-ended questions in order to allow the participants to respond adequately and express themselves. I collected and analyzed the data gathered from these sources in the context of their



worship experience and also its effects in order to determine the role of the Liberian United Methodist Church toward indigenization and inculturation in its worship liturgy.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The concepts of confidentiality and anonymity were employed and honored in order to protect the participants. Verbal explanation of the procedures was given to all participants, and assurance was made that all discussion would be held in strictest confidence. No names of the interviewees are mentioned in this document; instead, I used the participants' initials for reference. All interview instruments became my exclusive possession. Upon the completion of the research, the documents containing the data were destroyed.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter dealt with the methodological steps employed to conduct the qualitative, exploratory research with the goal of determining a contextually relevant form and worship model for the indigenous Bassa migrants of tThe United Methodist Church in Liberia. An interview was used to gather the necessary data. The questionnaire items were constructed according to the research questions they addressed. The findings collected are fully discussed in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Problem and Purpose**

This chapter deals with the three research questions that guided the study and gives an overview of significant findings. The research questions were thoroughly discussed by the participants. This discussion significantly informed the findings generated.

As stated in previous chapters of the study, many indigenous migrants in urban United Methodist churches of Liberia are worship spectators rather than worship participants. To a significant degree, much of the causality is directly related to the style used by the urban churches attended by migrants. The problem is that the liturgy, worship style, and form used in the majority of the urban United Methodist churches are basically Western in origin and in practice. Additionally, the form of worship, the materials, and the worship resources imported to Liberia from the United States remain foreign to indigenous migrants. If worship, or any other expression of faith, is to be culturally indigenous at a deeper and meaningful level, it has to be accepted, adopted, or created by the culture itself with the assistance of a trained Christian leader. Importantly, for this process to be authentically Christian, it has to be guided by Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit. The local community has to draw the illumination from the Holy Spirit.

Thus, the purpose of the research was to explore and develop an indigenous worship model through which indigenous Christian migrants of Liberia can be acculturated and assimilated into the urban United Methodist Church.

### Participants

Table 4.1 provides an age-gender profile of the respondents to the semi-structured interview questions for members of the two churches that were interviewed. Those coded A1-A30 are members from the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church. Those coded from B1-B20 are members of the New Hope United Methodist Church.

**Table 4.1. Characteristics of the Members (N=50)**

Member/Respondent	Age	Gender
A1	54	M
A2	49	F
A3	70	M
A4	50	F
A5	41	M
A6	38	M
A7	57	F
A8	62	F
A9	49	M
A10	64	M
A11	91	M
A12	63	F
A13	54	M
A14	41	M
A15	38	F
A16	38	F
A17	52	M
A18	50	M
A19	55	M
A20	40	F
A21	38	M
A22	40	M
A23	47	M

**Table 4.1. Characteristics of the Members (N=50), cont.**

<b>Member/Respondent</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
A24	36	F
A25	40	F
A26	62	F
A27	53	M
A28	51	F
A29	41	F
A30	36	M
B1	39	M
B2	42	M
B3	61	F
B4	47	F
B5	57	F
B6	38	M
B8	60	M
B9	40	F
B10	56	F
B11	41	F
B12	36	F
B13	44	F
B14	50	F
B15	38	F
B16	49	F
B17	50	M
B18	41	F
B19	47	F
B20	60	F

A total of fifty members from the two churches participated in the interview. The participants were within the age range of 36 to 91 years. Participants were all laypersons who are serving the churches in different areas of lay ministries. One important

observation is that majority of the interviewees from both churches were choristers with a total of twenty-three males and twenty-seven females. The focus group was made up of the leadership from each church.

For the general members, the age is categorized as follows: Ten respondents were between ages 36 to 39, constituting 20 percent of the participants. Seventeen persons of the participants were in the age range of 40 to 49 years, forming 34 percent of the respondents. Additionally, fourteen persons between the ages of 50 to 59 years, constituting 28 percent of the participants were interviewed. Also, seven persons between the age range of 60-69, forming 14 percent participated, and, finally, two persons age 70 years and above, constituting 4 percent of the total number of participants were included in the process. This age level was intentionally chosen because in the Bassa culture it is the age range that can specifically and best represent and defend the community. This is the age range that treasures the values and norms of the Bassa culture. Truly speaking, in Bassa culture, wisdom and authority are strengthened and verified by age and accumulated years.

**Table 4.2 Characteristics of the Focus Group (N=6)**

Leader	Age	Gender	Position
A	46	M	Men's Present, New Hope UMC
B	44	M	Lay Leader, J.J. Powell
C	37	M	Chair, Church Council
D	48	F	Pastor, New Hope UMC
E	36	M	Church Secretary, J.J. Powell UMC
F	39	M	Lay speaker, New Hope UMC

## Research Questions

This project is based on three research questions related to the purpose statement. Questions and findings are subsequently reported in two groups. Research questions #1 and #2 deal with the indigenous migrants' perceptions of the existing worship model and the significant principles and means that should be created to effect the necessary changes. Research question #3 was the instrument used to interview the focus group, which comprised the leadership of the J. J. Powell and the New Hope United Methodist Churches. This question was concerned with the idea of the leadership of both churches owning and validating the proposed changes and principles as suggested by the members of the churches.

### Research Question #1

When, where, and how do you see God in the worship experience? (*As a Bassa Christian, how do you see the worship of Christ as it presently is?*) The answers to this question were based on the respondents' evaluation of the existing worship model and components and the ways in which the worship is presently done. The answers to research question #1 served as the basis for determining answers for research question #2. Research question #1 leads to the operational questions below:

1. How long have you attended this church?
2. How deeply/how much does the worship you are presently doing each week connect you to God?
3. In what ways does what you are presently doing communicate God's Word (the Scripture) into your heart and mind? In your present Sunday worship, how (in what

ways) does the Word of God, the Scripture speak into your heart and help you live as a faithful witness throughout the week, after you leave church?

4. How do you see the worship service since you began attending this church?
5. What ways do you think the worship is relevant to your Bassa culture?
6. What areas of the worship would you consider as the best parts, those that appeal to you most? Why do you consider these parts?
7. What about the worship service that troubles you most?

### **Research Question #2**

What significant principles and means should be created and developed to effect the necessary changes? (*How might worship be changed to connect with the Bassa people better?*) Based on their cultural significance, the indigenous worship adapts forms from the host culture, giving the cultural forms new theological interpretation. The answers to research question #2 helped to determine the necessary principle and components of indigenous worship experience. Research question #2 leads to the operational questions below:

1. How do you see the worship service that is being done in the English language?
2. If you do not understand English, what effect does it have on you?
3. How should the worship service be designed to fulfill the purpose of the gospel today?
4. Suggest some practical ideas that you find particularly helpful and meaningful that could make the worship service be understood better and still remain authentically Christian.

5. What are some ways that might involve more worshipers during the worship service?

6. Describe what you would consider to be the ideal worship experience.

### **Research Question #3**

To what extent do you the pastors and leaders of the churches own and validate the changes and practices proposed by your congregations? (*If our present way of worship is significantly changed, can and will the Bassa leadership accept it?*)

This question highlighted the proposed principle and changes made by the members of the two congregations under observation. The proposal was placed before the leaders of the churches. The question helped to determine (1) why the members of both congregations are proposing the changes, and (2) what help such changes will bring to each congregation in terms of its spirituality. Question #3 also addresses the effects the changes in the worship, as proposed by the members of the congregations, will have on the churches. The biggest issue was, “How do the proposed changes connect the worshipers with God and communicate God’s Word and truth to them?” The focus group was asked to reflect on the issue. This question attempted to identify the theology of indigenous worship as suggested by the members in the choice and use of certain worship components. Research question #3 led to several additional operational questions:

1. How do you see the suggested changes in the worship service that were mentioned and identified by your congregations?

2. What help and improvements will (or could) these suggested changes bring to your congregations?



3. In what ways might these suggestions increase congregational participation in worship?

4. What help do you see the proposed changes bring to your churches?

5. In what ways might the proposed changes stimulate deeper discipleship and increase faithful Christian living?

6. To what degree will you as leaders guide and lead the vision without biasing the process?

The leaders of the church have the challenging task to listen, learn, and understand what the people are saying. The people need a cultural form of worship that will be authentically Christian and also useful. The challenge is that if any cultural form is to be useful, it has to take on a new theological meaning and significance. The theological meaning has to dominate the cultural form in order to give perceived and understood Christian meaning to the worship experience. A worship form will become truly authentic and indigenous only when the cultural form used in the worship takes on biblical, theological meaning. This process must be guided and led by trained Christian leaders in the indigenous churches if it is to become a reality. The leaders of the churches are expected to help in identifying the components of the worship that will serve as vehicles for experiencing God and the ultimate truth.

