

**REINSTATING THE ALTAR THAT PLEASES GOD**  
**IN THE NEW GENERATIONS OF WORSHIPERS**  
**LOCATED IN THE CENTRAL MOUNTAIN REGION OF UTUADO, PUERTO RICO**

By

Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez

Liberty University

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OR WORSHIP STUDIES

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## ABSTRACT

Through the years, each generation of worshipers has conceived throughout their service many beliefs about worship; some inspired by the Holy Spirit, and others, self-proclaimed. Many of these self-acknowledged concepts do not align with biblical truths because instead they follow the needs and trends of the culture surrounding the church. These clashes of opinions, feelings, and preferences among the Christian community have been slowly deviating congregations from the altar encounter established in the Bible to an entertainment stage experience where the human senses are enhanced. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study is to establish the importance of the altar, and how its sanctity needs to be reestablished among the new generations of worshipers. Moreover, this research will examine the perceptions pastors have on the biblical altar experience, and how it has been modified to suit human standards and needs. The pastors participating in this study serve diverse Christian communities (Charismatic, Methodist, Calvary Movement, Pentecostal, and Independent congregations), in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico (CMRUPR). Personal interviews with these participants (community pastors), existing literature on the altar worship experience, and related issues.

*Keywords: altar, worship, Entertainment Stage Experience*

## **Dedication**

To the Holy Trinity, God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
to whom all of my academic titles have been surrendered.

## **Acknowledgments**

To my parents, Juan Carlos Rosado Cotto and Luz Estrella Méndez Del Valle

for guiding me in a lifestyle of worship.

Your prayers, love and support made this achievement possible.

To my older and only sister, Luz Estrella Rosado Méndez

for sharing your vision and helping me grow.

Your encouragement and counsel have given purpose to my life.

## **Abbreviation**

CMRUPR      Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico

US            United States

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Background of the Problem

Puerto Rico, a United States (US) territory since 1898 and commonwealth since 1952, is greatly influenced by the North American culture.<sup>1</sup> The syndrome of “wanting to be part of the trend” and “America does it better” has also affected the island’s Protestant worship experience. At large, the US Christian community’s worship experience has undergone a powerful transformation; the altar that once was once conceived as a holy place has become a mundane stage where everyone can stand and participate.<sup>2</sup> This church phenomenon, mainly taking place in populated cities, has transformed the intimate worship encounter into an entertainment stage experience.<sup>3</sup> Hence, although this tendency is more common in the urban areas, it has also subtly influenced rural church congregations. Because of this, it is important to measure the degree of change the worship experience is undergoing within the Christian community of the central mountain region; specifically, the town of Utuado (the largest rural municipality of Puerto Rico). It is necessary to examine what the altar that pleases God means to the pastors of this region, and how it has slowly begun to change.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Meaning of ‘Commonwealth.’” Puerto Rico Report. Accessed January 18, 2020. <https://www.puertoricoreport.com/the-meaning-of-commonwealth/#.XiN8DxNKhQI>.

<sup>2</sup> Brannon Hancock, “Transformation Through Worship.” *Holiness Today*, April 2016. <https://holinesstoday.org/transformation-through-worship>.

<sup>3</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Mega Iglesias y sus Implicaciones para la Misión Cristiana.” *Movimiento de Lausanne*, September 2014. <https://www.lausanne.org/es/contenido/aml/2014-09-es/megaiglesias-y-sus-implicaciones-para-la-mision-cristiana>.

According to the research examined, this process of worshiping in spirit and truth (John 4:24) has been minimized by many Christian congregations.<sup>4</sup> Through the years, each generation of worshipers has developed many notions about worship; some inspired by the Holy Spirit and others self-proclaimed. The clash of opinions, feelings and preferences have been slowly deviating from the altar encounter to an entertainment stage experience. Somehow, many have forgotten that the Word of the Lord [has and will] endure forever (1 Pet. 1:25)<sup>5</sup>, and that His request for genuine worshipers has not changed.

#### Statement of the Problem

A great majority of churches in the last century have prioritized their ministry's vision into gaining new believers to Christ and members for the church; nonetheless, in this process, the worship/Word/altar experience has been altered with a performance/techno/stage practice. As author Lee states, "In many services, chapel has become a concert hall, and the worship leader has become an actor/actress or rock star. The congregation becomes an audience, and worship then degenerates into a means to fulfill the needs of people."<sup>6</sup> Philosopher and theologian Kierkegaard, first spoke of this in the nineteenth century: "in regard to things spiritual, the foolish of many is this, that they in the secular sense look upon the speaker as the actor, and the

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<sup>4</sup> John Kiddie, "The Importance of Holiness" *Evangelical Times*, Jan. 2009, [www.evangelical-times.org/24806/the-importance-of-holiness/](http://www.evangelical-times.org/24806/the-importance-of-holiness/).

<sup>5</sup> (Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New King James Version.)

<sup>6</sup> Kyuhyuk Lee, "A Study for Training and Building Up Worship Leaders for Spiritual Maturity and Revival in South Korea" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2017), *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects. 1448*. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/1448>.

listeners as theatergoers who are to pass judgment upon the artist. But the speaker is not the actor – not in the remotest sense.”<sup>7</sup>

“Although people are gathering under the name of worship, it cannot be worship if they do not focus on God.”<sup>8</sup> Author Miller also questions, “Are we raising the affection of our hearers with the truth or simply the thrill of the song?”<sup>9</sup> These entertainment stage experiences have deviated the responsibilities of the Levites in their music ministries. Rowan explains, “As the church has grown over the years, worship services [have been] added to accommodate the changing worship desires of the congregation.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, many church leaders are inviting celebrities and crowds to the stage, but not to the feet of the Lord. For this reason, when unbelievers visit a worship service where smoke machines, bright colored lights and spotlights are the focus, they may think that a worship service is almost like being in a secular concert, but with the word Jesus mentioned in some songs.<sup>11</sup> Evaluating this current trend, Cymbala and Merrill ask, “Aren’t God’s Words and the Holy Spirit enough to keep people’s attention, and work wonders as they did two thousand years ago? Has God run out of steam?”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing* (Merchant Books, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Kyuhyuk Lee, “A Study for Training and Building Up Worship Leaders for Spiritual Maturity and Revival in South Korea”, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2013), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Karen D. Rowan, “A Design For A Christian Contemporary Worship Environment” (M.A. diss., Florida State University, 2011). 123. [https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:168439 /datastream/PDF/view](https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:168439/datastream/PDF/view)

<sup>11</sup> Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars*, 75.

<sup>12</sup> Jim Cymbala and Dean Merrill, *Fresh Power: Experiencing the Vast Resources of the Spirit of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 176.

For some, the entertainment stage experience is positive because it brings unbelievers to the church. In addition, the high-quality sound and special effects draw the new generation to participate in the worship experience. Nevertheless, even though they come to church, these new generations are not really having an encounter with Jesus; their lives are truly not being transformed.<sup>13</sup> Somehow, in the urgency of seeing the church grow in quantity, leaders have weakened the quality. Therefore, clarification and formation of the purposeful usage of worship and the arts in congregational settings as a church growth tool must be questioned.

When the altar of God is lowered to meet the demands of the culture and the younger generations, the whole congregation will suffer the consequences. As Miller states, “The public display of worship that is not founded in regular private worship robs us of our truest joy and deprives the church of the example of a leader worth emulating.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, once the congregation is moved to a passive participation in the corporate worship services, they will become conformed with arriving to church and leaving in the same manner; thus, creating a generation that has lack of anointing and knowledge of Scripture. Cymbala and Merrill confirm this statement by stating, “We need continual infillings of the Spirit to meet the strong ungodly tendencies of the age.”<sup>15</sup> This lukewarm conduct among believers is critical for it is the church that has been called to be filled by the Holy Spirit in order to defeat the demonic forces of the world. As apostle Paul affirms in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, “For the weapons of our warfare are not

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<sup>13</sup> Bryan Griem, “In Theory: Do Megachurches Provide a Better Experience?” *News Press*, August 30, 2012. <https://www.latimes.com/socal/glendale-news-press/opinion/tn-0902-do-megachurches-provide-a-better-experience-20120830-story.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars*, 38.

<sup>15</sup> Cymbala and Merrill, *Fresh Power*, 90.

carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.”

#### Statement of the Purpose

Understanding that worship and sanctity of the altar has deviated from the plan God prescribe through Scripture, this study seeks to reaffirm the importance of the altar of God and reestablish the Levitical responsibilities in the new generations of worshipers. As a case study, it will limit itself to examine the viewpoints several Christian pastors (serving at churches located in the rural municipality of Utuado, in the Central Mountain region of Puerto Rico) have on this particular matter.

#### Significance of the Study

There is an urgent plea among the true believers of Christ for revival to take place among the nations.<sup>16</sup> As authors Brown and Kilpatrick affirm, “...revival is our most desperate need in this hour—not because we crave something new, but because we decide to recapture something ancient, something pure.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as Lee asserts, “Worship leaders need to understand basic principles of worship through the Bible in order to be spiritually mature and well trained.”<sup>18</sup> Miller also affirms, “It’s impossible to have too much Bible in our services. Our times together should be drenched in it.”<sup>19</sup> In general, the foundations of the altar that pleases God

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<sup>16</sup> Michael L. Brown, John Kilpatrick, and Larry Sparks, *The Fire That Never Sleeps: Keys for Sustaining Personal Revival*, (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2015), 61-62.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, Kilpatrick and Sparks, *The Fire That Never Sleeps*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, “A Study for Training and Building Up Worship Leaders for Spiritual Maturity and Revival in South Korea”, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars*, 89.

needs to be reinstated for the greatest harvest of souls in this century to take place.<sup>20</sup> However, if the leaders of our churches continue to have as priority pleasing the masses, by adapting the secular stage experience to the worship altar experience, the glory of God will not descend with the power that we read about the book of Acts.<sup>21</sup> To see this kind of glory manifested in our churches, pastors, worship leaders and all Christians need to refocus their priority on pleasing God. “Worship is not one-sided. It is not a worship for the worshiper just to sing a song. If they do not have a proper object of worship, everything that people do is meaningless. God calls and invites His people to a place of worship to meet them and to let them meet Himself.”<sup>22</sup> For this reason, this investigation will provide evidence that the contemporary church of the twenty-first century needs to reignite the foundations of the altar that pleases God.

This case study will be of great significance to the pastors and worship leaders of the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico (CMRUPR) and beyond because it will help define and/or reaffirm the true priority of worship; one not centered on pleasing the worshipping community, but the Almighty God. This study will also share biblical truths on worship that will train, not only pastors and worship leaders, but the whole congregation on how to restore God’s holy altar. As the person who reads submerges into this case study, he/she will learn the importance of following the Tabernacle plan of worship in the contemporary service and understand the responsibilities of today’s new generation of Levites. Also important is discerning

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen R. Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God: The Passion and Reason of True Worship* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 25.

<sup>21</sup> David M. Edwards, *Worship Three Sixty-five: The Power of a Worshipping Life* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Hallellu Choi, “Christ-centered Worship: Five New Testament Principles for the Korean Church” (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, 2018). <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/1932>

what trends in worship, currently used in churches, originate in Scripture and which do not. Overall, this research will develop in the reader a greater understanding of what God expects from those who worship Him.

### Research Questions

The following research questions and hypotheses will be addressed and examined in this study:

**RQ 1:** What social, economic, and generational factors have caused the altar to stage transformation?

**RQ 2:** What strategies are pastors practicing in the worship service to maintain the altar pleasing to God?

### Research Questions Significance

In order to reinstate an altar that is pleasing to God among the new generation of worshipers, answering these questions is an essential part of this case study. Each of the pastors that will be interviewed, have unique experiences and strategies that will enrich the existing documentation of this thesis. This study will generate meaningful findings about the perceptions of a particular group (Utuado's pastors laboring in unique rural communities) have towards the altar that pleases God and its current transformation. It is understood that the study participants' viewpoints may not be the overall perception of other local and national locations. Nevertheless, studies concerning the perceptions and experiences of sub-groups of the Puerto Rican community have been absent in previous scholarly research. At large, this investigation will shed light to the current decision-making taking place within this specific rural population when interacting with national-urban-ecclesiastical trends that are consistently searching to transform their present worship experience.

## Definition of Terms

Altar: “In religion, a raised structure or place that is used for sacrifice, worship, or prayer.”<sup>23</sup>

Pentecostal Worship: worship that is “...led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>24</sup>

Holy Altar Encounter: “place where [man and woman] have had a personal encounter with God.”<sup>25</sup>

Entertainment Stage Experience: corporate worship where the congregation becomes a spectator and has a passive role during the service.

Entertainment Evangelism: The presentation of the gospel reinterpreted to attract new believers to the church, not necessarily to Christ.

Seekers Service Experience: service that “...designs every part of the service in light of that person's perceptions, experiences, and needs.”<sup>26</sup>

## Worship Definitions

Thomas Cranmer, English Reformation leader, defined *worship* as the “...setting forth of God’s honor or glory, and to the reducing of the people to a most perfect and godly living.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. “Altar.” Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., September 16, 2011. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/altar>.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen R. Phifer, *Beyond the Mountains: Conversations with the Scriptures about Worship* (2010), 87.

<sup>25</sup> Jack Hayford, “A Time of Altars.” Jack Hayford Ministries, November 19, 2012. <https://www.jackhayford.org/teaching/articles/a-time-of-altars/>.

<sup>26</sup> Duane K. Kenderman, “Thinking About the Seeker Service.” *Reformed Worship: Resources for Planning and Leading Worship*, n.d. <https://www.reformedworship.org/about-us>.

<sup>27</sup> James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 23.