The results of the study are grouped into two categories. Category one contains findings to research questions particularly addressed to lay members of the J. J. Powell and New Hope United Methodist Churches. Category two consists of findings from focus group made up of leaders from the two churches.

### **Findings of Category One**

This portion of the project deals with the findings from the research. The findings were generated through the interview with the members of the churches under observation. The respondents were asked specific questions from the main research questions of the project.

#### **Research Question #1**

When, where and how do you see God in the worship experience? (*As a Bassa Christian, how do you see the worship of Christ as it presently is?*) Having deeply reflected on this research item, the responses of all the interviewees (lay members) were nearly identical even though they came from two different churches, each interviewed separately and independently.

##### 1. How long have you attended this church?

Respondents variously gave dates ranging from fifteen up to forty-five years. The range of their years of attendance places the participants in a better position to respond adequately to other operational questions because of their own experiences with the worship services they have observed over the years.

##### 2. How deeply/how much does the worship you are presently doing each week connect you to God?

In spite of varying opinions from each participant, all participants seemed to believe that both the preaching (Word) and singing (music) during the worship serve as connecting points to God. Significantly, most participants pointed out that the music serves to evoke an emotional reaction and response from them. This emotive component is a strongly desired dimension of the expected “encounter with God.”

3. In what ways do what you are presently doing communicate God's Word (the Scripture) into your heart and mind? In your present Sunday worship, how (in what ways) does the Word of God, the Scripture, speak into your heart and help you live as a faithful witness throughout the week, after you leave church?

The respondents pointed out tangible components of the worship through which God's Word is communicated. The respondents pointed out some primary items that seem to serve as a means of experiencing God in worship. The tangible components the respondents mentioned include the following.

**Tangible experience.** The majority of the respondents alluded to the Lord's Supper as a truly tangible experience. To Bassa it represents the opportunity to participate physically. This tangible experience in which God offered himself to humankind provides an opportunity for the worshiper to respond to God in some tangible, physical, meaningful way. This response illustrates the fact that physicality is important to Bassa people. These respondents consider the Lord's Supper as a significant focal point for worship. The participants maintained that through Holy Communion they know that they are, in fact, truly connected to the covenant community through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Music.** The participants in both churches commented on the relevance of the musical aspect of worship. For them, they observed that music evokes feelings and emotions. This observation is especially true of the music, especially the music that is done in their native Bassa vernacular. They asserted that through the singing, they are given the freedom to express their feelings and emotions to God in a way that is unique and personal for each of them. One participant stated, "Music provides the opportunity

for a reciprocal exchange between God and her.” This statement is a profound one, because as praises go up, the worshipers believe that blessings are sent down by God.

**Message (preaching).** The participants unanimously considered the preaching/message to be the primary component for experiencing God in that preaching has the capacity to evoke feeling and emotion. The interviewees clearly stated that the message provides Christian doctrine and also challenges them toward relevant application. The preached Word serves as a means of experiencing God in a way that can be applied in their actual, real world.

**Prayer.** All the participants clearly mentioned that prayer is one of the major ways through which they experience God and are connected to him. The belief of the people is that through prayer they are communicating with a friend who cares and is all sufficient in dealing with their personal situations. Through prayer, worshipers feel directly connected to God who is the object of their worship.

#### 4. How do you see the worship since you began attending this church?

The evaluations provided by respondents from both groups were similar. The participants see their worship as incomplete. The worship does not fully address the Bassa worshipers because they cannot read and write the English language. Whenever a component of the liturgy is given in the English language, the signal is that the Bassa worshipers are automatically disconnected from the experience and intent of the specific component. One respondent commented, “The liturgy done in English does not appeal to me because it does not administer to me. It does not address the majority of the worshipers who don’t have formal education. The liturgy is largely biased; it is like going

to school without learning anything.” This statement speaks to the huge concerns most of the worshipers expressed during the interview process.

5. In what ways do you think the worship is relevant to your Bassa culture?

Respondents clearly indicated a huge gap between the worship and the Bassa culture. Not much relevance is seen. They perceive that when worship is planned and structured, few elements of authentic Bassa culture are considered. In addition to the fact that seldom are Bassa songs sung and rarely are drums and *sasa* (a non-strings instrument) used, little about the culture is really considered in the liturgy. Due to this act, the liturgy does not really speak to the cultural issues of the Bassa people.

6. What areas of worship would you consider as the best parts, those that appeal to you most? Why?

Nearly all the participants from both church groups clearly stated the following as areas of the worship that appeal to them most. Those areas include the praise and worship at the very beginning of the service, the prayers, and tangible worship experiences such as Holy Communion, special Bassa music, and the preaching or the message. For them, these specific components and actions lift their spirits, evoke feelings and emotions, and communicate God’s Word to them. These actions challenge them to be more connected to God and to live as faithful witnesses.

7. What about the worship service troubles you most?

The respondents all expressed concern about the fact that the worship for a group of *non-literate* (illiterate) people is done mostly in English. For *nonliterate* (illiterate) Bassa, this process is highly troubling. This act of doing worship does not fully address their liturgical and spiritual needs. Such a worship method does not encourage

interactivity. One participant commented, “Worship done this way lacks a high degree of clarity and relevance. Such a way of doing worship renders the non-English speaking worshippers mere spectators.” Another trouble spot mentioned is the time allotted for announcements. One respondent said, “In some cases, the announcements consume more time than even the message from the Bible, the Word of God; this is troubling.” In some churches the announcements are arranged and given to one announcer. When more than one person makes announcement, the process becomes very boring.

### **Research Question #2**

What significant principle and means should be created and developed to effect the necessary changes? (*How might worship be changed to connect with the Bassa people better?*)

The major theme throughout the interviews was the great need for the worship experienced in the urban United Methodist Church to relate directly to issues faced by indigenous migrants. The participants seemed to unanimously concur that they are largely disconnected from their previous worship experienced prior to their immigration to urban city life. The manner and style in which urban worship is done is foreign to them. The migrants that urban worship significantly ignores Bassa cultural and real-life issues. They long for worship components that are culturally relevant and authentically Christian.

1. What do you think of the worship that is being done in the English language?

The majority of the respondents pointed out that the worship done in the English language for *non-literate* (illiterate) Bassa worshippers rendered them as spectators than participants. One participant asserted, “This worship makes people to look like foreigners in a strange land instead of citizens of the land (the church).” The participants

unanimously suggested that the language used in the worship service should be the common vernacular of the people. This idea was expressed by one of the participants in these words:

The English language is good to be used in a worship service of the *Kwie* [educated people]. It is incomprehensible to the *non-literate*. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the English language for *non-literate* people in worship because it will only create a barrier to the message being communicated.

The quest of the worshipers is to fully participate in the worship service. Therefore, the service has to be done in the language that the people understand.

2. Since you do not understand English, what effects does it have on you?

The participants commonly asserted that “the components of the worship done in English have no practical and positive effects on the Bassa worshipers”. One respondent pointed out, “When they tell us to stand or to sit, we do; and they say their ‘thing’ in English. We are only followers at this time because we do not understand what they are saying in English.” The liturgy in the English language makes the worship to be foreign. This act disenchants the Bassa worshipers.

3. How should the worship service be designed to fulfill the purpose of the gospel today?

Respondents suggested that the design of the worship should consider the culture of the people who are to engage and participate in the worship if they are to experience God. Cultural factors that can more fully communicate the gospel as a vehicle for

experiencing God should not be ignored. If worship is expected to express relevant cultural, theological, and biblical truth, the ritual must consider the Bassa language.

The respondents proposed the following items to be considered in the design of the worship (inclusion is more significant than specific order):

- Bassa gospel music (traditional three songs ascribed to the Trinity),
- Prayer,
- Welcome/Greeting,
- Responsive reading,
- Scripture readings,
- Sermon,
- Testimony,
- Baptism/Dedication of children,
- Holy Communion,
- Offering,
- Invitation to the *Sarzangbah* (literally the place of sacrifice),
- Traditional Bassa praise dance,
- Announcements, and
- Drama.

Five additional things considered to be essential to the participants were mentioned as worthy of consideration in the design of the worship, though technically they are not components of the worship. These include

- Clarity of language,
- Clarity of theology,



- Bassa traditional dress code for clergy,
- Choir utilized during worship, and
- Reasonable length of the service.

4. Suggest some practical ideas that you find particularly helpful and meaningful that could make the worship service be understood better and still remain authentically Christian.

The interviewees commonly concurred that worship should largely be done in the Bassa vernacular. The idea of interpretation and translation of the components of worship was highlighted by the respondents as well. The respondents stressed the need for an interpreter to translate the parts of the liturgy that will be done in English for clarity. They said that the liturgy should be done in the language of the majority, in this case, the Bassa people in the two churches under discussion. The respondents also suggested that in order to effect full participation, the teaching of the Bassa language (Bassa literacy program) has to be carried out in the local congregations.

The respondents observed that the liturgy should be redesigned and revised in the Bassa language and given to each worshiper who can read the Bassa language. The priesthood of all believers is to be encouraged and practiced. The point is that members of the congregations should be assigned specific responsibilities in worship practice such as praying and reading Scriptures during worship time.

5. What are some ways to involve more worshipers during the worship service?

Respondents contributed three dominant suggestions. The respondents suggested that more songs be sung in the vernacular Bassa language during the worship service. The worshipers should be taught and encouraged to read the Holy Bible that has already

been translated in the Bassa language. They are of the strong conviction that if the liturgy is developed and done in the Bassa language, then more people will be participants instead of spectators in the worship service.

6. Describe what you would consider to be the ideal worship experience.

Most of the respondents feel a sense of fulfillment when experiencing and participating in the liturgy. They see their worship as an encounter with God. Even though they may not understand all that is done in the worship, due to language issues, they all agreed that being in the presence of God during the worship and participating in some of the rituals is a worthwhile, significant experience. One respondent said, "People experience God in different ways. For me, I experience God ideally through the singing and the preaching, especially the parts that are done in the Bassa language." The respondents were unanimous and clear that the worship draws their hearts to God.

**Profile of the Focus Group**

As previously stated, the focus group is made up of leaders of the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church and the New United Methodist Church. The focus group consisted of the pastors, lay speakers, lay leaders, Administrative Council chairpersons, and worship leaders from each of the two congregations. All were of the Bassa tribe. All were persons well versed in traditional Bassa worship practices and also familiar with Methodism. Not all the lay leaders and pastors expected to attend actually attended the meeting. Only the pastor of the New Hope United Methodist Church was present. However, other prominent leaders attended as well. While the general members from the two churches were very cooperative in attending the interview meetings in their numbers as planned, I experienced the difficulty in getting the full number of the focus group as

expected. The original research model projected fifteen persons in the focus group. However, eight persons finally consented. Of the eight who agreed to participate, a total of six persons were able to be in attendance (see Table 4.2, p. 95).

### **Findings of Category Two**

This section deals directly with the information gathered from the members of the focus group. The focus group was made up of the leaders of the J. J. Powell and the New Hope United Methodist Churches. The focus group consists of the pastors, the administrative council chairpersons, the lay leaders, the lay speakers, and the worship leaders. We met as a group together in the conference room of the Episcopal office of the Liberia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church in the city of Monrovia. The process was beneficial and fruitful to have the leaders of these churches as participants in the interview. The interview focused on the research question #3.

Before dealing with the research question, I carefully introduced the subject and purpose for our gathering. I further shared with the group the findings of the interviews conducted with the fifty members from the two congregations. It took more than an hour to deal adequately with this aspect of the work. An extended period of questions and answers then followed. Together, we then proceeded to discuss the main research question and the operational questions that followed.

During the interview, a colleague who serves as one of the secretaries in the United Methodist University acted as recorder for the group, taking notes during the interview process and assisting in the process of summarizing the data collected. In this process, I performed the role of a summarizer:

The summarizer reviews the recorder's notes, analyzes the content, and writes a focus group report. Because the facilitator and recorder have

attended all the sessions and have an overall understanding of the discussion and data, one or both usually perform this role. (Bader and Rossi 6)

The focus group interview started with a discussion of research question#3.

### **Research Question #3**

To what extent do the pastors and leaders of the churches own and validate the changes and practices as proposed by the congregations? (*If present means of worship are significantly changed, can and will they be accepted by the Bassa leadership?*)

Having listened to the leaders of the congregations, the responses by the focus group indicated a general concurrence. They were frank enough to say that the suggestions and proposals made by the fifty representatives from the two congregations were quite necessary. The focus group demonstrated wiliness to begin planning and implementing the suggestions. The leaders acknowledged their own limitations in doing the liturgy. The focus group clearly asserted that the discussions and comments from the members were relevant to the worship and serve as needed eye-openers. The gathered leaders acknowledged that they were willing to comply. According to the leaders, the main issue at stake is that of language. The leaders pointed out that implementing the suggestions will likely generate greater participation and also elicit increased responses from the congregations.

Research question #3 had six operational questions. The first was, “How do you see the suggested changes in the worship service that were mentioned and identified by your congregations?” The leaders were very supportive of the changes suggested by the representatives of the two congregations. They think the changes are necessary and that those changes, when carried out adequately, will increase participation and greater

involvement in the life of the church. One of the leaders commented on their leadership shortcomings:

We thought we were doing the right thing in the worship. Now we see that we have not fully done what is expected of us. Therefore, since our eyes have been opened by the comments from our members, we are going to do what is expected so that God's name will be glorified by all of our Bassa worshipers.

This statement is a clear indication that the leaders now have some increased level of understanding when relevant to congregants' perceived limitations of the liturgy. One of the early reasons for the establishment of the urban indigenous Bassa churches was to create the necessary worship space for the *non-literate* (illiterate) Bassa people.

Subsequently, with the way the worship is being done presently, this good intent has not fulfilled its original purpose. Therefore, appropriate changes appear to be necessary if the worthy, original vision and purpose is to be realized.

The second operational question was, "What help or improvements will (or could) these suggested changes bring to your congregations." The leaders all agreed that the changes would increase numerical and spiritual growth of the congregations. They also pointed out that the changes would stimulate fuller participation by the members of the congregations. One leader made this great comment:

The Holy Spirit has the power to transform any good element from Bassa culture for the use of Christ. Christ can sanctify any "vessel" for His purpose and use it. We should carefully and prayerfully select appropriate cultural elements for use in worship.

The leaders affirmed that since indeed one of the main issues identified in the study is language, serious attention be given to it. They asserted that the idea of effectively communicating the gospel in the language of the people would increase meaningful growth. On the language issue, one of the leaders cited this illustration:

One day during worship service, a lady who had traveled for a long period of time in the USA returned to Liberia. Being eager to worship in her own dialect, she found her way to the church. But to her surprise, the entire liturgy was done in the English language. In the middle of the service, she got so furious and angrily walked out of the edifice. When contacted, she said, "I am vexed because you all have turned our Bassa church into *Kwie* [English] church. Everything is 'English, English, and English.' This is not fair to us. We must do something about it."

The focus group leaders agreed that worshipping in the Bassa language would increase retention, thus keeping worshipers in the church and making them own their worship of God more fully. Taking such a step will also serve to minimize complaining about the nature and style of their worship of God.

The third operational question was, "In what ways might these suggestions increase congregation participation in worship?" As stated earlier, if the issue of language is taken seriously, the leaders commonly concurred that the congregation will more fully participate in worship. For instance, the leaders said that if the Bassa literacy program is carried out and the people learn how to read and write the Bassa script, then when the liturgy is done in Bassa and printed in a bulletin, each worshiper will be able to participate as the leader leads the worship service. Further, the components of worship such as the reading of scripture lessons, the act of praise, praying, preaching, and singing in the Bassa language, the leaders observed, will stimulate fuller participation. When the people understand what is being done in worship, this understanding might lead them to be faithful witnesses and participants in the ministry of the church.