The word to be highlighted from this definition is *reducing*. John the Baptist also acknowledged that believers could only grow in God’s presence when they decreased (John. 3:30). The apostle Paul conveyed to the Ephesians to “...put off, concerning [their] former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of [their] mind” (Eph. 4:22-23). George Florovsky also stated that “Christian Worship is the response of men to the Divine call, to the ‘mighty deeds’ of God, culminating in the redemptive act of Christ. ...[it] is primarily and essentially an act of praise and adoration, which also implies a thankful acknowledgment of God’s embracing love and redemptive loving-kindness.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Vatican II expressed that it is, “...the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity.”<sup>29</sup> Edwards defines worship as “...an activity that takes place throughout the pages of God’s Word. It existed before the earth was made and will be a part of the new heaven and earth that is yet to come. Worship is the most important ministry of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>30</sup> For N. T. Wright, “...‘worship’ means, literally, ‘worth-ship’: to accord worth, true value, to something, to recognize and respect it for the true worth it has.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, *worship* is an act of obedience; a total surrender of our will before the Triune God. As DeYoung states, “There is nothing more important in life than worship.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Edwards, *Worship Three Sixty-Five*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> N. T. Wright, *For All Gods Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin DeYoung, “A Theology of Worship” The Gospel Coalition (TGC). October 22, 2015. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/a-theology-of-worship/>.

### *Adam and Eve's Liturgical Worship*

The first book presented in the Holy Scriptures, Genesis, illustrates the beginning of all things God considered fundamental concepts in the life of all humans: creation, relationships, marriage, family, offerings, sin, wars, and more importantly of worship. Clearly, God established these elements of life in the first book of the Holy Scriptures for a reason. As Morgan explains, “Genesis is the beginning of creation, of sin ...of life ...of human life ...of death ...of human race ...Jewish race, of everything that is. It traces its origin back to the book of Genesis.”<sup>33</sup> “Worship has its beginnings in Genesis along with everything else...”<sup>34</sup> This is why it is so significant for the Christian community to understand its importance.

Interestingly, worship in the first chapters of Genesis is not portrayed in songs with vocalists and music instruments. To think that worship consists of music solely is a wrong connotation. Music is one of the most beautiful expressions of worship, but it is not the only one. The worship we see in the Garden of Eden is *liturgical*, meaning the work of the people. As Hill states, “...worship in the Christian church is now viewed as a corporate act with each member contributing to the liturgy—the work of the people in worship.”<sup>35</sup> Gibson agrees and notes:

In other words, the labor that God instructed Adam to perform in the Garden of Eden was his worship to God. And so, for Adam and all his descendants, a liturgy was fixed, stitched into the very order and fabric of human life on earth: call—response—meal:

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Morgan, “Worship as the Beginning – Genesis”. University, accessed January 17, 2019, [https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course\\_id=\\_454572\\_1&content\\_id=\\_26362441\\_1](https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_454572_1&content_id=_26362441_1)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew E. Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!: Old Testament Worship for The New Testament Church* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1993), 109.

Call to worship (through God's Word and sacrament); Response (by faith and obedience); Fellowship meal (union and communion with God).<sup>36</sup>

The life that Adam and Eve had in the Garden was a lifestyle of worship because they were in constant agreement with God's instructions. Adam understood that naming the animals, caring for the plants, and conserving the garden's natural aspect were all elements of worshipping God. When our actions, decisions, and responsibilities are according to God's perfect and unique will, we are worshipping Him. "God established worship on Mount Eden with his son, Adam. It was familial, covenantal worship of God through word and sacrament—the word of the covenant of life and the sacrament of the tree of life."<sup>37</sup> However, if Christians do not submerge in the study of the Word of the Lord and on His Covenant, they will never understand how liturgy becomes worship in His presence. Hence, this is why Toledo affirms that "The most important reason worship leaders should study theology is that the Scriptures make explicit connections between the study of the Word of God and the worship of the church."<sup>38</sup> In other words, believers need to merge what they read in Scripture with what they live every day, and this requires faith, total dependency on the Word of God.

God's plan for worship in Genesis is for humanity to learn to depend on Him. All Christians need to understand that the same dependence on God Adam and Eve had at the Garden is still essential in their lives. As Whaley explains, "The second essential in building

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<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Gibson, "On Earth as It Is in Heaven: A Biblical Theology of Worship" ChurchLeaders. January 22, 2019. Accessed January 26, 2019. <https://churchleaders.com/worship/worship-articles/342210-on-earth-as-it-is-in-heaven-a-biblical-theology-of-worship.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Gibson, "On Earth as It Is in Heaven: A Biblical Theology of Worship".

<sup>38</sup> David M. Toledo, "Why Worship Leaders Should Study Theology." *Artistical Theologian* 2 (2013). [https://www.dropbox.com/s/srfekfapjbr76jx/2013 Vol 2 Artistic Theologian WITHOUT COVER.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/srfekfapjbr76jx/2013%20Vol%20Artistic%20Theologian%20WITHOUT%20COVER.pdf?dl=0).

relationships involves our dependence on God. Adam and Eve [knew] no other source for life than God. They [were] dependent upon God as their counselor, companion, caregiver, guardian, and God [met] every need.”<sup>39</sup> They knew nothing else than to center God, and at the same time they knew everything because they had God as their only source. Everything in a Christian believer’s life needs to be align to God. When this is accomplished, all doors are opened, and God’s blessings can descend when believers center their lives in Him.

To have worship as a lifestyle means following the Word of God. It demands a total sacrifice of human desires, passions, opinions, ideas, and goals (Rom. 12:1-2). However, many people think, as Adam and Eve thought, that by being physically obedient to God, He would forgive their inner disobedience. Adam and Eve were following God’s commands by fulfilling their garden chores. Although, they were physically worshiping God with their work, their hearts were desiring the fruits of the prohibited tree. And this is exactly what occurs to Christians today: they go to church, read the Bible, fast, and pray. Yet, in the middle of all these acts, they become robotic worshipers; worshiping with their lips, but now with their hearts. Solomon wisely mentioned this aspect in Proverbs 16:2, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.”

When Christians fail to have God as the center of their lives, they lose focus and meaning. Castleman affirms, “To ‘worship’ with no thought of God, who is both the object of and mediator for worship, usually results in a service [congregational or private] that merely

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<sup>39</sup> Vernon Whaley, “Created for Relationship - Genesis 1 & 2” University, accessed January 16, 2019, [https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course\\_id=\\_454572\\_1&content\\_id=\\_26362441\\_1](https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_454572_1&content_id=_26362441_1)

manifests the effort, gifts or intentions that please worshipers and that they find acceptable.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, as Dawn attests, “Losing God as the subject can turn liturgy into performance rather than sacrament.”<sup>41</sup> Believers begin to drift away from the perfect garden God established for their pleasure into a desert filled with spiritual famine and drought. Sin corrupts humanity and guides it to paths of disease and death. This is what awaited Adam and Eve when they were expelled from Eden. As the book of Genesis 3:23 confirms, “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

The book of Genesis presents the foundation of the theology of worship. God’s plan for worship was for all creation (human beings and beasts) to worship God with its work. God gives humans the privilege to serve Him, as long as they keep listening and obeying His voice. Adam and Eve’s time in Eden was written in Genesis for believers to acknowledge and remember how worship should be: a lifestyle of submission, obedience, prioritizing and surrender to the Triune God.

#### Worship: Lifestyle of Submission

True worship demands submission from believers. “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Leave your land, your family, and your father’s household for the land that I will show you’” (Gen. 12:1). Did God show Abram? In due time, God gave Abram descendants more numerous than the stars in the sky and the sand in the shore. Nevertheless, if Abram would not have submitted his will to

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<sup>40</sup> Robbie F. Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2013), 27.

<sup>41</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching out without Dumbing down: a Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 243.

the voice of God, he would have never had Isaac as a son, nor seen the land of Canaan. Overall, this is what worship is all about; it is placing humans' lives in the role of the second character and letting Jesus become the protagonist of all things. "[Humans are] not the heroes of this story. Jesus is!"<sup>42</sup>

The mission of worship in Christian churches is not to perform songs that astonish the congregation. "That means [they] are going to be singing songs [they] may not have chosen because they are not [their] favorite, to arrangements or with accompaniment that [they] may not have chosen because they are not [their] favorites."<sup>43</sup> Worship is not a mechanism to multiply the church's membership or to expose the talents in church. The mission of worship in churches is to exalt God in praises of gratitude and joy. As Seel reaffirms, "The most important music in the church is the congregational song...bringing all into unity singing responsive praise directed toward God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit..."<sup>44</sup> Targeted worship style used as a church growth tool is unbiblical. The Bible only presents worship as the exclusive act of exalting the name of Jesus.

Phifer comments that "...the real power to reach the world for Jesus is the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of the people of God."<sup>45</sup> Tozer also affirms, "When the Spirit

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<sup>42</sup> Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars*, 99.

<sup>43</sup> Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, *Sing!: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2017), 15.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Allen Seel, *A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation* (Metuchen, NJ & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1995), 56.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen R. Phifer, (n.d.). "Greeks At Nine/Jews At Eleven: Worship That Brings Down Walls." *Enrichment Journal* - Enriching and Equipping Spirit-filled Ministers. Retrieved December 07, 2016, from [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200703/200703/200703\\_000\\_Greeks\\_at\\_Nine.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200703/200703/200703_000_Greeks_at_Nine.cfm)

of God takes over, [the congregation] worships in spirit and in truth; and that worship exceeds mere external rituals.”<sup>46</sup> But to acquire this anointing, believers need to be praying, interceding, fasting, offering not only in the monetary; but also, in a life of serving and worshipping continuously; all of these actions constitute the elements of submitting. This is why a “...true worshiper is an evergreen oak, strong and productive throughout the year.”<sup>47</sup> As author N. T. Wright explains it:

Worship is humble and glad; worship forgets itself in remembering God: worship celebrates the truth as God’s truth, not its own. True worship doesn’t put on a show or make a fuss; true worship isn’t forced, isn’t half-hearted, doesn’t keep looking at its watch, doesn’t worry what the person in the next pew may be doing. True worship is open to God, adoring God, waiting for God, trusting God even in the dark.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, “Real acts of worship must be the overflow of a perpetually worshipping life.”<sup>49</sup> When true believers of the Triune God practice this “...all of life becomes a worship service.”<sup>50</sup> As Kraeuter explains, “Our Sunday morning worship should be the culmination of an entire week of worshipping the Lord.”<sup>51</sup> Overall, listening the voice of the Holy Spirit and trusting-obeying the Word of God, is a life system that works. Jesus used it in His years of ministry, and it will certainly work for believers in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>46</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 58.

<sup>47</sup> Phifer, *Worship That Pleases God*, 100.

<sup>48</sup> Wright, *For All Gods Worth*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> John MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 44.

<sup>50</sup> Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books House Company, 2001), 159.

<sup>51</sup> Tom Kraeuter, *Keys to Becoming an Effective Worship Leader* (Hillsboro, MO: Training Resources, 1991), 31.

## Worship: Lifestyle of Obedience

Worship also demands obedience. As Seel reaffirms, “[Obedience] requires meekness before God...as a Fruit of the Spirit, meekness is before God...while most people inappropriately replace meekness with humility which is before man/woman.”<sup>52</sup> The book of II Kings states, “So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, ‘Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored, and you will be cleansed’” (II Kings 5:9-10). Naaman was a man of position and authority among his people. He expected the prophet to receive him and heal him instantly. However, even though Elisha’s response was not what he expected, Naaman obeyed and got healed. *Obedience* means to diminish human carnality, to eliminate sin, to obey God’s command, and to do His will; in order “to be holy, as [God] is holy” (I Pet. 1:16). For the mission of God to be fulfilled, the Church and its worshipers must begin ministering to the Lord in obedience, for it is their best expression of praise to the Almighty One.

In Matthew 19:21, Jesus said to the rich young ruler, “if you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” The rich young ruler was happy to follow Jesus because he was to receive more blessings, but the young ruler was not willing to give away what he already owned. This action is at present seen in the life of many believers; they want God to bless them, but they do not want to totally obey Him. But when Christians live to worship God in their lives and assets, they are obeying His plan. Blessings only descend when believers live to please God; there is no other way (Ps. 107).

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas A. Seel, Interview, February 22, 2020.

Obedience is a word that troubles people. The truth is that for the mission of humanity to be fulfilled, a true Christian must start ministering to the Lord by obeying to Him. Believers follow God and serve as an example that others can imitate. Kraeuter admits, “Without obedience to God, [believers] will never experience His ultimate purposes for [their] lives.”<sup>53</sup>

Worship is a human’s response which is seen through the life of Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus was clear on His mission on Earth; He came to die for humanity’s sins. Jesus came to worship God with His act of obedience. During His time and ministry on Earth, He taught all those who had ears to hear and eyes to see. The gospels are filled with Jesus’ parables, beatitudes, and miracles; Jesus used them to model His teachings and the Father’s commands. They were an expression of worship that gave glory to God. Even though, Bible readers cannot find a passage where Jesus is found singing, His ministry was one of continual worship.

Moreover, healing miracles such as Simon’s mother in law being cured (Luke 4:38-39), the cleansing of the leper (Luke 5:12-14), the paralytic’s healing (Luke 5:17-26) and the healing of the centurion’s servant (Luke 7:1-10), among others, were expressions of worship. Also, worship was observed when Jesus rebuked the wind and waves in the storm (Luke 8:22-25) and the liberation of the possessed man from Galilee (Luke 8:26-33). These acts are part of God’s worship plan for they bring light to the darkness; they are Jesus’ form of worship. Newby understands that “the son of man models for us a genius and genuine mean for Christian faith formation.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Kraeuter, *Keys to Becoming an Effective Worship Leader*, 53.

<sup>54</sup> Steven Newby, “Worship in the Gospels - Part 1” University, accessed February 13, 2019, [https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course\\_id=\\_489780\\_1&content\\_id=\\_28850153\\_1](https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_489780_1&content_id=_28850153_1)

Worship cannot be limited to singing and music, nor to a specific time and place.