The fourth operational question was, "What help do you see the proposed changes doing for your churches?" The leaders believed that when these changes are effected, the worshipers would feel that they are no longer spectators in the worship service. The changes will serve as a vehicle to bring the gospel to the people in clear and meaningful

ways that that they understand. The new way of doing worship will also help equip the people to serve as evangelists to one another. These new relevant components will further enhance contextual and authentic Christian worship among the Bassa migrants. This new move toward worship will make those who might learn to read and write the Bassa language to be well versed in their own language and be able to read the Bible in their own vernacular, thus promoting scriptural literacy and holiness among Bassa Christians. These actions might lead the churches to a purposeful end. These changes will help the churches from discriminating against people who are *non-literate* (illiterate) in worship.

The fifth question was, “In what ways will the proposed changes stimulate deeper discipleship and increase faithful Christian living?” The focus group leaders noted that when people are taught well, and with appropriate challenges to practice what is taught, then the possibility of their doing the right thing will significantly increase. Therefore, true discipleship occurs when the people know their Master and also know the ordinances that he wants them to observe. In Christianity, the Bible is the predominant and clearest lens through which individuals see and come to know their Master, Jesus Christ. When people learn to read the Bible in their own language and the Word of God is preached to them in the vernacular, they understand, and their biblical knowledge is increased, leading them toward more faithful discipleship. The Word of God challenges God’s children to faithful Christian living. Therefore, hearing, receiving, and learning the Word in one’s own language is an imperative.

The sixth operational question was, “To what degree will you the leaders guide and lead the vision without biasing the process?” The leaders strongly acknowledged this area of the project as being very challenging. On this note, they affirmed that they would

all try to be very objective. They promised to focus on striking a balance between the content and purpose of worship and consideration of worship style. The focus group agreed that the ideas discussed and presented would not dominate the process. Rather, leadership will allow a great degree of participation and freedom. The leadership said that they would afford everyone the opportunity and freedom to present his or her ideas. Leadership promised not to impose their ideas on the congregations. Rather, leadership will strive to serve as faithful teachers of the Word of God and implement worship components that will be culturally relevant and authentically Christian. The leaders talked about developing a clear sense of vision and the need to be secure enough to allow the process to flow beyond their personal ideas. At the same time, leadership promised to maintain enough control to keep the process focused and on course. The focus group anticipated the best possible outcome as they begin to implement the suggestions as proposed by the congregations. The leadership of the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church revealed that it once had the Bassa literacy program established in the church for the purpose of teaching the vernacular. This program went on for a length of time but broke down due to several unavoidable reasons. Considering its importance, the leadership promised to reestablish the program.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The study has produced the following significant findings:

1. The practice of doing the liturgy in the English language among *non-literate* (illiterate) (Bassa) worshipers is troubling because this method disconnects them from the worship and they are not fully spiritually nourished.



2. The establishment of the Bassa literacy program for many members of the congregations is viewed as an effective approach in preparing the people to have meaningful participation in the worship.

3. The worship experience provides a way to transfer cultural faith traditions and forward the gospel to future generations.

4. The establishment of an indigenous worship committee in each church is a necessary step toward indigenization of Christian worship.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Major Findings

The problem this study addresses is the verifiable reality that The United Methodist Church in Liberia has been significantly Westernized. The liturgy, worship style, and form are predominately Western. Consequently, this reality serves as a serious hindrance to indigenous United Methodist migrants who wish to participate fully in the worship service. Typically, the indigenous elements of the Liberian culture have little part in the imported liturgy. The form of worship, particularly, the materials, and worship resources imported to Liberia from the United States of America and also from British model remain foreign to indigenous Bassa migrants. The purpose of this project was to explore and develop an indigenous worship model through which indigenous migrants of Liberia can be acculturated and assimilated into urban United Methodist congregations.

#### **Conducting the Liturgy in the English Language**

I carefully evaluated the liturgy, worship style, and forms used by the New Hope United Methodist Church and the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church. Further, the results of the interviews with both the members and focus groups, made up of leaders from both congregations, revealed that doing the liturgy in English for *non-literate* (illiterate) worshipers is troubling and limiting. This point authenticates earlier statements made in Chapter 2 of this work being relevant to the use of appropriate language in worship. In Chapter 2, the importance of language was highly stressed (See page 72). The use of foreign language in worship may be of no help to the faith and spiritual well-being

of the worshipers. The participants stressed the need for the worship to be done in the Bassa language if the worshipers are to be connected and fully spiritually nourished.

The issue of language in Christian worship is an essential element. Bassa worshipers now consider the English language used in the liturgy as a sacred language. The feeling among the Bassa worshipers is that the English language is associated with Christian worship beyond their native tongue. It is also observed that during the worship service English is given more virtues than the Bassa language. This practice has rendered the worshipers as aliens in a strange land. The continuous use of the English language in worship for the Bassa people, who can neither speak nor understand English, makes the liturgy incomprehensible for them. This practice is troubling because English is not native to the Bassa population. Missionaries and settlers whose mandate was to Christianize and civilize the indigenous people carried the English language to Liberia. This questionable association between task-mission and language stuck and has remained.

Throughout the history of the Christian Church, no standardized language or a single language for the Church has been formulated. Even in the Bible, the language used in any of the churches depended on the locality of the church. The apostles were clear on this issue. The early Christian Church was cognizant of this fact. From time immemorial, the Christian rites, rituals, and ceremonies have not been celebrated through one exclusive, sacred, liturgical language. Considering the issue of language, Christian liturgy has regularly undergone major changes for obvious reasons. When Latin was adopted for the liturgy, it was buttressed by major translations that helped to foster the reality at the time in certain localities. Using language that is foreign to the people during worship

should rightfully be considered as potentially divisive. The appropriate step would be for the language of the majority in a given congregation to be used in the liturgy. This action will increase fuller participation and spirituality.

Language is powerful. It reflects and forms human attitudes and actions. As language shapes and influences human perceptions, language used in worship shapes and influences perceptions of God. Language that does not communicate the truth of the gospel and at the same time excludes and alienates God's children should be avoided in worship. The church will do well to use language that the people understand. Since God in Christ is called the Word (John 1:1), the use of words (language) in Christian worship should be given careful attention.

#### **The Establishment of a Bassa Literacy Program (Bassa Language)**

Many years ago, the Bassa of Liberia developed an alphabet called the Bassa Vah Scripts. This step marked the beginning of the Bassa literacy program. According to Bassa oral tradition, dedicated men and visionary leaders skillfully invented the Bassa communicative code known as the Bassa Vah. Two of those outstanding men were Di Wadah and Dr. Thomas Flo Narvin Lewis. This communicative code was used as language among the Bassa people.

Dr. Syrulwa Somah gave a brief historical overview on this development:

Di Wadah took an additional step to improve this code. He chewed on raw leaves to make a symbol of the cross, or an arrow, or a straight line, such marks representing ideas, which could be communicated either covertly or overtly.... Di Wadah retained a system of communication like his ancestors. Apart from the Vah symbols, Di Wadah invented another secret code for verbal communication and called it "Bahn-wudu," a codified dialect within the Bassa language attesting to the fact that the leadership should continue to improve its culture. Bahn-wudu refers or uses the

blended sound of two letters as ideograms to give a diagraphic sound that stood for several related words or concepts. (144)

This renowned Bassa scholar applied great efforts to develop the Bassa language. As time progressed, Di Wadah refined these crude symbols into a complex script that could express abstract ideas. This farsighted man believed that encouraging and unifying the youth in the development of their written language would preserve the future in them. Di Wadah taught the youth in the Bassa community his method of “leaf biting” and “leaf throwing” communication.

Even though this method marked the beginning of the Bassa language, as with other languages, Di Wadah’s method and linguistic system has been undergoing transformation. This transformation started by Dr. Lewis, a son of a Bassa chief from Hwuduagbam, District #3, Grand Bassa County. Lewis is recognized for refining and systematizing the Vah script in the 1900s. He is known and credited with developing the initial written communication for the Bassa language. This work earned him the title of *brainchild* of the Bassa language. He is a hero to the Bassa people. He also taught the Vah script to Bassa people living in Liberia. As an educated man, he may have studied other foreign characters, especially Roman, Chinese, and Egyptian characters and, thereafter, consolidated his thoughts into thirty Bassa characters. According to Dr. Syrulwa Somah, those characters include twenty-three consonants and seven vowels. Each vowel has five accents or tonal marks to modulate the voicing of each vowel (145). When Lewis redesigned the Vah script, he named it *Ehni Ka Se Fa* (the Bassa alphabet). He taught the alphabet to his people because he knew the power of the mother tongue. (see Figure 5.1).

**n k s f m dy g**

**d kp j xw w z gb**

**d c hw t b v h p b ny gm**

**Figure 5.1. The *Ehni Ka Se Fa* (the Bassa alphabet).**

The Christian Church in Bassa land became involved in the teaching of the Bassa language to its members. With the assistance of some Canadian missionaries in Liberia, a collection of the New Testament text of the Christian Holy Bible was published using the Bassa Vah scripts. In English, the collection of Scriptures in Bassa is called *Po-Po Hwie* (literally, Salvation Road). Through the *Po-Po Hwie*, the Bassa Christians learned how to read the Bible. The Bassa churches were then encouraged to teach not only the *Po-Po Hwie* but also the Bassa language.

However, a careful evaluation and observation of the activities of the New Hope United Methodist and the J. J. Powell United Methodist Churches revealed that Bassa literacy program is significantly lacking in these churches. In fact, I learned that very few members of these churches can read the Bassa Bible. As a matter of fact, the J. J. Powell United Methodist Church once had the Bassa literacy program established with a limited number of its members participating. This program was terminated about twenty years ago. While the entire Bible (Old and New Testaments) has been translated into the Bassa language, not many Bassa people can read its scripts. Because the Bassa people have not

learned how to read and write the Bassa language, a majority of them do not own copies of the Bible, which is currently available to them in their own language.

### **Passing Cultural Faith Tradition on to the Next Generation**

Interaction with the interviewed participants indicates that the worship experience provides a way to transfer and pass cultural faith traditions on to the next generation. The Bassa people have a tradition of taking their children along with them to church service. The purpose of this action is for the children to learn how Bassa people worship God. Through the worship experience, the Bassa migrants' children are introduced to indigenous Bassa Christian culture. Consequently, they are encouraged to participate. A worship service that considers the use of Bassa signs and symbols is a means of helping the children or the younger generation to learn to worship and to value the gift of their culture properly. Worship creates both space and opportunity to nurture the future practice of faith tradition in the lives of the children. One of the participants interviewed indicated the importance of taking the children to worship because doing so is like obeying the Bible commandment: "Train up the child in a way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). The point is that taking the children to worship service is part of the training the Bible talks about.

The Bassa Christians received their faith through the effort of their ancestors or forebears. In the same vein, they deeply desire to pass the faith, given by the Spirit to them, on to their descendants. The migrants are aware that their upbringing was important in their faith journey. They wish to pass on to their children the same gifts they received. As the apostle Paul says, "[W]e pass on to you that which we received" (1 Cor. 15:13), so the Bassa worshipers wish to pass on their faith tradition to their children. The

Bassa Christians consider the Christian faith as a household treasury that has to be guarded, protected, preserved, and then passed on to members of the family so that the tradition will continue when the older generation has passed. In the Bassa culture, the family plays highly significant roles in the spirituality of the people. Many of the Bassa people became Christians through and because of family and communal relationships. Their conversion to Christianity was a result of parental or family influence. Many of them selected certain congregations or denominations because they were churches of their parents or relatives. To Bassa people the choice of denomination as a means of retaining ties with their families and sustaining the family tradition is a significant one and decision.

#### **The Establishment of an Indigenous Worship Committee**

The interviews with the indigenous Bassa worshipers suggest that if the worship is to be indigenous, an indigenous worship committee made up of individuals who have been trained biblically, theologically, and culturally must plan it. If *liturgy* literally means *work of the people*, then the people must be put to work. Such committees should be made up of people who possess creative abilities and who understand the Scriptures, the Bassa people, and their history (and story). Additionally, effectively forming such a committee is a way of involving the entire worshipping community. Constructing an indigenous model should and cannot be limited to staff and pastors of the churches. This point Marcia McFee makes the below statement:

In order for “liturgy” to literally become what that word means—the work of the people—we must engage in process to evaluate, study, and design our worship together as a community. It will be fun, inspirational, and sometimes difficult. But it is a faithful act to struggle with sometimes conflicting feelings regarding our rituals. We get to talk about what



matters to us, learn about each other, and learn more about why we do things that we do. (7)

The people for whom the worship is designed should and must be involved in the process. The worship team should be comprised of staff, established members, and the targeted group members.

When such a committee is composed, the members will be charged with the responsibility among others to choose themes and topics that will specifically relate to the cultural issues of significant concern to the churches and their involved congregations. For worship to be indigenous, it has to be indigenous for and in the particular local culture. Ethnic cultures are uniquely different. Considering this fact, indigenous Bassa worship will look different and have different emphases and components than Western forms of worship.

The components earlier identified by the indigenous interviewees are culturally and theologically meaningful. How those components are utilized to address indigenous Bassa worshipers becomes the burden and task of the specific indigenous worship committee. The committee is to discern ways in which the worship service will be truly culturally indigenous and, simultaneously, biblically faithful, knowing both aspects are possible. Many of the indigenous Bassa people come to church seeking spiritual direction and biblical/theological answers. These issues can be addressed through a worship service that is practical and applicable to them. The worship must be done in a mode and format in which the worshipers will experience an encounter with God. The worship experience must be infused with a broad range of emotional triggers and tangible experience that give opportunities to encounter the Holy and respond to God through appropriate Christian actions. Based on the interviews in the study conducted, evidence

suggests that indigenous Bassa worshipers need a uniquely tangible, real worship experience. This process calls for an authentically indigenous worship.

The worship team must become sufficiently creative and innovative in constructing a worship service if worship is to meet the needs of indigenous Bassa people in the churches involved. The worship team has to facilitate a creative process that will expose the congregations to broad new ideas. The team must discover and employ creative ways to communicate with indigenous worshipers' experiences that are both different from what they have previously felt and also worth experiencing. William M. Easum and Thomas G. Bandy write, "[T]he creativity of worship designers and handcrafting each worship experience will be pushed to the limit" (71). In designing an indigenous Bassa worship service, creativity is an important ingredient for the people involved in the process. The committee must bear in mind that the indigenization of worship has greatly to do with the specific local culture of the people the Church is trying to reach. With this view in mind, the committee must utilize all appropriate, available components throughout the entire worship experience to communicate a unified, single theme and authentic message to the worshipers. The gospel message must be faithfully communicated throughout the entire service. All components incorporated into the service should serve the sole function of enabling the worshiper to understand and respond to the biblical message. All the components must be related to one another with unity and cohesion.

### **Implications of the Findings**

This study has several specific conclusions and implications that strongly challenge Bassa congregations to become more directly involved in the indigenization of

the United Methodist Church liturgy in Liberia. This action on the part of Bassa congregations will generate fuller participation of indigenous Bassa worshipers in the two congregations under discussion. This process, when carried out appropriately, will increase the spirituality and holistic transformation of the indigenous Bassa worshipers in these churches. I suggest the following implications.

From a theological point of view, all human beings are created to worship. Since the creation of the world, God established a covenant relationship with his creation, and worship is a response to that covenant, giving God the greatest worth among conflicting and competing demands for individuals' allegiance. If God's covenant did not exist, then humanity would worship lesser gods. God made humans to worship him. For that reason he says in the first commandment of the Decalogue, "Do not worship any other gods besides me" (Exodus 20:5 ). The implication is that the church should be actively involved in creating the necessary and appropriate environment and opportunities for all to worship God fully.

The second point is that even though the substance and meaning of worship remains constant, worship style must adapt and modify in response to cultural changes. The literature indicates that throughout the biblical story, worship style and forms have, in practice, changed in response to the changes occurring in the lives of the worshiping community. Each passing biblical generation has experienced the evolution of worship forms. The focus of worship has always remained the covenantal relationship God gives his people. The history of Israel, the chosen people of God, clearly demonstrates how the people worshiped. The story of Israel about a transition from the individual family sacrifices of the patriarchs to the portable tents of a nomadic Israel to the temple of

worship of an established nation. The desperate cries of an exiled people to the localized phenomenon of the synagogue of a dispersed people led to the changes brought by Jesus who taught that new wine needed new wine skins.