Worship is a lifestyle. The Sabbath did not limit Jesus from worshiping God and bringing honor to His Father. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus restored a man's withered hand in front of the Pharisees. Clearly, Jesus did not do this to spike the Pharisees, but to teach them that worship is not a stiff, calculated, and/or traditional experience. More remarkable is to think that even death did not hold Jesus from teaching worship to His disciples. In Luke 24, Jesus appears to the disciples, eats with them and commands them to wait upon the Holy Spirit. "We see the disciples communing with Jesus, we see them worshipping."<sup>55</sup> Newby understands that "In the [gospels]...we see Jesus Christ teaching us how to worship, how to live a life of worship."<sup>56</sup>

#### Worship: Lifestyle of Prioritizing

Worship demands prioritizing. In chapter 6 of the book of Daniel, Daniel had to prioritize his loyalty. Daniel served God, before any other leader on Earth. Even though there was a decree to worship King Darius for thirty days, Daniel knelt and worshiped God three times a day without fear of retaliation. Daniel was clear that the God who He served was the only God to be worshiped. And as long as Daniel honored God, he was blessed and found grace among his enemies. Just like Daniel, today's Church needs to be seen as one that its priority is to serve God. This means that the programs and trends that may distance believers from God need to be discarded. As Morgan states, "Yes, [they] do have a certain freedom of the will."<sup>57</sup> However, as

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<sup>55</sup> Steven Newby, "Worship in the Gospels - Part 2" University, accessed February 13, 2019, [https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course\\_id=\\_489780\\_1&content\\_id=\\_28850153\\_1](https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_489780_1&content_id=_28850153_1)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Morgan, *Mastering Life before It's Too Late: 10 Biblical Strategies for a Lifetime of Purpose*. (New York: Howard Books, 2015), 16.

Morgan continues “The decision to adopt God’s will for [themselves] is a lifetime, lifelong choice, and it’s the only true starting place for mastering life.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, this signifies that they will congregate according to their church schedule and will fervently dedicate time for collective worship. This also denotes that they will care and live their lives according to Scripture to not get worldly tainted. At large, their minds, hearts, and actions, as the body of Christ, will be centered on doing what God wants. When God is the center of a human life, true worshipers establish God as priority. Like Jesus, worshipers have to be in their Father’s business (Lk. 2:49); “[their] food is to do the will of [The Father] who sent [The Son], and to finish [Jesus’] work (Jn. 4:34.)”

If Christian leaders’ priority is to please the masses with their professional services and modern worship, they are going down a pothole. As Castleman states, “When worship is designed for congregational taste and preferences, however, God as the mediator and center of the worshiper’s intent is easily lost.”<sup>59</sup> Page and Lavon ask and answer, “When did [worshipers] become idol worshippers? It happened when the method of worship became the priority of [many] churches. Many worshipers spend much more time promoting a style of worship than encouraging people to stand in the presence of God.”<sup>60</sup> Phifer also asserts, “Churches grow because lost people see and feel Jesus in the lives of God’s people all through the week, not

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<sup>58</sup> Morgan, *Mastering Life before It’s Too Late*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship*, 27.

<sup>60</sup> Franklin S. Page and Gray L. Lavon, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today’s Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Pub, 2014), 24.

because [they] are slick and professional in [their] presentations on the weekend.”<sup>61</sup> In worship ministries, leaders battle in this area multiple times because music in general is very subjective and people tend to be very opinionated. What genres, styles, artists, lyrics, sounds, instruments please God are the questions worshipers must make themselves when preparing a worship service. God is ready to give all believers the answers, but they must be willing to listen. They need to establish Him as their priority. As Castleman declares, “...worship is best shaped by *first* considering the God who is worshiped, not the preferences of significantly flawed people whose ‘righteousness is filthy rag!’”<sup>62</sup>

In the Old Testament (Exod. 25), when God told Moses about the construction of the Tabernacle, He was very specific. God not only guided Moses with the colors, materials and dimensions that were going to be used for the Tabernacle and the furniture, He also specified the men and women who were going to work in the construction of this project. God also detailed the types of offerings that were going to be sacrificed, and the persons that were going to have the privilege of serving in the Tabernacle (the priests and Levites). Continuously, believers can acknowledge that God has a very well thought plan for everything He wants. The church’s task is to be in one accord to see God’s will accomplished in everything believers do in and outside of church. Webber explains, “Worship shapes the way [believers] live in the world. [They] go from

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen R. Phifer, (n.d.). *Enrichment Journal* - Enriching and Equipping Spirit-filled Ministers. Retrieved December 01, 2016, from [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200703/200703\\_000\\_Greeks\\_at\\_Nine.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200703/200703_000_Greeks_at_Nine.cfm).

<sup>62</sup> Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship*, 24.

worship, to love and serve the Lord in [their] families, [their] work, and in all [their] relationships.”<sup>63</sup>

God, Creator of everything that exists, demands His peoples’ adoration because He is worthy (Rev. 4:11). Understanding that everything responds to Him, Christians must demonstrate excellence in everything that they do in the worship ministry. All believers must work with excellence for the Scriptures advises, “whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men...” (Col. 3:23). As the Holy Bible also declares, “God will order [His believers’] agenda, and the things [they] have to accomplish for His glory. Every day will bring its on trouble” (Mt. 6:34). In addition, the worship leader must study the Word of the Lord and chose songs that will exalt His name. Musicians must practice with joy considering the privilege it is to play an instrument in the house of the Lord; singers must unite their voices in one accord so that all praises may reach the throne of God. All technicians must work with diligence to assure that the equipment will work without distortion, so that worship can flow like a river. Uniting all talents, working with excellence, and hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit will guarantee a supernatural presence. This is the way Christians worshipers can prioritize their ministries. When they all work toward doing what God wants. As Morgan concludes, “Our lifelong dreams are sweeping aspirations for our lifespans can be implemented only as we capture each day in turn for Christ.”<sup>64</sup>

The first thing that believers must do as worship leaders or pastors is constantly remind everyone of the worship team and congregation that Jesus “...as Redeemer is central to our

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<sup>63</sup> Robert E. Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship: The Ministries of Christian Worship* VII, (Star Song Pub. Group, 1994), 18.

<sup>64</sup> Morgan, *Mastering Life before It's Too Late*, 25.

Christian walk...”<sup>65</sup> They must reaffirm that everything scheduled, programmed and rehearsed is for His glory. Second, worshipers must remind themselves that the Holy Spirit is the *one* orchestrating the service. They must be sensible enough to hear His voice and abide the instructions He gives. Third, worshipers must ask the Holy Spirit to examine themselves every time they come to direct, sing, or play an instrument. They must humble themselves in His presence, take anything that might be left of proudness and selfishness away, so that He can be their center. As Edwards states, “In seeking Him and making Him [their] first priority, He makes [their] needs [His] first priority.”<sup>66</sup>

In the process of growing in the Spirit, maturing in the presence of the Lord, worshipers learn that they must become less of themselves so He can become greater (John 3:30). Believers need to acknowledge that all they possess is because of His underserving mercy over them. Like Paul states in Romans 12:2, “...do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.” In the process of doing what *God* wants, the Holy Spirit that dwells in each true believer will guide him/her to what the Father has prepared for them to do. The Potter’s hands will shape each vessel to become a reflection of His glory. Like this, and only like this, worshipers will do what *God* wants.

This new opportunity takes believers out of their comfort zones and religious rituals. It is a worship that, as Tozer explains, is portable: “You carry worship inside your heart. You can have your worship with you.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit is in all believers and as their Counselor,

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<sup>65</sup> Seel, Interview.

<sup>66</sup> Edwards, *Worship Three Sixty-Five*, 126.

<sup>67</sup> Tozer, *The Purpose of Man*, 127.

He helps them to reflect God as they worship Him everywhere they go with everything they have. As Tozer also states, throughout their "...total life, the whole man and woman, must worship God."<sup>68</sup> And as worshipers submit to the will of God, they learn to pray in His Nature, in the Spirit. Cleansing their hearts from all the sin and contamination of the world; "...so the Holy Spirit wants to come into [their] soul and live in it. Not weekending there, not a houseguest for a while, but making [their] soul a permanent habitation."<sup>69</sup> When believers submit to what the Holy Spirit wants, they will be able to worship God in spirit and in truth.

#### Worship: Lifestyle of Surrendering

Worship also demands surrendering worldly desires and ambitions. "Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers. They were Simon (his other name was Peter) and Andrew, his brother. They were putting a net into the sea for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me. I will make you fish for men!' At once they left their nets and followed Him" (Matt. 4:19-20). Surrendering the nets, meant more than just not fishing anymore. Surrendering meant not doing their will. Moreover, it denoted from that moment on that the disciples were not pleasing themselves with their lives and ministries; on the contrary, they were surrendering their services and agendas to serve their Master. These two brothers may have been the only economic support of their families; however, their trust on Jesus made them decide and accept His calling without hesitation. Simon and Andrew knew who was calling out to them. They knew who they were going to live for.

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<sup>68</sup> Tozer, *The Purpose of Man*, 127.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

Surrendering means not fulfilling the personal will, but the will of God “...and our willful obedience leads us to holiness that is rooted in God’s perfect will for each of us...”<sup>70</sup>

Worship leaders also need to surrender their personal agendas. At times, praise and prayer during service do not surpass the ceiling because there are too many people pleasing themselves.

Christians have to understand that in order to do what *God* wants, their plans, ideas and opinions have to submit to His will. As Castleman asserts, “...it is wiser to ask questions that center first on the character of God, the truth of Scripture, the pattern of worship with the biblical account and what the church has learned (for good or for ill) about what is pleasing and acceptable to God.”<sup>71</sup> That is why Sander explains that, “the early leaders of the church were sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. Because they had surrendered their own wills to the Spirit’s control, they were delighted to obey His promptings and guidance.”<sup>72</sup>

Worshippers cannot let their private agendas become a dictatorship of what needs to happen in a service. They cannot let their academic titles, experience and knowledge determine the flow of the Spirit. In spite all of their talents, they must recognize that all of their work is centered on giving glory to Jesus. The spotlight of their worship cannot be replaced by the style of the service, technology, voices, or musicians. Everything worshippers do is for God to be exalted and praise. They evangelize with their reflection of Jesus everywhere they go. With His love, worshippers portray Him to others by practicing the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), knowing that God is love. They are all evangelists of the reign of God, they are His ambassadors

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<sup>70</sup> Seel, Interview.

<sup>71</sup> Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship*, 23-24.

<sup>72</sup> J. Oswald Sander, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 79.

and without love, they “become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). Moreover, worship leaders are in the spotlight everywhere they go. However, “since [they] are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, [they have to] lay aside every weight” (Heb. 12:1) (their personality, talent, and position) to be a reflection of Jesus.

Overall, worshipers must keep their own self-centered thoughts and ideas aside to see His glory. God works where there are humble hearts wanting to do His will. The Triune God has to be the midpoint of worship. With this goal in mind, congregations will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, healed by the blood of Jesus and shaped by the Father’s hands. As Soren Kirkgeard states:

In the theater, the play is staged before an audience who is called theatergoers; but at the devotional address, God himself is present. In the most earnest sense God is the critical theatergoer, who looks on to see how the lines are spoken and how they are listened to hence here the customary audience is wanting. The speaker then is the prompter, and the listener stands openly before God. The listener, if I may say so, is the actor, who in all truth acts before God.<sup>73</sup>

#### Altar Definitions

“The Hebrew word for altar comes from a verb meaning ‘to slaughter for sacrifice. In Biblical Times, as Davis clarifies, “Altars were places where the divine and human worlds interact. Altars were places of exchange, communication, and influence.”<sup>74</sup> During the times of the Old Testament, altars made of stone and wood were extremely purposed to offer God burnt offerings and sacrifices. However, as Britannica explains:

The earliest Christians used neither temples nor altars in their worship, which was usually conducted in private houses. By the 3rd century AD, however, the table on which the Eucharist was celebrated was regarded as an altar... When the Christians began to build churches, a wooden altar table was placed in the choir or in the apse...

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<sup>73</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas W. Davis, “Altar Definition and Meaning - Bible Dictionary.” Bible Study Tools. Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/altar/>.

In Western churches from as early as the 4th century, the altar was covered by a canopy-like structure, the baldachin, which rested on columns placed around the altar. The altar was further ornamented by an altarpiece (q.v.), a screen or wall behind it covered with paintings or sculptures.<sup>75</sup>

Nowadays, the altar continues to be a raised platform, mostly of wood. However, as Rodríguez discusses, "...altars aren't as common as they once were. Some churches no longer have the space for them. Others juggle multiple service schedules that leave no time for extended worship and intercession around the altar. Still others are designing their sanctuaries with fewer religious symbols to put unchurched attendees at ease."<sup>76</sup> Thus, this transformation leading to simplification or nullification of meaningful religious events and/or symbols need to be examined.

#### *Tabernacle Altar*

It has been known for centuries that the altar of the Triune God was the original place where He manifested His holy presence (Exod. 40:34). In biblical times, only a selected few had the privilege of accessing this holy ground. Entering the most intimate place of the Tabernacle demanded sanctification and purification from a selected priest. But due to the sacrifice of God's son, Jesus Christ, not only was humanity saved from its sins; but it also received a direct entrance to the presence of God (Heb. 10:19). Christians can only stand in awe of the grand honor they have when encountering His magnificence. The freedom now enjoyed in the House of the Lord was not present in the beginnings of God's Tabernacle. When submerging in the

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<sup>75</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Altar." EncyclopediaBritannica. EncyclopediaBritannica, Inc. Accessed September 19, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/altar>.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Rodríguez, "Back to the Altar: Returning to the Place of Divine Encounters." *Influence Magazine*, 2017. [https://issuu.com/vitalmagazine/docs/aug\\_sept\\_2017](https://issuu.com/vitalmagazine/docs/aug_sept_2017)

Word of God, believers can understand the seriousness of approaching the Holy of Holies. The only way a priest could stand and live in the most Holy Place was with a sanctified mind, body, and spirit. Thus, this study seeks to establish the importance of the altar of God, and how it needs to be reestablished in the new generations of worshipers.

Hence, this study has been organized in five chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, states the importance of studying the transformation worship is currently undergoing and defines the concepts that will be discussed throughout the future chapters. The second chapter of this study presents two reviews: Biblical and Literature. The Biblical Review explains how God envisioned His altar and worshipers in the Tabernacle (Old Testament). It then discusses how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ transformed the Old Testament experience, and how today's believers become Levites in the presence of God. On the other hand, the Literature Review presents fundamental background information on how Christian tradition has allowed worship to become an entertainment stage experience in many altars. Chapter three, Methods, briefly presents the available studies focused on altar worship, related topics and the current study design and procedures. Chapter four, Research Findings, contains the outcomes of the study. Chapter five, Conclusions, offers the conclusion and recommendations made in order to bring the new generations of worshipers back to the altar that pleases God. Appendixes (recruitment template, consent, sample questionnaire and participants' interviews (translated transcriptions and transcribed interviews)) have been included after the Bibliography to conclude this dissertation.

## Chapter 2

### Biblical and Literature Review

#### Altar Worship Beginnings

From the moment of Adam and Eve’s fall in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), man has been tempted to sin. As Phifer states, “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, God, in His everlasting love, established a plan to restore mankind’s original status of purity. According to the Old Testament, the tabernacle God commanded Moses to construct, presented the opportunity humanity needed to restore its relationship with God. The book of Exodus details, how this tabernacle was composed of three physical parts: the Outer Court or Court of the Tabernacle, the Inner Court or Holy Place and the Holy of Holies or the most Holy Place. Hill explains, “The tabernacle was furnished with a series of items described in Exodus 25—30.”<sup>78</sup> Overall, each furniture was of great significance for both God and His servants.

The Outer Court had the principal gate to the Tabernacle, the altar of burnt offering (Exod. 27:1) and the bronze laver (Exod. 30:17). It was here, in the altar of burnt offerings, were the priest presented burnt, grain, peace, sin and trespass offerings as sacrifice to the Lord. As Hill explains, “Animal sacrifices were performed here, and the altar fire was to burn continually.”<sup>79</sup> Then, the priest in the Laver “...carried out their daily ritual washings”<sup>80</sup>, symbolizing the need of cleansing the soul from sin. Inside the Inner Court, God instructed to place the Table of

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<sup>77</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 252.

<sup>78</sup> Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 166.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

Showbread (Exod. 25:23-30), the Golden Lamp Stand (Exod. 25:31-40) and the Altar of Incense (Exod. 30: 1-10). The Table of Showbread, "...was perpetually stocked with fresh bread symbolizing the meal of covenant fellowship the tribes of Israel enjoyed with Yahweh."<sup>81</sup> The Golden Lamp Stand was kept burning as symbol of the Holy Spirit; it emphasized the need to live by the light of the Spirit. "[It] functioned practically as the source of light for the tabernacle and held theological significance as a symbol of the light of divine revelation."<sup>82</sup> The Altar of Incense symbolized the prayers and intercession of the people going up to God as a sweet fragrance. Duguid also discusses that "...the smoke from the incense itself, constantly rising from the altar, came to symbolize the prayers of God's people constantly ascending before the Lord."<sup>83</sup>

In addition, the Ark of God was in the Holy of Holies. This rectangular box, with one gold cherubim on each side, symbolized the presence of the Holy of Holies (Exod. 37: 7-8). This place was sacred because of the divine presence of the Shekinah of God. "Atop the ark was a lid of pure gold called the mercy seat. Here blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement."<sup>84</sup> To enter this unique setting, the priest had to be sure of his spiritual life before God; immediate death would take place if human sanctification were not obtained.

Just as God detailed the construction and use of the Tabernacle, He also chose who would serve Him. God preselected only one family of the twelve tribes of Israel (Levi descendants) to serve in the Tabernacle. From this one tribe, only the lineage of Aaron could assist in this

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<sup>81</sup> Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 168.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Iain Duguid, "The Altar of Incenses." *The Table Talk*, December 2107.

<sup>84</sup> Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 168.

sanctified place; also, the Levi tribe came from the descendants of Jacob and Leah. Thus, is understood that from the beginning of time, God had bestowed a special task for this family. In the book of Numbers, God spoke to Moses and Aaron about the responsibility of the Levites, but it is in Deuteronomy 10:8 where the three basic duties of the Levites are stated. These are: “to bear the Ark of the covenant of the Lord” (Deut. 10:8) “to stand before the Lord to minister to Him,” (Deut. 10:8) and “to bless in His name” (Deut. 10:8). These special and rigorous tasks reminded the children of Israel the love God had for them as His creation and willingness to maintain a relationship with them. God knew that all the animal sacrifices, burnt offerings and yearly cleansing were not going to save man from sin; therefore, He sent Jesus Christ, His son as Redeemer.

#### Jesus: The Ultimate Sacrifice

Jesus Christ is the reason we now encounter God directly as worshipers in the most Holy Place. As Paul summarizes in Hebrews 10:19-20, we “enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh...”. Now, a human priest is not needed, “for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...” (1 Tim. 2:5). As the letter to the Hebrews states, Jesus is “the great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God...” (Heb. 4:14). The sacrifice of Jesus is the only sacrifice needed to unite, once and for all, God the Father with humanity. “Now that the obstacles are removed, Christ’s people have access into God’s presence and worship.”<sup>85</sup> Phifer explains, “When the failure of truth was beyond the ability of man to redeem, God sent

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<sup>85</sup> Ian C. Macleod, “Christ’s High Priesthood and Christian Worship in Hebrews.” *Puritan Reformed Journal*, Jan. 2016, 156.

Jesus, His own arm, clothed in righteousness, salvation and judgment to restore what had fallen into Satan's hands."<sup>86</sup>

However, even though believers are now free to enter His presence, they cannot forget that God, the Great I Am, is still *holy, holy, holy*. They may call Him friend, but He is not their *pal*. Believers may be welcomed to His House, but they must never forget that the place of corporate worship is a *holy place*. MacArthur declares that "to be in God's presence, one must be holy...When sinful humans choose not to come to God, when they choose to reject Jesus Christ, their ultimate end is to be sent to the place prepared for the devil and his angels, out of the presence of God."<sup>87</sup> In other words, time and people can change, but God and His request for sanctified worshippers in His holy sanctuary remains unmovable. What believers must do is "...recapture that sense of awe and reverence in the presence of God"<sup>88</sup> seen in the process of entering the Tabernacle.

### Levitical Transformation

#### *Tabernacle*

At present, the gate to the Tabernacle represents the physical door to the church; but it can also symbolize believers' mouths when they "enter into His gates with thanksgiving" (Psalm 100:4). When entering the House of God, they open their mouths and give thanks to the Lord for His love and mercy. Then, they sacrifice praise and songs of worship (the altar of burnt offering), and cry for His blood to cleanse them from their sins (bronze laver). "[They] are ready for the

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<sup>86</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 254.

<sup>87</sup> MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority*, 108.

<sup>88</sup> Tom Kraeuter, *Becoming a True Worshiper* (Hillsboro, MO: Emerald Books, 2006), 70-71.

inner court only when [they] have passed the gate of thanksgiving, the court of praise, and the altar of sacrifice.”<sup>89</sup> The Inner Court is also found in our contemporary worship services. The Table of Showbread represents the Word of God that believers are called to read and study in order to build up their faith. The Altar of Incense corresponds to the private or public prayer where they bring to the Lord their petitions and issues. The Golden Lamp Stand symbolizes the Holy Spirit that lights our way through Jesus, to God. Phifer asserts, “Putting all these elements together, we see that before we can enter the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies, we must pass through the outer court.”<sup>90</sup>

The main goal of a believer when entering the gates of the Outer Court is to encounter the Holy of Holies. In other words, “The destination of the worship experience as it is seen in this model is the Holy of Holies.”<sup>91</sup> This is where the manifestation of the glory of the Lord was presented to the people in the desert. As stated in Exodus 40:34, “then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” At present, believers have the daily opportunity to enter this sacred place because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This is the place where they wait upon the Lord to visit them. Their genuine seeking of the presence of the Lord will determine how He will respond. The relationship between the physical layout of the Tabernacle and the structure of a contemporary worship service is that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have always been present. This lack of knowledge results in believers staying at the outer and inner court when the Holy of Holies is available to them.

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<sup>89</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 43.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>91</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 44.

Phifer clarifies, “The Holy of Holies is a place of exchange...we pass through the veil into the holy of Holies to wait in his presence, drinking in His competence and finding wholeness in His holiness.”<sup>92</sup> There is a haste in the heavens for the church of Christ to have a true encounter with the Almighty God.

Jesus declared in Matthew 14:7, “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Human beings conceive many highways to substitute the narrow path Jesus spoke about because sometimes, it feels *too* narrow. There is always the thought that Jesus needs to adapt to human plans and calendar; the truth is that it is the other way around. Jesus must be the center of our worship and the object of our affection. Believers should seek God’s wisdom pertaining the service and layout alteration before enacting changes. Moreover, Kauflin asserts, “That’s why biblical worship is God-focused (God is clearly seen), God-centered (God is clearly the priority), and God-exalting (God is clearly honored).”<sup>93</sup> If Jesus is at the center, nothing else matters; believers come to God to do His will. Webber also states, “...worship is not what *I* do, but what *God* is doing.”<sup>94</sup> The church does not belong to converts, it is *God’s house*, like their bodies are His. Phifer asserts, “We still must walk, work, and worship *His way*, not ours.”<sup>95</sup> In other words, “The power of the presence of Jesus doesn’t flow to our comfort.”<sup>96</sup> As Dawn states, “...our worship must keep God as the subject, for such worship

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<sup>92</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 46.

<sup>93</sup> Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2008), 177.

<sup>94</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Worship Is a Verb: Eight Principles Transforming Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 66.

<sup>95</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Phifer, *Beyond the Mountains*, 109.

cannot help but invite us all into God’s self-giving character, into God’s concern for the lost, into the incarnation of the gospel through our lives.”<sup>97</sup> Understanding the order and structure of God’s plan in His altar, allows believers to know what is expected from them.

### *Levites*

In the Old Testament, the Levites were first given the task of carrying the Ark of God when the people had to move from one place to another; “and when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down...” ( Num. 1: 50-51). They followed God “by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire” (Exod. 13:21). Christians now carry the Ark of the Covenant in their hearts and follow the voice of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them. As Phifer explains, “Just as the Old Testament priests bore the Ark of God on their shoulders, we carry Him with us every day. We can do this because the Blood of Jesus has made us holy.”<sup>98</sup> The Holy of Holies” is now in the temple of our heart if we have Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Worshippers, musicians, singers, technology staff and everyone who is part of a worship ministry or team, need to understand the importance of what *carrying the Ark* means. They are the reflection of the glory of God; they carry the presence and glory of God. “We are his habitation by His Spirit. In reality we don’t come to church—we carry “church” with us everywhere we go.”<sup>99</sup> “Worship is life as life is worship in the Old Testament; the same is no

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<sup>97</sup> Marva, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, 126.

<sup>98</sup> Phifer, *Beyond the Mountains*, 109.

<sup>99</sup> Seel, Interview.

less true today for the New Testament's church."<sup>100</sup> The worship ministry does not end at the church's parking lot; everywhere a worshiper of God moves, his/her actions and attitude need to manifest the glory and blessing of the Lord. As Edward explains, "Our worship really becomes the sum total of our life lived out to God. It is our response to Him and His Word and His will."<sup>101</sup> At large, worshipers are the reflection of Jesus Christ and light to this world because He dwells inside of them (Matt. 5:14).

The Levites' second task was "to stand before the Lord to minister to Him" (Deut. 10:8). God has always wanted to hear His people's praises of gratitude and thanksgiving for everything He has done for them (John 4:23). Phifer states, "[God] wants to drink deep from the waters of our adoration. God is thirsty for our worship. It means as much to Him as water to a parched tongue."<sup>102</sup> Whether believers are in their private or public worship, the act of prostrating themselves and exalting God is the way of ministering to Him. The last task given to the Levites was to "bless in His name" (Deut. 10:8). If God is the priority in life, His blessings and presence will accompany His people. As ambassadors and Levites in the House of the Lord, they are called "to behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Comprehending the solemn task God gave the first generation of Levites, today's worshipers must acknowledge that their responsibility of carrying the Ark, ministering to God, and blessing others in His name is still part of their daily lives. Edwards asserts, "Our worship begins in our spirits and moves to our

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<sup>100</sup> Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 190.

<sup>101</sup> Edwards, *Worship Three Sixty-Five*, 167.

<sup>102</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 132.

souls, then it is followed by a physical response to God’s presence through our bodies (actions).”<sup>103</sup> In other words, “Worship is a verb—it is love in action.”<sup>104</sup>

Consequently, worshipers must go back to the Bible to understand God’s holy calling and restore their purpose as Levites. As Tozer avows, “You have to be a purified people if you are going to be a worshiper of God, reflecting the image of Him that created you.”<sup>105</sup> The Lord is a holy and jealous God; whatever He separates, whoever He chooses, needs to be ready to carry the Ark (1 Pet. 1:16). For example, the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, were consumed in a blink of an eye because of their profane fire (Lev. 10:1-3). Uzzah touched the Ark and died instantly (2 Sam. 6:7). King Uzziah was covered with leprosy when he entered the Holy of Holies without authorization (2 Chr. 26:19). Jehovah God is a God of order, and what He has separated has to be sanctified. Why then is the His Holy altar been replaced with an entertainment stage?

### Hunger for the Power

The 19<sup>th</sup> century served to spark among congregations the desire to discover the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.<sup>106</sup> Hyatt enlightens, “As the nineteenth century dawned, America was again morally bankrupt. A generation had come of age that knew little of revival

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<sup>103</sup> Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God*, 165.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>105</sup> Tozer, *The Purpose of Man*, 173.

<sup>106</sup> Stephen R. Phifer, WRS 505 Student Guide Spring 2017. Retrieved from [https://my.valleyforge.edu/ICS/icsfs/WRS\\_505\\_Student\\_Guide\\_Spring\\_2017.pdf?target=5e5bcfca-a7f546d6-be5c-099f7ce9fe2d](https://my.valleyforge.edu/ICS/icsfs/WRS_505_Student_Guide_Spring_2017.pdf?target=5e5bcfca-a7f546d6-be5c-099f7ce9fe2d). (n.d.), 45.

that had swept the nation sixty years earlier.”<sup>107</sup> People were tired of thinking that the age of miracles and Pentecost had passed. According to Hyatt, “This concern prompted fervent prayer that precipitated a national spiritual awakening beginning on the east coast around 1800 and spreading to the western frontier.”<sup>108</sup> Moreover, Towns and Whaley expound, “[These] meetings were a welcome time of fellowship for farmers. While they waited to harvest their fields, they gathered in great campus for community preaching, teaching, and renewal.”<sup>109</sup> Hence, they were hungry for revival; the Upper Room experience was what they were seeking. This meant a strong process of sanctification: purifying thoughts, actions, and character in the search of the Holy Spirit. In addition, “Throughout the history of the Christian Church, baptism has always been the mark of Christian identity.”<sup>110</sup> Baptism in the New Testament is the covenant similar to circumcision in the Old Testament. Moreover, Menzies explains, the “Spirit of Pentecost [came] to enable every member of the church... to fulfill [their] prophetic call to be a light to the nations.”<sup>111</sup>

The baptism of the Trinity was returning to the congregation. The Reformation extended throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century with speaking of tongues, dancing in the spirit, and other physical

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<sup>107</sup> Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity* (Chicota, TX: Hyatt International Ministries, 2002), 121.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2012), 145.