Since biblical days, worship experiences have changed and evolved in response to the cultural changes of the context in which the worship was occurring. Each culture has a positive effect and mark on the form its worship takes. Vincent Donovan presents a clear insight on this point:

What we are coming to see, now, especially in this context of bringing the Christian message to pagans of many different cultures, is that there must be many responses possible to the Christian message, responses which are filled with promise and meaning, but which have hitherto been neither encouraged nor allowed. We have come to believe that any valid, positive response to the Christian message could and should be recognized and accepted as church. That is the church that might have been, and might yet be. (83)

The Incarnation demonstrates that God's nature and his desire to reveal and make himself known to humanity. God wants to be known through fellowship. From a Christological point of view, God became flesh in Jesus Christ to reveal himself, his nature, and his love to humanity. Through the death of Jesus and the destruction of the veil in the temple's Holy of Holies, God made his presence fully accessible to anyone who worships him:

We can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. This is a new, life giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's people, let us go right into the presence of God. (Heb. 10:19-20)

The indigenous Bassa people come to worship seeking to experience God and hoping to enter God's presence. Jesus provides the means for this wonderful encounter and God desires that the worshippers do so.

Another implication is that worship that is not culturally indigenous actually separates the worshipers from God. The interview conducted revealed that the present worship style creates a barrier for the indigenous Bassa worshipers to experience God fully. The research established that missionaries who came to Liberia often brought with them the customs, traditions, and worship styles of the particular sending church. The indigenous people, excited by the good news, followed the worship patterns introduced and established by the missionaries, including the imported language. The cultural traditions of the indigenous people were too often dismissed because they were considered stumbling blocks for spiritual growth and thus seemed unacceptable to God. Consequently, the beginning of the separation of faith and life, religion and culture, occurred. If worship does not provide a viable means for connecting indigenous Bassa worshipers to God, due to cultural barriers, maintaining those barriers is a continuing problem for the Church. Any worship that is not culturally indigenous inhibits persons of that culture from fully receiving all that God has to offer in worship. Far too often, the resulting consequence is that person cannot fully respond to God. The Church must deal with the issue of placing religious demands on the people that may end up serving as obstacles to God's desire and intent that all people worship him (see Matt. 23:4, 13).

#### **Limitations of the Study**

Two significant limitations of this study can be identified. The first is the size and scope of the focus group. The original research model projected fifteen persons in each focus group. However, only eight persons consented. Of the eight who agreed to participate, a total of six persons were actually able to be in attendance (see Table 4.2, p.

95). The size and scope of the focus group limited the quantity and also the breadth of interview data gathered and interpreted.

The next limitation is the focus on only the two United Methodist Bassa congregations in the metropolis of Monrovia. While I learned great lessons on indigenization and critical contextualization of Christian worship, the emphasis of this project has been limited to cultural characteristics of the Bassa, indigenous worshipers in the J. J. Powell and the New Hope United Methodist Churches in the city of Monrovia. Further, the significant issue at stake is the discovered obstacle of doing the liturgy in the English language for a group of *non-literate* (illiterate) worshipers, thus rendering them mere spectators instead of participants. Admittedly, this work has been limited to some degree by its main focus on the Bassa indigenous worshipers in these two congregations.

### **Unexpected Observations**

The first unexpected observation is the fact that the younger generation is having difficulty speaking the Bassa language during worship time. The negative implication of this discovery is that if the younger generation is not encouraged to learn and speak the Bassa language then the issue of indigenization will continue to be at stake in these congregations. The critical implication is that if indigenization is not prioritized now, in the next two decades, the Western form of the liturgy will dominate these indigenous congregations and Bassa migrants will have a marginal place in the churches.

A second unexpected observation was the church's general lack of awareness of the place and importance of indigenization and contextualization of the liturgy. With most of the people I observed, I became aware that they did not know that the liturgy could be done indigenously or that it would be culturally relevant and authentically

Christian to do so. Many of the respondents confessed that they thought that the English language was a sacred language reserved exclusively for worship.

The third unexpected observation was the immediate, positive response by the local churches and their readiness to adopt the practices of the proposed new model easily and quickly as it was discussed and presented. Since the news of this project has rapidly begun to spread, I have been invited by several other United Methodist churches to present the concept, design, and model of indigenization of Bassa Christian worship. Following my presentations, some of the congregations have adopted the material and immediately begun implementing and practicing it. Some of the leaders in these congregations have told me that the process is working for them. These leaders specifically mentioned the singing of indigenous Bassa songs, reading the Scripture in Bassa, using Bassa language for prayer, and the dramatic impact of preaching the Word in the Bassa language. They expressed that these practices have greatly encouraged fuller participation in worship. Their worship leaders are initially cautious about this process, for most, a first-time experience, but they are complying accordingly.

The fourth and final unexpected observation has been the strong and forthright confirmation made by the ecclesiastical head of the denomination. During a discussion with the Bishop, he was highly impressed with the project. He has openly stated that this step is the direction he would like for the indigenous congregations to take in considering the issue and practice of Christian worship by and among Bassa Christians. The Bishop hopes that this new action may also be extended across the entire Methodist denomination throughout Liberia. He pointed out that every congregation needs a worship service in which they will fully participate. He said that upon the completion of

the project he will encourage the entire Liberian Methodist denomination to practice it. He has promised to encourage other church leaders to implement the recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

In consideration of the findings from this study, the following recommendations are herein stated. First, to ensure fuller participation and holistic transformation of the worshipping community, the worship must become indigenous. This recommendation does not promote a particular worship style over another. Authentic indigenous worship is comprised of cultural components that communicate the gospel and provide appropriate opportunities for the worshiper to encounter God. Such a worship service reflects the worldview and context of the host culture. The purpose and substance of an indigenous worship must always be to proclaim the gospel faithfully and to bring the worshiper into an authentic encounter with God. A truly indigenous worship is the most effective and most biblically based form of worship.

Second, the church should utilize an indigenous worship committee to structure the liturgy effectively to address the mode and needs of indigenous Bassa worshipers. Such a team must identify culturally relevant components and plan worship services that will involve the indigenous people in the service. Using an indigenous team is the most effective way of applying a biblical model for the church desiring to operate as the body of Christ. The committee approach is the most effective way of creating worship that is culturally relevant and meaningful.

Third, the church should make the worship a comprehensive, creative, and a total experience. I am aware that controlling precisely how God enters the worship experience and how he interacts with the worshipers is impossible, but churches should do all they



can to make their worship an experience where God may be encountered. The worshipers must be given the opportunities to be engaged spiritually, emotionally, actively, passively, theologically, and practically. This experience requires using components that are of interest and more largely understood by the worshipers.

Fourth, the Liberian United Methodist Church should develop a more contemporary indigenous worship styles to be used in the urban indigenous Bassa congregations. The worship style should consider the important cultural components from the Bassa tradition and simultaneously communicate biblical and theological truths. The main task of every missionary, pastor, evangelist, and worship leader is to become experts of the culture they are seeking to serve with the gospel. To effectively administer and minister to people of any culture, one must become intimately acquainted with the traditions, customs, language, artifacts, concerns, desires, fears and history of the people.

Fifth, the Liberian United Methodist Church should become proactive in translating the existing worship resources including the ritual, hymn books, etc. into the Bassa language for the use by the indigenous Bassa worshipers. Translation is a powerful and effective tool in disseminating the gospel. When people find a piece of important literature in their language that they can read, it will help them to more fully own the information contained in the literature. Translating the worship resource materials will encourage greater participation into the worship service.

### **Postscript**

This qualitative study explored and developed an Indigenous Worship Model through which the indigenous migrants, specifically the Bassa tribe, of Liberia can be acculturated and assimilated into the urban United Methodist Church. Due to its western

nature, the existing model of worship used by the J. J. Powell and the New Hope United Methodist Churches is alienating. It does not provide the avenue for fuller participation.