<sup>110</sup> Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 154.

<sup>111</sup> Robert P. Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), 38.

evidence of the Holy Baptism. Among the major Pentecostal Revivals, The Azusa Revival in 1906 needs to be mentioned; "...it impacted Christian doctrine and practice."<sup>112</sup> The Healing Revival which was also powerful "...occurred in the late forties and fifties in America."<sup>113</sup> "The 'Third Wave' movement of the Spirit began in the 1980's"<sup>114</sup>, also was known as the "...Latter Rain Revival."<sup>115</sup> For all of these Pentecostal revivals, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, there had to be a generation of worshipers who consecrated the altar of God. "Large groups of people met to confess sins. They restore relationships with one another and reached out to unsaved neighbors and friends."<sup>116</sup> These were the ones who lived to maintain the incense burning in the Holy Place. Ministers (who interceded before stepping out to lead worship) took the time to know God's will. The priority of each service was to move God's heart with a truthful and spiritual worship.

#### Changes Through the Times

According to the facts stated, it could be understood that with each year that went by, a new generation of Levites was born. As they grew in the presence of the Lord, they learned to love and respect what past generations had developed. Interestingly, they were able to blend the past worship experiences of their elders with their unique encounters with the Spirit. Towns and

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<sup>112</sup> Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 231.

<sup>113</sup> Tony Cauchi, "20th Century Awakenings." *The Welsh Revival of 1904-1905*, [www.revival-library.org/index.php/catalogues-menu/20th-century](http://www.revival-library.org/index.php/catalogues-menu/20th-century).

<sup>114</sup> Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story*, 103.

<sup>115</sup> Cauchi, "20th Century Awakenings." *The Welsh Revival of 1904-1905*, [www.revival-library.org/index.php/catalogues-menu/20th-century](http://www.revival-library.org/index.php/catalogues-menu/20th-century).

<sup>116</sup> Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 235.

Whaley state, “As the World War II baby boomers grew into teenagers and adults, parachurch organizations established youth camps, Bible study groups, youth evangelism teams, Christian athletic organizations, radio ministries for youth, youth music teams, vacation Bible schools, Bible institutes, and youth music training institutes.”<sup>117</sup> However, slowly but firmly, a subtle transformation began to take place in the twentieth century.

According to Brouhard, several factors can be considered. First, mass evangelism declined giving way to radio evangelism (1920). “By 1927, there were more than 600 radio stations in America. By 1930, one in three homes in America owned a radio.”<sup>118</sup> “Radio ministries played a major role in persuading evangelicals to accept Christian music written in popular styles.”<sup>119</sup> “This contribute[d] to a move to spectating instead of participating. Gospel music became more geared to entertaining.”<sup>120</sup> As Dawn explains it, “The entertainment mind-set is evidenced when people attend worship for ‘what I will get out of it.’ In such an approach, God is not the center of worship; we are. Such worship does not create a special time and place for God to confront us, for us to be with God in a set-apart and faithful way.”<sup>121</sup>

Second, evangelistic crusades (e.g. Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Bob Jones, etc.) took place nationally in stadiums and campuses, giving way to youth self-expression, music icons on the altar, and secular music with Christian lyrics (1945-1960). “Gatherings of young people

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<sup>117</sup> Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 279.

<sup>118</sup> Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 274.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>120</sup> Jonathan Brouhard, “Timeline of Worship.” *Prezi.com*, 30 Apr. 2012, [prezi.com/qjr0jepofwd\\_/timeline-of-worship/](http://prezi.com/qjr0jepofwd_/timeline-of-worship/).

<sup>121</sup> Marva, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, 124.

would meet together Saturday nights; [here] entertainment was mixed with worship.”<sup>122</sup> Third, during the Jesus Movement experience (1968-1990) “...the youth was disillusioned with traditional Protestantism. There was no respect for authority systems. Youth began to write songs to Jesus, about Jesus, and about their personal encounters with Jesus in their own style.”<sup>123</sup> Christians musicians began to travel and publish their songs, becoming the “...me generation.”<sup>124</sup> This provoked “...‘worship wars’ [between] groups who wanted their favorite music played; [they moved] from organ and choirs to guitar, keyboard and drums.”<sup>125</sup> Finally, in the late twentieth century, “...[emerging worship] [sought] to change the presentation of the Gospel, not the message, by [adopting] a marketing strategy for the Gospel,... [utilizing] the arts and multimedia in presentations and [offering] freedom of expression in worship.”<sup>126</sup> As a result, the church began experiencing in the twenty-first century the consequences of what was previously allowed: *the Seekers Services’ Experience*.

#### Altar Entertainment

The Seekers services’ music is not considered worship music. Their primary vision with music is to define with the “...lyrics the theme of the message and connect the non-believers in

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<sup>122</sup> Jonathan Brouhard, “Timeline of Worship.”

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Robert E. Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship: Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship II*, (Nashville, TN: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994), 395.

<sup>125</sup> Steven Stufflebean, “The Revolution in Christian Music.” *Lamb and Lion Ministries*, [christinprophecy.org/sermons/the-revolution-in-christian-music/](http://christinprophecy.org/sermons/the-revolution-in-christian-music/).

<sup>126</sup> Jonathan Brouhard, “Timeline of Worship.”

the congregation to Jesus.”<sup>127</sup> The Seekers’ services or “...progressive believer’s service”,<sup>128</sup> has been effective in some churches, but not in others. The music in the Seekers’ services, sung about real life issues, and the reality that Jesus is the ultimate answer. Generally, the service “...includes the traditional elements of worship (call to worship, confession, sermon, singing, prayer and offering), but shapes them into more contemporary styles in an attempt to attract community people.”<sup>129</sup> As Gaddy affirms, “Confusing worship that pleases God with entertainment in which people, with God’s help, seek to please other people...is to risk doing great harm to the spirituality of all the people involved.”<sup>130</sup> In addition, Gray and Lavon state, “...the problem exponentially expands when the central message of the gospel is abandoned in order to be more relevant and user friendly.”<sup>131</sup>

This concept gives way to what is known as “...Entertainment evangelism.”<sup>132</sup> It may sound amazing at first, but it does not motivate the congregation to sing; “...it turned the church

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<sup>127</sup> Tim O’Neil, “Music Resources for Seeker Services.” *NCLS Research*, 1998, [www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=1062](http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=1062).

<sup>128</sup> Ruth Vander Hart, “Reformed Worship - Resources for Planning and Leading Worship.” *Using Screens in Worship: One Church's Criteria | Reformed Worship*, [www.reformedworship.org/article/march-1992/seeker-service-new-strategy-evangelism](http://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-1992/seeker-service-new-strategy-evangelism).

<sup>129</sup> O’Neil, “Music Resources for Seeker Services.”

<sup>130</sup> C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (1992), 35-36. Quoted by Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching out without Dumbing down: a Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 130.

<sup>131</sup> Page and Lavon, *Hungry for Worship*, 58.

<sup>132</sup> White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 129.

in to an evangelistic tent.”<sup>133</sup> The congregation becomes a show audience that silently listens and does not participate. According to Webber worship is replaced when:

The overriding concern are entertainment and numbers. Television has given this approach its powerful support. It speaks in terms of the stage, the performers, the package, and the audience. It is a three-ring circus by the roadside. It gets the crowds, but what it feeds them is frequently shallow, hollow, and tasteless.<sup>134</sup>

White also stated that ...“the praise and worship model is often replaced in the Seekers’ service by a stress on performance by highly competent musicians.”<sup>135</sup> The final aim of this type of encounter is to briefly state biblical truth through songs in a space that does not resemble the rigors of the altar of God and the church lieu.

Christian tradition has deviated from the holy standard God established for His altar. As Page and Lavon clearly explain:

Performance-driven worship has taken its toll on churches. Most struggle to define the boundaries that separate entertainment and worship. This is not *American Idol!* Church members need to step out of the judge’s chair and cease focusing on individual preferences, likes, and dislikes. Likewise, it is time for worship leaders to step out of the spotlight. When it comes to worship, it was never intended for us.<sup>136</sup>

In many churches, worship in the altar has been modified to fit human requirements and has been shifted and focused to achieve worldly things. The altar that once was considered holy is now a concert stage where anyone can participate. Worshipers are now music players that come to show off their talents, where their hearts are tuned to a self-centered melody. As Page and

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<sup>133</sup> Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship: Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship II*, 395.

<sup>134</sup> Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, 395.

<sup>135</sup> White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 129.

<sup>136</sup> Page and Lavon, *Hungry for Worship*, 70.

Lavon point out, “The problem arises when the lines between performer and worshipper are not defined.”<sup>137</sup> Generations have been pulled apart in worship services because of different music styles, and to better accommodate personal preferences (worship wars).<sup>138</sup> Leaders are using worship services as a mechanism to bring people to church, and congregations have become crowds with a *what can you entertain me* attitude. “The major problem with performance-driven worship is that the congregation is robbed of the opportunity to respond directly to God.”<sup>139</sup>

Furthermore, these new ideas misplaced the responsibilities of the Levites in their music ministries. They bring crowds to the stage, but not to the feet of the Lord. “We have given them worship approached that cater to their preferences and feel-good devotionals to get them in the door, and then failed to disciple them into spiritually mature followers of Christ.”<sup>140</sup> “The music may be excellent and move people emotionally, but if not correctly focused, it is nothing more than entertainment.”<sup>141</sup> As Seel acknowledges, the worship leader, “[can] fix this problem in worship... use spoken dialog as testimony, etc. seeking to point them to why [they] are singing such and such a song, etc....too often, our song services go on for 20-30 minutes without directing the people about what to seek to experience.”<sup>142</sup> In other words, the worship/Word/altar experience is being camouflaged with a performance/techno/stage practice. For this reason, as

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<sup>137</sup> Page and Lavon, *Hungry for Worship*, 57.

<sup>138</sup> Robb Redman, “Worship Wars or Worship Awakening?” 24 Jan. 2010.

<sup>139</sup> Page and Lavon, *Hungry for Worship*, 58.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>142</sup> Seel, Interview.

Alexander resolves, “We need ‘a model of the church that is not built around performance theater. We need churches built around people sharing their lives in everyday ways of watching speakers and musicians perform.’”<sup>143</sup>

### Altar Viewpoints

Contemporary leaders, whether they are pastors, elders, or worship ministers, need to be aligned with what pleases God in His altar. Interestingly, there exist two different viewpoints to this issue. First, the eagerness of wanting to reach new believers for Christ pushes certain leaders to give into trends that are not altar worthy. Church elders are letting the younger generations take over, so teens can stay in church, eventually giving way to worship entertainment.

According to Jackson:

There is the theory that the Christian religion was never designed to be static. Proponents of this concept allege that beyond a few minimal components (e.g., the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died for the sins of humanity) Christianity is free to change with the times. It may adapt to various cultures. Its forms may be altered to meet the whims of new generations.<sup>144</sup>

Thus, as Randle describes, among the new changes observed are “[No suits are to be used] ...Services [are to be] shorter — and start later. Hymns [are to] give way to contemporary gospel. And the choir [is to now] be called “the worship team.”<sup>145</sup> Overall, Randle continues,

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<sup>143</sup> John Alexander, “Bleeding Hearts: How Church Communities Can Flourish”, *The Other Side* (1993), 61. Quoted by Marva, Dawn J. *Reaching out without Dumbing down: a Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 190.

<sup>144</sup> Wayne Jackson, “Is the Restoration Plea Valid?” *Christian Courier*, [www.christiancourier.com/articles/1547-is-the-restoration-plea-valid](http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1547-is-the-restoration-plea-valid).

<sup>145</sup> Aaron Randle, “Bucking a Trend, These Churches Figured out How to Bring Millennials Back to Worship.” *Kansascity*, *The Kansas City Star*, [www.kansascity.com/living/religion/article188544194.html](http://www.kansascity.com/living/religion/article188544194.html).

“by updating long-considered immovable church mores — dress codes and preaching styles, attitudes toward the secular, a willingness to discuss the taboo — and embracing modern music and technology (preach[ing] not from a Bible but from [an] iPad), these churches brim with youthful vivacity.”<sup>146</sup> With these changes, families have been divided during worship to accommodate their different preferences. Consequently, Pastor Sandy Wilson explains that “parents have gone hands-off with teaching their kids about worship... When kids [come] into the adult worship service in seventh grade, they are rowdy and unprepared for this type of worship. The children's church has actually become an impediment to their subsequent spiritual growth.”<sup>147</sup>

On the other hand, while the worship stage experience is occurring in many church realms, there is a current movement that wants to retain God’s holiness in the sanctuary. Interestingly, this yearning is taking place simultaneously within Catholicism and Protestantism. According to Pronechen, there is a move to restore the missing altar rail in many Roman Catholic churches. Stroik states that in the past, altar rails were eliminated because there was “a desire to make churches into gathering spaces more like Protestant meeting houses, and the argument that kneeling [was] a sign of submission, which [was] seen as disrespectful to the modern person — [they] didn’t kneel before kings and queens, so it was more ‘democratic’ not to kneel.”<sup>148</sup> However, many Catholic churches are reinstating altar rails to define the place of

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<sup>146</sup> Aaron Randle, “Bucking a Trend, These Churches Figured out How to Bring Millennials Back to Worship.”

<sup>147</sup> Angie Ward, “Let the Little Children Come.” *Christian History | Learn the History of Christianity & the Church*, [www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/summer/letthelittlechildrencome.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/summer/letthelittlechildrencome.html).

<sup>148</sup> Joseph Pronechen, “Altar Rail Returning to Use.” *National Catholic Register*, 2 July 2011, [www.ncregister.com/daily-news/altar-rails-returning-to-use](http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/altar-rails-returning-to-use).

holiness for its members to respect. There are yet more reasons for incorporating altar rails. Stroik also found that “[many] numerous visitors, don’t know how sacred the altar is and wander around the sanctuary. The church has to put up ropes and signs like in a museum to do what altar rails were supposed to do: ‘create a real threshold so people can tell it’s a special place, a holy place set apart.’”<sup>149</sup> As Greg Markey explained:

Altar rails give a clear designation as to what is the sanctuary...The word ‘sanctuary’ comes from the word ‘holy,’ which means ‘set apart.’ The sanctuary is set apart from the rest of the church because it reinforces our understanding of what holiness is. The sanctuary is symbolically the head of the church and represents Christ as the head.<sup>150</sup>

In the case of Protestant churches, many are not only restoring the sanctuary; but also, our defining the word holiness and stating its importance in the presence of God. Many leaders understand that the current entertainment stage experience has been provoked by the needs of the current culture. As Scandrett indicated:

While we’ve cast off old, legalistic notions of holiness, we’ve merely replaced them with private, moralistic notions... [There is a] quest for cultural relevance, which is defended in the name of winning others to Christ. If we talk about holiness with unbelievers, won’t that present just another hurdle for them to overcome on their way to Christ? For this and other reasons, we are rapidly forsaking our historic commitment to holiness. Recent polls show that many self-described evangelicals march in moral lockstep with mainstream American culture in practices of divorce, spousal abuse, extramarital sex, pornography consumption, materialism, and racism, just to name a few. While we tip our cap to the importance of holiness, many in our culture don’t view us as morally different in any meaningful way—except to see us as hypocrites.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Joel Scandrett and Sharla Fritz. “What Does God Mean When He Asks Us to Be Holy as He Is Holy?” *Christian History | Learn the History of Christianity & the Church*, Christianity Today, 28 Feb. 2012, [www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/theology/what-does-god-mean-when-he-asks-us-to-be-holy.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/theology/what-does-god-mean-when-he-asks-us-to-be-holy.html).

Keddie also concurred with this thought by stating, “Yet if you are not holy – if your speech is not seasoned with grace and your actions are not Christ like – what encouragement to believe on Christ will those around receive? Many spurn the gospel because they see little authentic godliness in the professing church.”<sup>152</sup>

For this reason, church leaders are also establishing a dress code among their congregations. Kirkpatrick observed, “...It [is] important to teach dress code not as a “code” but as a means of communication. If modesty is our value, we must then look to that value, not rules or codes.”<sup>153</sup> Reverend Mark H. Creech also stated:

Worship is essentially the offering up of our self to God as a sacrificial offering. This is the meaning of Paul's instructions when he writes, “therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1). In other words, New Testament worship in contrast to Old Testament practice requires we not only bring our best offering to the Temple, but that we bring ourselves, our entire selves in a hallowed manner, for now we are the Temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16,17). This means we should come before the Lord in reverence, presenting our best to Him – bringing our best gift – coming with our best attitude – making our best appearance.<sup>154</sup>

Basic theology is also being offered in certain youth circles. Crowe explained that basic theological teachings to the youth serves to teach God’s sovereignty, holiness, justice, love, and goodness. This biblical foundation helps to equip the young generation of worshipers to know: who they are, what is their purpose in life, what is right from wrong, and how to confront pain/moral confusion in the world they live in.<sup>155</sup> In addition, church leaders are also

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<sup>152</sup> Kiddie, John. “The Importance of Holiness.”

<sup>153</sup> Rich Kirkpatrick, “Church Dress Code: Rules vs. Values.” *ShareFaith.com*, 18 Oct. 2017, [www.sharefaith.com/blog/2016/07/church-dress-code-rules-versus-values/](http://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2016/07/church-dress-code-rules-versus-values/).

<sup>154</sup> Rich Kirkpatrick, “Church Dress Code: Rules vs. Values.”

<sup>155</sup> Jaquelle Crowe, “5 Reasons Why Teenagers Need Theology.” *The Gospel Coalition*, June 2016, 28, [www.the-gospelcoalition.org/article/5-reasons-why-teenagers-need-theology/](http://www.the-gospelcoalition.org/article/5-reasons-why-teenagers-need-theology/).

strengthening the youth participation within the church experience through the mentoring of older generations.<sup>156</sup> The new generation of worshipers need to feel part of the whole church experience. According to youth pastor Shane Burt-Miller:

Often, young people feel as if they have no place within the local church setting. This can be addressed if we become more intentional about mentorship and leadership development. When we help them to understand their identity in Christ, the significant roles they hold, and the ideas they bring, the illusion that they can wait until they are older will diminish.<sup>157</sup>

By understanding the need new generations have in feeling and being part of the whole church dynamics, current church leaders are adapting past teaching strategies to the demands of these generations without compromising the altar that pleases God. In and out church educating experiences (community service, missionary trips, challenging sermons, youth focused retreats etc.) allow leaders/mentors to give real experiences on what it means to be a true worshiper of God.<sup>158</sup>

#### Current Studies

Research on altar worship has previously examined on various issues. First, studies have focused on *tabernacle worship*. For example, Aubrey's study titled, "Keep the Fire Burning: Biblical Principles for a Church to Spark Revival in the Northeast," seeks to explain how the

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<sup>156</sup> Richard Rymarz, "Nurturing Well-Being through Religious Commitment: Challenges for Mainstream Christian Churches." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 29 July 2009.

<sup>157</sup> Shane B. Miller, "Where Young People Can Find Their Identity." *Where Young People Can Find Their Identity* | *HOLINESS TODAY* 2017, [www.holinesstoday.org/youth-identity](http://www.holinesstoday.org/youth-identity).

<sup>158</sup> Eugene C. Roehlkepartain and Peter L. Benson. *Youth in Protestant Churches*. Search Institute, 1993, [www.search-institute.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/youth\\_in\\_protestant\\_churches.pdf](http://www.search-institute.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/youth_in_protestant_churches.pdf).

conferences and tabernacle experiences offered at a Baptist Church in New York area catalyst for revival and renewal in the Northeast.<sup>159</sup> Krupp and Larsen also performed a study titled, “The Altar Call in the Church Today: Where God’s Presence and Self Sacrifice Meet”, was a project “... designed in the hope of offering a new perspective on what has traditionally been called the altar call or the invitation.”<sup>160</sup> In conclusion, the researchers explain that “...pastors are using various means and tools throughout a worship service that encourage altar moments in order to point people toward growth as disciples. Often pastors still offer an opportunity to respond to God’s presence through self-surrender at the end of the sermon.”<sup>161</sup> Moreover, Wilcox’s research titled, “The Story and the Song: Examining Worship in the Tabernacle in Relation to the Gospel and Postmodern Evangelism,” focuses on the importance of following the divine plan of worship presented in the Tabernacle of Moses in today’s worship service.<sup>162</sup>

Second, other studies have focused on *worship styles*. Choi’s study “Christ-centered Worship: Five New Testament Principles for the Korean Church” “...suggest[s] five principles of Christ-centered worship for Christians in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea in Seoul to apply to their Sunday services and private life.”<sup>163</sup> In conclusion, Choi found

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<sup>159</sup> Bruce D. Aubrey, “Keep the Fire Burning: Biblical Principles for a Church to Spark Revival in the Northeast” M.A. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2014.

<sup>160</sup> Gerry B. Krupp, and David L. Larsen, “The Altar Call in the Church Today: Where Gods Presence and Self Sacrifice Meet.” (D.Min. diss., Trinity International University, Ann Arbor, 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Debra E. Wilcox, “The Story and the Song: Examining Worship in the Tabernacle in Relation to the Gospel and Postmodern Evangelism” (M.A. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2017).

<sup>163</sup> Changhwan Choi, “The Worship Experience: Five Essential Ways a Pastor Leads a Congregation To Respond.”

that even though the participants of the survey were regular attendees to church, they did not cultivate their lives in worship to God during the rest of the week. Heidy Hoernig's study titled, "Worship in the Suburbs: The Development Experience of Recent Immigrant Religious Communities" objectives were "...to compare experiences across minority religious groups in order to explore development issues, to better understand relationships between religion, culture and land use, and to examine municipal planning implications of and responses to religious diversity. The study findings show that most place of worship development experiences have been characterized by adaptation rather than conflict."<sup>164</sup>

In addition, Johnson's research titled, "Worship Styles, Music, and Social Identity: A Communication Study" "...investigates music and worship style preferences... this study seeks to answer the following questions: Does worship preference predict organizational identification? Does music preference predict worship style preference?"<sup>165</sup> "Findings indicate that demographics are an important factor in worship style as expected, but that music preference still largely influences an individual's worship style choice."<sup>166</sup> Legg's study "Worldviews in Music a Rhetorical Study of Philosophies of Truth and Reality Found in Country Music and Contemporary Christian Music" "...examines the philosophies of truth and reality that are

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<sup>164</sup> Heidy J. Hoernig, "Worship in the Suburbs: The Development Experience of Recent Immigrant Religious Communities" (M.A. diss., University of Waterloo, 2006).

<sup>165</sup> Terry L. Johnson, "Worship Styles, Music, and Social Identity: A Communication Study" M.A. diss., Cleveland State University, 2008.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

communicated through the lyrics of Country and Contemporary Christian Music.”<sup>167</sup>

“Contemporary Christian songs were found to communicate a Theistic view of truth and reality every time worldviews were brought up. This means that anyone listening to a CCM station will likely be receiving Theistic messages.”<sup>168</sup>

Third, worship studies have also examined *worship space*. Kendrick’s research titled, “Narrow Your Focus: a Strategy for Revitalization of a Small to Medium Size Plateaued or Declining Traditional Church,” “...attempts to identify reproducible principles for the revitalization of small to medium sized plateaued or declining traditional churches... It is the purpose of this thesis to give pastors of small to medium sized plateaued and declining traditional churches the tools necessary to achieve revitalization.”<sup>169</sup> Sauskojus’ study “Incorporating a Pedagogy of Worship in the Community Group Ministry of Grace Bible Church” “...was conceived and further designed to discern the reality of an intentional worship component in small groups, particularly the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church.”<sup>170</sup> Wheeler’s investigation titled, “Visual Art, the Artist and Worship in the Reformed Tradition: A Theological Study” examined how the “ biblical narrative with its theological insights can be interpreted into a visual language and used by the church as complementary too,

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<sup>167</sup> Karen L. Legg, “Worldviews in Music a Rhetorical Study of Philosophies of Truth and Reality Found in Country Music and Contemporary Christian Music” (M.A. diss., The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 1979).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Johnny L. Kendrick, “Narrow Your Focus: a Strategy for Revitalization of a Small to Medium Size Plateaued or Declining Traditional Church” (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2009).

<sup>170</sup> Jeremy G. Sauskojus, “Incorporating a Pedagogy of Worship in the Community Group Ministry of Grace Bible Church” (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2019).

but never replacing, biblical preaching and teaching in words.”<sup>171</sup> The study concluded that “the visual dimensions of the worship space is important to allow for this space to function as an invitation and call to worship.”

Fourth, studies have also focused on *struggles between modern and traditional worship*. Bullock’s study titled, “Sing Unto The Lord A New Song—Just Not That One! A Case Study of Music Censorship in Free Will Baptist Colleges,” “[was performed] to highlight the ways that the Christian church is still enforcing music censorship and to provide insight into how this censorship is affecting the current generation of believers.”<sup>172</sup> “Even though music censors attempt to guide or even preclude the use of personal choice in music, it is clear that the students interviewed still retain personal choice when it comes to the styles of music they enjoy.”<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, Jordan M. Covarelli’s research, “The Ancient-Future of Worship Education: the Evangelical-Sacramental Movements Effect on Modern Worship Education,” “... looks at developments in evangelical/Pentecostal contemporary Christian worship music (CWM) in response to its theological critiques and analyzes the effects they are having on what training worship leaders will need.”<sup>174</sup> “This research showed that evangelical-sacramental churches still use contemporary and modern musical genres; but also, use traditional songs. The research

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<sup>171</sup> Geraldine J. Wheeler, “Visual Art, the Artist and Worship in the Reformed Tradition: A Theological Study” (M.A. diss., Australian Catholic University, 2003).

<sup>172</sup> John E. Bullock, “Sing Unto The Lord A New Song—Just Not That One! A Case Study of Music Censorship in Free Will Baptist Colleges” (M.A. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2015.)

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Jordan M. Covarelli, “The Ancient-Future of Worship Education: the Evangelical-Sacramental Movements Effect on Modern Worship Education” (M.A. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2018).

shows that these churches require worship leaders to be proficient in modern and traditional music styles, historical worship practices, songwriting, and pastoral care.”<sup>175</sup> Celso Fernandes’s study “The Liturgy of Hebrews: An analysis of how social changes influence the style of worship services” “... analyzes and compares two moments that Christianity suffered influences from changes that occurred in society. The first moment is based upon the Epistle of Hebrews, in the first century of the Christian age, when it dismembered itself out of the Jewish liturgy and formed a liturgical speech for itself. The other moment is the present day, where the worship services have received strong influences from changes that society has suffered.”<sup>176</sup> Philip’s research, “Blended Worship: A Future Model of Worship for the Presbyterian Churches in South Korea,” “...provide[s] a future model of blended worship for the Presbyterian churches in South Korea. The project thus examines the nature of true worship in the Bible and identifies how the worship form has changed throughout the history.”<sup>177</sup>

Fifth, multiple studies have also examined *worship practice transformation*. For example, Ronald Bowles investigation, “A Case Study Analysis of the Process of Worship Change among Baptist Churches in Dallas County, Texas,” “... was a qualitative case study analysis of the process of worship change and transition undertaken by several Baptist churches in Dallas County, Texas. The purpose of the current study was to identify an effective process of worship style change and transition through a case study and cross-case analysis of four Baptist churches

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Celso E. Fernandes. “The Liturgy Of Hebrews: An Analysis of How Social Changes Influence the Style of Worship Services” (M.A. diss., 2006).