The project is deeply concerned about participatory worship. The researcher is of the opinion that if holistic transformation is to become a reality in the lives of the worshipping community then that community has to fully participate in the process. When the people fully participate in worship, the result is that the Spirit enables transformation of the worshipers. Participatory worship is engaging with all that happens during the worship time. Importantly, participatory worship is engaging with the Word of God to such an extent that the worshipers are sent out with vital energy into the world to do the work of God. Worship that is participatory engages our senses, our intellect, and our spirit. Additionally, participatory worship elicits an authentic response from the worshipers. In most cases, when the worship promotes and calls for participation it inspires the participants to some kind of action. This type of worship lives beyond the time and place of the ritual. Participatory worship moves the worshipers to do something as a response. Another element of participatory worship is its inclusiveness. Such inclusiveness gives consideration to the language and style used in the worship. Inclusiveness also considers all ages in worship, their ethnicity, the voice of the people, and the designers of the worship. The designers of worship, whether staff, pastors, laity, should have in mind the target population and make sure that their input is considered, and, when appropriate, included. In short, interactive worship is participatory worship. Such worship leads to and enables transformation. A worship that does not increase involvement does not generate fuller participation and transformation.

The United Methodist Church in Liberia should continually be aware that the church, the people of God, is made up of people from diverse backgrounds and ethnic or tribal groups. Therefore, in constructing a ritual for its worship, it must pay attention to the culture of the people. When the church falls short of this fact, the people will become mere spectators in worship rather than participants.

**APPENDIX A**

**LETTER OF APPEAL TO THE PASTORS OF J. J. POWELL  
AND NEW HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES**

March 15, 2012

Dear Pastor,

Greetings and best wishes to you in Jesus' name.

I am a doctoral student at the Asbury Theological Seminary in the USA. I am presently working on my dissertation on the topic, "The Indigenization of Christian Worship in the United Methodist Church of Liberia." My emphasis is on the Bassa churches in the city of Monrovia. Your local church is included in this study. I am therefore appealing to you that your church be a participant in this study.

I would like for you to please select thirty members (**J. J. Powell UMC**) and twenty members (**New Hope UMC**) of your congregation for an interview. Their names and identity will not be disclosed in the document and to anyone at all. I further ask that you, the associate pastor, the chairperson of the Administrative Board, the Lay Leader, the lay speakers, and worship leaders of the congregation be included to make up my focus group. Please send me the names of those that you would select so that I can write them as soon as possible. The dates for our meetings will be arranged when the selection process is completed.

Many thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

Faithfully yours,

Isaac Chukpue-Padmores

**APPENDIX B**  
**LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS**

April 2, 2012

Dear Bro./Sis.

Greetings and best wishes to you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am a doctoral student of the Asbury Theological Seminary in the USA. Presently I am conducting research on the topic, "The Indigenization of Christian Worship in The United Methodist Church in Liberia." My emphasis is on the Bassa people of the church who are presently living in Monrovia from the rural area.

In consultation with your pastor, we are selecting you to please participate in the process by answering few interview questions that will help us in the process. Please be informed that I will keep your name and bio-information secret. The date of the interview will be communicated to you when the selection process is completed.

Many thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

Faithfully yours,

Isaac Chukpue-Padmore

**APPENDIX C**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATIONS**  
**AND FOCUS GROUP**

**Research Question # 1**

When, where, and how do you see God in the worship experience? (As a Bassa Christian, how do you see the worship of Christ as we presently are doing it?)

1. How long have you attended this church?
2. How deeply/how much does the worship you are presently doing each week connect you to God?
3. In what ways does what you are presently doing communicate God's Word (the Scripture) into your heart and mind? In your present Sunday worship, how (in what ways) does the Word of God, the Scriptures, speak into your heart and help you live as a faithful witness throughout the week, after you leave church?
4. How do you see the worship service since you began attending this church?
5. What ways do you think the worship is relevant to your Bassa culture?
6. What areas of the worship would you consider as the best parts, those that appeal to you most? Why is this so?
7. What is about the worship service that troubles you most?

**Research Question # 2**

What significant principle and means should be created and developed to effect the necessary changes? (How might we change our worship to connect better with Bassa people?)

1. What do you think of the worship service that is being done in the English language?
2. If you do not understand English, what effect does it have on you?
3. How should the worship service be designed to fulfill the purpose of the gospel today?
4. Suggest some practical ideas that you find particularly helpful and meaningful that could make the worship service be understood better and still remain authentically Christian.
5. What are some ways that might involve more worshipers during the worship service?
6. Describe what you would consider to be the ideal worship experience.

**Research Question # 3**

To what extent do you the pastors and leaders of the churches own and validate the changes and practices as proposed by your congregations? (If our present way of worship is significantly changed, can and will it be accepted by the Bassa leadership?)

1. How do you see the suggested changes in the worship service that were mentioned and identified by your congregations?
2. What help and improvements will (or could) these suggested changes bring to your congregations?
3. In what ways might these suggestions increase congregational participation in worship?
4. What help do you see the proposed changes doing for your churches?
5. In what ways might the proposed changes stimulate deeper discipleship and increase faithful Christian living?
6. To what degree will you the leaders guide and lead the vision without biasing the process?



## APPENDIX D

## THE APOSTLES' CREED (TRANSLATED IN BASSA LANGUAGE)

## Àpósò Kídfi

Ḿ po Gèdèpósò vènè jè jǎà. Gèdèpósò vènè m̀ à Bǎ. Ǿ nyu dyòò kè bódó-kpàà. Ḿ  
 poe jǎà kà Ǿ tò ma Ǿ Dyú-gàà Jízè ke. Jízè dyiìn Zùù vènèĩn. Ǿ wódó dè màa se gaa jè  
 dyí dyuò m̀ Medéee xwíníín. Ǿ dyé gǎ, ké Ǿ mēin kǎá Pádè dyúa. Wa zà Ǿ dyódóún, ké  
 Ǿ nyu gĩó wé wǎ, wéd tā nìin nyee, Kédèi wódóé dè. Ǿ mué dyoún dè Gèdèpósò djàùn-sò  
 kǎ. ðéè Ǿ nì kǎũn bó à bìi. Ḿ poe jǎà, dè Gèdèpósò djàùn-sò kǎ dèè Ǿ ké sòin zaa-wǎ-po-  
 wèè xwíníín, b́e Ǿ ké bódóè zaa wǎ poeĩ dyi. Ḿ po Zùù Hwèĩn-hwèĩnò jè jǎà, ḿ po cíci  
 séin nì bódó-kpàà kǎee jè jǎà. Ḿ po Kédèi nyó nàmàũn kǎin zĩin jè jǎà, ké ḿ po Ǿ  
 kpódó-dyùàà dyí-sò-sòò jè jǎà b́e sè-sèè tíin. Kǎà Ǿ me nì.

**APPENDIX E**

**THE HYMN “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY”**

**(TRANSLATED IN THE BASSA LANGUAGE)**

Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,

Ɖeɓíś Gèdèpśò gana-nyò,

Bó zǝ-wíín gànà-kúún-kà

À wéǰé-wùdùò nyini ǰé ìn gbo.

Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,

Wìi-ɓéǰé-nyò kè gana-nyò,

Gèdèpśò nì nyo tād mú,

Bèǰèsi nì wa kǝ.

Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,

Dyóún-nyò séín ɓǝò ɓiè ìn ní,

wa zà káá-gbǎ kpa ǰe dú,

Ké wa poe ìn ɓo zǝ,

Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,

Dyóún-cíí-ǰè jìǰí ìn ɓo zǝin,

Nyo nì ma, ké ɔ nì,

Ké ɔ nì kánáá pu.

Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,

Tíe-kròò báìn ìn kòìn,  
Nyo mò nàmàũn-nyòe ɔ dyéǵéǵ  
Se nì báìn-bàìn dyéé b́éìn.  
Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mPú,  
Nyo ǵò se bó ìn wáún nì,  
Bé ɔ ké mú hwè,  
Bó ǵe séín b́ě jè.  
Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,  
Ɖeǵíó Gèǵèpǵò ò gana-nyò,  
Nì nyuu-ǵè séín mu ìn báìn  
Ɖé toǵòò kǵ, dyóún kè dyóún.  
Hwè mú, hwè mú, hwè mú,  
Wìi-béǵé-nyò kè gana-nyò,  
Gèǵèpǵò nì nyo tǵò mú,

## WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Byron E. *Worship Matters: A United Methodist Guide to Ways to Worship*. Vol.1. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999. Print.
- Arhin, Samuel Acquaaah. "Ghanaian- American Worship Practices." *Worship across Cultures*. Ed. Kathy Black. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998. 1-165. Print.
- Awolalo, J. O. *Yomba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*. London: Longman, 1979. Print.
- Bader, Gloria E., and Catherine A. Rossi. *Focus Groups: A Step by Step Guide*. San Diego: Bader Group, 1999. Print.
- Bailey, Robert W. *New Ways in Christian Worship*. Nashville: Broadman, 1981. Print.
- Barna, George. *Revolution*. Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2005. Print.
- "The Bassa Language." *Uniboa.org*. United Bassa Organizations in the Americas, n.d. September 2, 2013.
- Bauckham, Richard. "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity." *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 324. Print.
- Beckett, John. "Passing on the Faith—The Hidden Questions." *Patheos.com*. Patheos: Hosting the Conversation on Faith, 13 Aug. 2013. Web. 5 Sept. 2013.
- Brown-Whale, Richard Edward. "Africanizing Worship in the Mission Churches of Africa." *Claremont Journal of Religion* 1963: Print.
- Busia, K. A. *Christianity and Culture*. Accra: Christian Council of Ghana, 1955.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991. Print.
- Chapman, Christopher. *Africa South of Sahara*. London: Europa, 1987. Print.
- Chima, Alex. "Africanizing the Liturgy." *AFER* 25.5 (Oct. 1983): Print.

- Comfort, Philip Wesleyan. *I Am The Way: A Spiritual Journey through the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994. Print.
- Comfort, Philip W., et al. *Opening the Gospel of John*. Fall River: Tyndale, 1994. Print.
- Cox, J. Lamark. *Handbook for Conference, District, and Local Church Leaders*. Atlanta: SCP/Third World Literature, 1994. Print.
- Creswell, John W. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2008. Print.
- Crichton, J. D. "A Theology of Worship." *The Study of the Liturgy*. 1968. C. Jones, et al. London: SPCK, 1978. 3-30. Print.
- Davis, Valerie Bridgeman, and Fosua Safiyah, eds. *The Africana Worship Book; Year C*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1989. Print.
- Donovan, Vincent. *Christianity Rediscovered*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978. Print.
- Durham, John I. *Worship Beyond the Usual*. Alanta: Mercer UP, 1993. Print.
- Easum, William M., and Thomas G. Bandy. *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997. Print.
- Idowu, E. B. "The Liturgical Background of the Igbo People." *African Theological Journal*. 20.2 Ausha: 1991. Print.
- Ejizu, C. I. *Ofo: Ibo Ritual Symbol*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1968. Print.
- Flemming, Dean. "Biblical Anthropology". Asbury Theological Seminary. Wilmore, Oct. 2009. Lecture.
- Greenman, Jeffrey P., and George Kalantzis. *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010. Print.

- Hawn, Michael C. *One Bread One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship*. Grand Rapids: Alban Institute, 2003. Print.
- Hoon, Paul. "The Problem of Adaptation in the Liturgy." *Christianity in Independent Africa*. Ed. Edward Fasholé-Luke, et al. London: Collins, 1978. 15-16. Print.
- Healey, Joseph. *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Black Christian Values*. Maryknoll: Orbis and London: SCM 1981. Print.
- Kakoma, Itonde A., ed. "Worship in African Contexts of Holism and Crisis." *Lutheranworld.org*. The Lutheran World Federation, 2005 Web. 14 Nov. 2010.
- Karnga, Abba G. *ABBA: God's Warrior in Liberia*. Pasadena: World Wide Missions, 1994. Print.
- Keifert, Patrick R. *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992. Print.
- Liesch, Barry. *People in the Presence of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988. Print.
- Long, Thomas. *Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship*. Grand Rapids: Alban Institute, 2001. Print.
- Mackay, John A. *Ecumenics: The Science of the Church Universal*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964. Print.
- Martin, Ralph P. *Worship in the Early Church in London*. Grand Rapids: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1964. Print.
- Maxey, James. "Bible and Mission." *Missiology: An International Review* 37.2 (Apr. 2010): Vol.XXXVIII Number 2. Print
- Mbiti, John S. *African Religion and Philosophy*. London: Heinman, 1967. Print.

McFee, Marcia. *The Worship Workshop: Creative Ways to Design Worship Together*.

Nashville: Abingdon, 2002. Print.

The Third International Consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on

Worship and Culture. Nairobi: January 1996. Print.

Nida, Eugene A. *Customs and Cultures*. Eugene: Wipf, 1975. Print.

Nthambur, Zoblon J. *Ecclesiology of African Independent Churches: The Church in*

*African Christianity*. Eds. J. N. K. Mugambi and Lauren Magesa. Nairobi:

Initiatives, 1990. Print.

Nydabahika, James. "Contextualization of Christian Liturgy." *African Theological*

*Journal* 20.2(1991): 122-135.

Payway, Paul. "Developing a Christian Community: African Experience of Worship as a

Form of Christian Discipleship." Diss. Perkins School of Theology, 2007.

Peterson, David. *Engaging with God: A Theology of Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1992. Print.

Rains, Vance Clifton. "Team Designed Indigenous Generation X Worship In A New

Church Plant." Diss. Asbury Theological Seminary, 2001. Print.

Riesenfeld, H. "Worship and the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ." *Studia Liturgica*

2 (1963):10-39. Print.

Rynkiewich, Michael A. "Anthropology for the Global Church, DM883." Asbury

Theological Seminary, Wilmore. 2009. Lecture.

Rynkiewich, Michael A. *Soul, Self, and Society*. Eugene: Cascade Books. 2011. Print.

- Salvucci, Claudio R. *Sacred Language*.  
(<http://mysite.version.net/driadzpubl/IndianMasses.html>. NJ: Evolution Publishing, 2008.  
Accessed date: November 21, 2012).
- Sargpong, P. A. "African Theology of Worship." *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 4.7  
(1974):31- 34. Print.
- Somah, Syrulwa. *Nyanyan Gohn-Manan: History, Migration and Government of the  
Bassa*. Charlotte: A&T State U, 2003. Print.
- Suess, Patricia. "A Confused Mission Scenario: A Critical Analysis of Recent Church  
Documents and Tendencies." *Christianity and Cultures*. Ed. Norbert Greinacher  
and Norbert Mette. London: SCM, 1994. Print.
- Temple, William. *The Hope of a New World*. New York: Macmillan, 1942. Print.  
*The United Methodist Book of Worship*. The United Methodist Publishing House:  
Nashville, 1992. Print.
- Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Time*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. Print.
- Webber, Robert E. *Worship Old and New*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. Print.
- Willimon, William H. *Word, Water, Wine and Bread*. Valley Forge. Judson Press, 1980.  
Print.
- White, James F. *The Worldliness of Worship*. New York: Oxford UP, 1967. Print.
- White, Susan. J. *Foundations of Christian Worship*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox  
Press, 2006. Print.
- Whiteman, Darrell. "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge."  
*International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Jan. 1997: 3. Print.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Real Worship*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. Print.



WORKS CONSULTED

- Ayandele, E. A. *Christianity in Independent African*. Ed. Edward Fashole -Luke, et al.  
London: Collins, 1978. Print.
- Beasley-Murry, George R. *World Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 36. 2nd ed. Nashville:  
Nelson, 1999. Print.
- Comfort, Philip Wesleyan. *I Am The Way: A Spiritual Journey through the Gospel of  
John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994. Print.
- Cox, J. Lamark. *Handbook for Conference, District, and Local Church Leaders*. Atlanta:  
SCP/Third World Literature, 1994. Print.
- Dongell, Joseph. *John: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Indianapolis,  
Indiana Wesleyan, 1997. Print.
- Empereur, James. *Models of Liturgical Theology*. Bramcote: Grove, 1987. Print.
- Fee, Gordon D. *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic,  
1996. Print.
- Frank, Senn. *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.  
Print.
- Frost, Michael, and Allen Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come*. Peabody:  
Hendrickson, 2003. Print.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Gospel According to St. John*. New York: Crossroad, 1987.  
Print.