<sup>177</sup> Lee Phillip, “Blended Worship: A Future Model of Worship for the Presbyterian Churches in South Korea” (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2014).

that had completed the transitional process.”<sup>178</sup> Byrd’s study titled, “The Impact of Lyric Choices on Spiritual Edification,” “... attempted to identify lyric choices that promoted strong personal perceptions of spiritual edification in a sample of 70 evangelical believers between the ages of 18-23 years of age who attended a large university in the Mid-Atlantic United States and were currently enrolled in an introductory worship course. The results showed a statistically significant difference in spiritual edification from pretest to posttest after exposure to worship lyrics in general. In addition, there was a significantly higher spiritual edification score in the integrated lyric group, as compared to the emotional lyric group.”<sup>179</sup>

On the other hand, Doss’ research titled, “Spiritual Transformation and Its Implications for Christian Worship,” “... presents a biblical foundation for transformation and scriptural examples of lives that were transformed by the power of God. Study is dedicated to the development of spiritual disciplines that produce life change in private worship.”<sup>180</sup> Haglund’s study, “Worship Renewal through Discipleship: How Discipleship and Mission Affects Our Worship,” “... examines the impact that discipleship has on participation and perceptions during congregational singing. Results indicate that those who have been discipled to actively participate in God’s mission of redemption in the world are less dependent on that which occurs

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<sup>178</sup> Ronald E. Bowles, “A Case Study Analysis of the Process of Worship Change among Baptist Churches in Dallas County, Texas” (Ed. D. diss., Dallas Baptist University, 2017. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.)

<sup>179</sup> Hanna J. Byrd, “The Impact of Lyric Choices on Spiritual Edification” (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2019.)

<sup>180</sup> Thomas W. Doss, “Spiritual Transformation and Its Implications for Christian Worship” (M.A. diss., Ann Arbor, 2015).

inside the worship event to engage them in singing because of what they have experienced outside of the worship event—namely, God using them in his mission of redemption.”<sup>181</sup>

In addition, Hodge’s research, “Multisensory Worship in Traditional Settings,” “...shares how multisensory worship is vital in reaching people today and how multisensory worship can be implemented in traditional settings small and medium-sized churches where worship has primarily been an exercise of print culture.”<sup>182</sup> Hodge concludes, “With the use of these multisensory elements of worship along with a new planning matrix, even the smallest of churches can produce meaningful worship experiences that speak to all generations.”<sup>183</sup>

Lipinski’s study, “Engaging Postmoderns in Worship: a Study of Effective Techniques and Methods Utilized by Two Growing Churches in Northern California,” indicates that, “The purpose of this project is to provide effective methodology for engaging postmodern worshippers.”<sup>184</sup> In conclusion, Lepinski states that, “...in a constantly changing and dynamic culture, some methodologies have the potential to be spuriously adopted by churches without reference to the theological underpinnings of those methods.”<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Kevin Haglund, “Worship Renewal through Discipleship: How Discipleship and Mission Affects Our Worship” (M.A. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2017).

<sup>182</sup> James Hodge, “Multisensory Worship in Traditional Settings” (M.A. diss., Texas Christian University, 2008.)

<sup>183</sup> Hodge, “Multisensory Worship in Traditional Settings”.

<sup>184</sup> Jon Paul Lipinski, “Engaging Postmoderns in Worship: a Study of Effective Techniques and Methods Utilized by Two Growing Churches in Northern California” D.Min. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2010.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, Moore's investigation, "Sing to the Lord a New Song: A Study of Changing Musical Practices in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1861-1901," reports on how the Presbyterian Church of Victoria used music in the role of worship during the latter half of the 19th century. "The study concludes that the process of musical change shows the Presbyterian Church of Victoria to have been a forward-looking and well-endowed institution with the confidence to take initiatives independent of Scottish control."<sup>186</sup> Graham's work titled, "Ministry through Musical Performance: Establishing Biblical, Historical, and Pedagogical (Educational) Precedent for the Christian Performing Artist." "...proposes the artist is a communicator of the Gospel through music and seeks to substantiate the Christian performing artist through biblical, historical, and educational rationale and precedent."<sup>187</sup> Thornton's study, "Exploring the Contemporary Congregational Song Genre: Texts, Practice, and Industry," "... sheds new light on the CCS genre, articulating its musical, lyrical, and extra-musical elements in greater detail and depth than has previously been available. It also reveals CCS as primarily a functional genre, facilitating musical worship for individual and gathered Christians."<sup>188</sup> Thornton's work concludes, "Tensions between the new and the familiar, the individual and

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<sup>186</sup> Laurence J. Moore, "Sing to the Lord a New Song: A Study of Changing Musical Practices in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1861-1901" (M.A. diss., Australian Catholic University, 2004).

<sup>187</sup> Lindsey M. Graham, "Ministry through Musical Performance: Establishing Biblical, Historical, and Pedagogical (Educational) Precedent for the Christian Performing Artist" (D.Min. diss., Ann Arbor, 2018).

<sup>188</sup> Daniel Thornton, "Exploring the Contemporary Congregational Song Genre: Texts, Practice, and Industry" (PhD diss., Macquarie University, 2015).

communal, the professional and vernacular, all contribute to the formation and evolution of the contemporary congregational song genre.”<sup>189</sup>

Also, Wood’s study, “Where Time and Eternity Intersect: the Integration of the Liturgical Calendar into the Worship Practices of the Evangelical Church,” “...examine[s] the historical developments of the use of the liturgical calendar and the value of introducing it to the evangelical church setting.”<sup>190</sup> Wood’s findings are as follow, “The liturgical calendar also provides a rich panorama of church history as the backdrop for worship. The liturgical calendar connects us to Christian communities across culture, race, language, and time. The liturgical calendar tells the story of salvation and offers an experience of time that transcends that of the world and calls us to see the deeper meaning of our lives lived out through the Word.”<sup>191</sup>

Finally, additional studies on Puerto Rican worship were found. For example, Jeanene Coleson’s research, “The Puerto Ricanization of Protestantism in Puerto Rico, 1898–1939,” “...identifies certain aspects of Puerto Rican culture that affected the religious and cultural development of Protestantism, recognizes its Reformed and liberal roots and utilizes specific case studies to illustrate the development of Puerto Rican leadership. Throughout this study, the Puerto Ricanization of the Protestant faith is explored in administrative, financial, liturgic, political, literary, theological and, among others, feminine aspects.”<sup>192</sup> Martinez’s study,

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<sup>189</sup> Daniel Thornton, “Exploring the Contemporary Congregational Song Genre: Texts, Practice, and Industry”

<sup>190</sup> Leah Woods, “Where Time and Eternity Intersect: the Integration of the Liturgical Calendar into the Worship Practices of the Evangelical Church” (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, Ann Arbor, 2018).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Jeanene M. Coleson, “The Puerto Ricanization of Protestantism in Puerto Rico, 1898–1939” (diss., Ann Arbor, 2007).

“The Social Thought of Protestant Christians in Puerto Rico in the 1960s: Beginnings of a Puerto Rican Theology of Liberation,” examine, “The social and theological contribution of Samuel Silva Gotay and Luis N. Rivera Pagan [as] a formulation of a situated and conditioned response to the socio-political, economical and religious conditions of Puerto Rican society in the 1960s.”<sup>193</sup> Finally, Vazquez’s et. al investigation titled, “Go and Make Disciples’: Evangelization, Conversion Narratives, and Salvation in Puerto Rican Protestant Evangelical Salsa Music,” studies how the music genre of salsa invaded the Christian worship music as an evangelical strategy in Puerto Rico. Their conclusion is as follows, “evangelical salsa music developed as music of evangelization as a result of the marginalization of salsa musicians from the Protestant evangelical community. Rather than abandon their faith, the musicians' response was the development of a salsa music expression that combined evangelical faith with the ‘heavy’ salsa tradition of 1970s salsa music.”<sup>194</sup>

All these works on worship confirm the importance of its study; thus, since no research was found pertaining the views rural Christian pastors have on the traditional/contemporary worship practices at the altar, this new study titled, Reinstating the Altar that Pleases God in the New Generations of Worshipers Located in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico is important for the field for several reasons. First, this study brings to the new generation of worshipers that are emerging and to pastors abroad, especially in the municipality of Utuado, a

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<sup>193</sup> Felipe Martinez, “The Social Thought of Protestant Christians in Puerto Rico in the 1960s: Beginnings of a Puerto Rican Theology of Liberation” (PhD. diss., Drew University, Ann Arbor, 1997).

<sup>194</sup> Luis A. Vazquez, Matthew J. Countryman, Jorge Duany, Daniel H. Levine, and Silvia Pedraza, “‘Go and Make Disciples’: Evangelization, Conversion Narratives, and Salvation in Puerto Rican Protestant Evangelical Salsa Music” (PhD diss., Ann Arbor, 2011).

new conscience of the importance of the altar in the new contemporary church. Second, this research gives a deep biblical view of what worship that pleases God is, a style of life. Third, it sheds light on how rapid evangelical changes are approaching the rural municipalities of Puerto Rico, especially Utuado.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

#### Introduction

The research study titled, “Reinstating the Altar that Pleases God in the New Generations of Worshipers Located in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico”, can be categorized as a qualitative research, exploratory/single instrumental, case study. According to the book *Qualitative Inquiry And Reserach Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*,

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative research studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore, a *case study* is defined as an “...exploration of a bounded system [of time and place] through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources [observations, interviews, audio-visual material, documents, reports, among others] and information rich in context”.<sup>196</sup> In other words, the researcher examines the topic being investigated through the eyes of those who are experiencing the phenomenon or who have experienced it. Moreover, a “Case study research involves developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or of multiple cases.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry And Reserach Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018), 7.

<sup>196</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Research and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998).

<sup>197</sup> Abbas Tashakkori & Charles Teddlie, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2009), 25.

This research topic can be further classified as an *instrumental* case study according to the definition provided by Creswell and Poth<sup>198</sup> which states: “in a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue.” According to Yin<sup>199</sup>, an *exploratory* case study is “used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.”<sup>200</sup> Concerning this exploratory feature of the case study, the intervention that will be explored are the viewpoints that pastors of the Central Mountain region (specifically Utuado) have concerning the worship/Altar experience within their churches. This case study’s purpose is to identify similar and/or different skills/activities that are being implemented in the worship/Altar experience of the selected congregations found in Utuado.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, the case study also explores how these skills/activities strengthen the congregation’s desire to please God and serve their community. Finally, this research can also be known as a single instrumental study because

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<sup>198</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Reserach Design*, 98.

<sup>199</sup> Haiyan Zhang, Rodney Washington and Jianjun Yin, “Improving Strategies for Low-Income Family Children's Information Literacy”, *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 2, no. 9, (2014), 655-658.

<sup>200</sup> Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researcer”, *The qualitative report* 13, no. 4, (2008, December), 544-559.

<sup>201</sup> This municipality is located in the central region of the island of Puerto Rico. Because of its Indian heritage and archaeological findings, Utuado (Taíno Indian name that means “among mountains”) is considered one of Puerto Rico’s most treasured landmarks. It was established by the Spaniards in 1739. Its 113.5 square miles is mainly recognized for its coffee plantation, elapsed gold mines and Indian ceremonial grounds, the largest one in the Caribbean. At present, the past great agro-economy has decreased, causing the region to be one of limited labor and latifundia. In spite of this, the region is exposed to Christianity due to the varied presence of denominational and independent Christian churches.

it will focus on identifying the skills/activities a small group of participants from the municipality of Utuado CUC (5 pastors) are applying with the congregations.

According to Merriam and Tisdell<sup>202</sup>, in a qualitative case study, the research serves as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. “Qualitative researchers typically employ inductive logic or reasoning, which involves arguing from the particular to the general.”<sup>203</sup> In this case, the researcher will have the opportunity to question the participants regarding the strategies and techniques they use during their congregations worship experience. These responses are analyzed by the researcher and allow him/her to arrive to conclusions regarding the participants strategies.

### Design

For the fulfillment of this case study, a specific group of participants were selected. The participants complied with the following characteristics: 1) they currently served as pastors, 2) their churches were located specifically in the municipality of Utuado (Central Mountain Region), and 3) they accepted to be interviewed.

Based on these characteristics, the group of participants were classified as a *unique sample*. According to Merriam and Tisdell<sup>204</sup>, “A unique sample is based on unique atypical, perhaps rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest.” In order to select this specific group of participants, the study followed a *purposeful sampling* strategy. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain

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<sup>202</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2016).

<sup>203</sup> Tashakkori and Teddlie, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research*, 25.

<sup>204</sup> Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 97.

insight; and therefore, must select a sample from which the most can be learned.”<sup>205</sup> Such is the case of the selected participants who were current pastors serving the community of believers in the Utuado area who accepted to share their opinions on worship and the individual/collective worship experiences in their churches. As Creswell and Poth acknowledge, “All of the individuals need to have a story to tell about their lived experiences.”<sup>206</sup>

As previously stated, while performing the literature review for this study, numerous topics on worship were found; however, very few focused on the Latino altar experience, and none had researched the population here being investigated. Thus, a brief questionnaire (Appendix E) was developed to obtain a local viewpoint on the selected topic. Overall, five (5) web conference software interviews (via Zoom) were performed with community pastors of Utuado, Puerto Rico. The interviewed participants were selected according to their consent, availability, experience, and this study’s time frame. Through web conference software (via Zoom), the participants provided answers regarding their lived experiences and how (based on what they have learned) they provided strategies that support their congregation’s worship/altar setting. In addition, all interviews took place under the authorization of Liberty University IRB protocols for study participants’ confidentiality.

The questionnaire was organized in three sections. The *first and second sections* had questions regarding biographical data of the participants (e.g. name, age, gender, occupation, academic preparation, tears of conversion and pastoral experience). The *third section* had questions concerning their definitions and perspectives on worship, past/current church worship experiences, and viewpoints on how the worship/Altar experience should take place:

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<sup>205</sup> Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 98.

<sup>206</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Reserach Design*, 157.

I. Participant' Biographical Data

1. Name
2. Gender
3. Age

II. Occupation/Academic-Church Experience

1. Occupation
2. Academic Preparation
3. Years of conversion
4. Years of ministry experience
5. Years of pastoral experience

III. Research Questions

1. How would you define *worship*?
2. Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience?  
Explain.
3. Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your years of spiritual growth. Explain.
4. Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.
5. How is worship conducted in your church?
  - number of worshipers
  - number of musicians
  - type of instruments
  - attire (casual, formal, uniform)
  - worship format (number of hymns or songs)

6. Have you noticed any change concerning the worship experience through time? Explain.
  - Worshipers
  - Altar
  - Music
7. What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused this transformation?
8. What strategies have you established to bring back new generations back to the previous altar experience? Explain.

The responses offered were transcribed and translated for this research's purpose (Appendix G). To ensure a thorough analysis of the data obtained, the *top-down method* was used to first examine the general picture of the interviews to then study each part by comparing and contrasting the findings.<sup>207</sup> In addition, as DeVault recommends *trustworthiness* (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) was assured with the *triangulation method*: "Triangulation is accomplished by asking the same research questions [to] different study participants and by collecting data from different sources and by using different methods to answer those research questions."<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> James Chen, "Top-Down Analysis." Investopedia. Investopedia, January 29, 2020. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/topdownanalysis.asp>.

<sup>208</sup> Gigi DeVault, "Talking Points for Convincing Clients of Data Credibility." The Balance Small Business. The Balance Small Business, August 20, 2019. <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/establishing-trustworthiness-in-qualitative-research-2297042>.

Overall, in the final part of this case study, the researcher: 1) established the topics and themes, 2) identified similarities and differences between the participants' answers, 3) interpreted the results and 4) presented the findings of the study.

### Questions and Hypothesis

The following guiding research questions and hypothesis were addressed for this particular study:

**RQ 1:** What social, economic, and generational factors have caused the altar to stage transformation?

**H 1:** *The social, economic, and generational factors that have caused worship to transform from a Christ-focus act to entertainment include global communication/media invasion, economic recessions and social-family turmoil are the constant factors that have promoted this altar to stage transformation.*

**RQ 2:** What strategies are pastors practicing in the worship service to maintain the altar pleasing to God?

**H 2:** *Strategies employed by pastors practicing in the worship service to maintain the altar pleasing to God include reinforcing the importance of fasting and prayer, bible study and worship seminars, as corporal strategies to maintain an altar that pleases the Triune God.*

At large, this study yielded meaningful findings about the perceptions of a particular group of pastors of Utuado have towards the Altar that pleases God.

## Chapter 4

### Research Findings

#### Responses

In general, the pastors interviewed fulfilled the following profile: gender (three males and two females), age (two aged 52, 56, 73 and 79 years of age), academic preparation (three bachelor's degrees, one Mizpah Biblical Institute and one juris doctor), years of conversion (average 62.4 years), ministry experience (average 38 years) and pastoral experience (average 13 years). When asked about their personal definition of worship, Pastor D.R. (50-year-old male pastor-theologian with 12 years of pastoral experience) affirmed that:

Worship is the Christian believers' lifestyle. In a specific moment of time, we will stop being ministers, but we will always be worshipers. In eternity, there will be no ministers, but there will be worshipers. Worship should transcend the altar; it should not be limited because it does not begin or end there. The altar is the place where we encounter God; it operates and functions according to the Scriptures. It is possible that the altar where you encounter God is not the physical altar found at church. [This practice] is not limited to the church experience.

Pastor M.C. (50-year-old female with 20 years of ministry experience) defined worship as the "...the moment when you pour your heart to the Lord. The moment where you express to God who He is to you." Pastor J.P. (54-year-old male pastor/business administrator with 15 years of pastoral experience) acknowledged that worship is "the maximum expression of praise a Christian can express. It is when we are able to praise God with all our soul, and in each action of our lives. Not only raising our hands; but also, with offerings and service." Pastor J.C.R. (71-year-old male pastor/human resources director with 13 years of pastoral experience) explained that "worship is the process of entering in God's presence. It is a manner of believers recognizing God's greatness and love." Pastor A.A. (77-year-old female pastor/ elementary

school teacher with 12 years of pastoral experience) stated that worship “is the maximum exaltation to the Lord.”

When questioned about the importance of worship within the church experience Pastor D.R. explained:

It is essential because worship is the first step in communicating with God. If we examine the model of prayer found in Mathew 6: “Our Father ...”, first I address the Father. Then, I find Him in the heavens to later adore Him (“...in heaven, hallowed be your name”) ... In general humanity has been designed to worship something. Every person adores a being; this explains why within the human heart there is an urge to worship someone or something greater than himself/herself; this can be offered vertically (to God) or horizontally (to the people and/or things).

Pastor M.C. answered:

Scripture clearly states that God is looking for true and spirit worshipers. In other words, there are twenty people with white robes, but you say, “we are looking for one with a red shirt.” Your focus will be on the one who you are looking for... the one with the red shirt. This is exactly what God does; He is looking for the true and spirit worshipers. He is looking... Their many who are wanting to worship Him, but He is seeking those who are genuine, real, the one who shakes His throne.

Pastor J.P. stated that “it is indispensable. When we want to have an experience with God we need to have that goal: become a worshiper.” Pastor J.C.R. indicated, “Worship is the key to enter God’s presence. It pulls believers away from world interactions and inserts them into His presence. It also lets us develop *agape-love* among the congregation.” Pastor A.A. sustained that “it is essential for in a church where there is no worship, the church does not exist.”

The third question concerning the level of importance the altar of God had during their years of spiritual growth, obtained the following response by Pastor D.R. “...the place where we minister is a holy place because it has been separated to worship God; it is holy. The message should not change, but the methods can. The message is sacred, but the methods are not.” Pastor M.C. expressed:

The altar is and will always be holy; this is not negotiable. Let us look at it this way, Scripture narrates a valley of dry bones and the voice of God said: “Son of man prophecy!” By the word of God through man, the dry bones will recover life. This is how it is with the altar. Through what flows from the altar, people receive life or death. We have to give the altar its rightful place. This is where the holiness of God is manifested, and it has to be in each person that stands on it. They have to have the respect and project the reverence God deserves. This is the importance I saw and learned to have when I was a little girl. However, this prerequisite has become flexible because now you can stand at the altar with ripped jeans and miniskirts. Many say why not? I tell you why not... because God demands respect. Sanctity is not negotiable.

Pastor J.P. explained that “the Lord’s altar has always had a high level of importance for it is where God’s presence dwells. We must be respectful to it.” Pastor J.C.R. indicated, “In the past, there was respect and devotion in the altar experience which motivated me to go another level. Therefore, I decided to join the church choir in order to learn more about the depths of altar worship. I also understood that learning the church hymns was the opportunity of being able to enter the Lord’s presence.” Pastor A.A. clarified that “the Lord’s altar was and is sacred. Not everyone is called to occupy it; it is a privilege for those who are called to stand on it. God does not change, and He is just. The altar is not to be taken lightly.”

The fourth question asked about the similarity of their altar experience in their youth with what they experience now in their churches. Pastor D.R. understood that there has been a “sudden change of view” concerning the altar. Pastor M.C. stated:

The same passion? No. There is always one that loves God above all things; but there are some that think that this is a talent show. They think that way because they have the talent; they should jump over true worshipers. This is not the way it is supposed to be like! Looks and talent are nothing, this is not important in God’s presence. What is essential is that lives receive life with what the one standing at the altar is imparting.

Pastor J.P. stated, “... that many have lost the respect towards the altar and what it represents.” Pastor J.C.R. affirmed, “In today’s congregation there is too much irreverence. Travelling as a preacher for twenty years before becoming a pastor let me notice how church members spent more time talking, texting, and expecting for the cellphone to ring instead of

aiming for God's presence and visitation." Pastor A.A. pointed out, "... worship and the [sacred] meaning of the altar is being shaken to its core. And this is not positive but negative.

Nonetheless, in our temple, we try to keep its integrity according to how it is established in the Bible."

The fifth question queried on how worship was conducted in the participants' churches. Pastor D.R. explained that there was a total of thirteen altar worshipers (six musicians). Among the instruments played were drums, acoustic/electric guitar, electric guitar, bass, piano, minor percussion, and electronic sequences. They mainly dressed casually but had uniforms for special occasions. Their worship experience mainly had four songs (hymns, praise and worship songs and *coritos*<sup>209</sup>). Occasionally, they also presented music videos during worship. Pastor M.C. explained that they did not have a structured choir, but they had different vocalists who sang. Among the instruments played were conga, bongo, drums, tambora, tambourine and a bass. They also used music tracks, especially during the kids' services. There was a required formal dress code, but every society/group (women, men, and children) had a selected uniform. Pastor J.P. mentioned that in the church there were three music ministries, with a total of twenty altar worshipers (five musicians). Among the instruments played were drums, electric guitars, and bass. There was a required formal dress code, but they also had uniforms for special occasions. They divided the worship experience in three parts: praise, petitions, and offerings. Pastor J.C.R. stated that the church had one worship group of seven altar worshipers (three musicians). The instruments used were three acoustic/electric guitars, piano and a cajon with a minor percussion set. For every service, a uniform or formal dress code was required. The worship service mainly consisted of five songs (depending on the move of the Holy Spirit), inserted with offerings,

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<sup>209</sup> Biblical repetitive short, fast-paced verses with a Caribbean rhythm.

petitions, and other congregational prayers. Pastor A.A. explained that their church had seven altar worshipers (two musicians). Among the instruments used were drums, a minor percussion set and a classical/electric guitar. He described their wardrobe as casual but modest. Usually they had four songs during their worship time (hymns and *coritos*).

The sixth question asked whether they had noticed through time any form of transformation concerning the worship, altar, and music experience. Pastor D.R. acknowledged:

Praise aims towards what the Lord does. Worship aims towards what the Lord is. Knowledge has increased in resources, techniques, repertoire, and musical genres. I have witnessed this transformation; generations change. According to my perspective, we are not better worshipers than others because of our preparation and/or resources. Innovation does not mean that worship will be better. Technology has caused a transformation that can contribute positively but can also become a distraction. At times, we need to emphasize the need to keep focused.

Pastor M.C. admitted:

There have been positive and negative transformations. There was a time where the worship team fasted together because they felt the longing of seeking the Holy Spirit. However, now it has become flexible or oriented to *when* the worship team has the time to fast and look for God's presence. Also, the title of "artists" given to those in the worship team seems secular. I have experiences of hearing these artists express when you invite them to your church: "I can worship in your church for an offering of \$3,000 and if you have a large crowd." When you bring the world to the church you damage everything. The altar view and respect has also been transformed. I can testify that by having the altar closer to the audience has a positive transformation. However, I have also seen churches where members are secluded due to the reserved sections for pastors, musicians, prophets, etc. It is almost secluded and elitist.

Pastor J.P. affirmed:

In the past, we used to sing many *coritos*. Now, we are more aware of the lyrics; there were *coritos* that did not focus on praise. We are now focusing on preparing ministry leaders for worship. Worshipers have been musically trained; we also emphasize [the importance of a spiritual life] of the worshiper. Overall, our music ministry has evolved; we have higher standards for altar worshipers. They need to rehearse; worshipping is not about lovely singing... The altar experience has evolved, and it is now difficult to have a profound spiritual experience due to worldly distractions... We have tried to keep worship music to what is expected according to Christian standards. Now, there is more variety, but we still conserve *coritos* and introduced worship songs.

Pastor J.C.R. recognized, “worshippers are less committed to the church and the Lord. In the altar, there has been a transformation in the physical appearance. Many worshippers wear inadequate dressing. Music now is more varied. I perceive that the lyrics focus on various themes on the Lord and the spiritual life of the believer.” Pastor A.A. claimed “...there has been a total transformation. Now, many do not go to church to worship the Lord, but to be entertained... [In the altar,] Christian worship [has become] secular music. [Modern Worshipers] copy what they see in the world with secular music.”

The seventh question queried on what factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) were believed to have caused this transformation. Pastor D.R. stated, “without a doubt, social factors have caused this transformation. In the beginnings here in Utuado, the Christian community was of low minimum resources. Eventually, things have changed, and now there are more resources (academic preparation, technology evolution, etc.) that have allowed the Christian community to evolve with the new generations.” Pastor M.C. explained, “Every nationality has its customs and traditions, but there has to be some rules for order. If a Muslim comes to me and says, ‘Allah is God,’ I respect Him, but I do not share his view. I cannot negotiate what I have learned. As a pastor, I cannot expect for outsiders that visit my church to impose their point of view.”

Pastor J.P. affirmed:

First, the present economic crisis has greatly impacted the church. In the past, people enjoyed a simpler life. We currently have members who work late and on Sundays. The current economic needs affect worship. Social factors have also hindered worship; we perceive a family disintegration. Parents in the past, would educate their children at home; they would establish a family altar at home. Now, [parents have no time] the Church is called to have a mayor role on these issues. Finally, the generational factor has also been affected. We have a generation that has confronted serious problems in understanding how to have an intimate relationship with the Lord. People come to Christ but are easily pulled away. It is a more reluctant and apathetic generation. Overall, we are influenced by many factors.

Pastor J.C.R. detailed, “global communication/media invasion, economic recessions and social-family turmoil are the constant factors influencing these new generations’ identity, social alliances, fashion style and view of life.” Pastor A.A. asserted:

These changes come from other countries that have great influence over the new generation. Whatever is shorter and easier to do is considered. The problem is basically that congregations have been taught about the love of God, and that He does not question what is wrong. As a believer, I can do whatever pleases me and I will still be saved. You can observe this during Christian concerts. Leaders state, ‘raise your hands and you will be saved.’ And this is what makes them free from sin. On the other hand, many pastors will allow ‘certain things to happen’ in church just to keep finances balanced and the congregation happy.

The final question of the interview requested the participants to offer the strategies established in their churches to bring back young worshipers to the altar experience. Pastor D.R. explained:

We use the Bible; it offers fundamental truths. The altar and the microphone are quite alluring; hence, even though we have had members that can sing, they do not have to belong to the worship ministry. One of our strategies is education and bible teachings. You can find one who sings to the masses, but we are a mass singing to the Lord. We humbly sing and worship the King. It is important for the church to have members who know how to sing, but it is also important for the Church to understand that we are all worshipers. We are practicing [now] what we will do for eternity.

Pastor M.C. stated:

We have done everything according to the Word. The young generations that come to our church fall in love with God and the church. They tell me: “we want to participate” and I give them the opportunity. We have a service that is called “The Friend’s Service” each person has to bring a friend to the service. If we use secular strategies to bring the new generations, it will be like going back to Egypt.

Pastor J.P. informed, “we have planned and offered teachings/education focused towards music/worship/voice, and retreats for spiritual issues. We have also offered and established a dress code. The church testimony serves as a physical and spiritual model to the younger generations. It can be done in the Lord.” Pastor J.C.R. sustained, “first, we have motivated the congregation to increase their spiritual quest through praying and fasting. Second, sermons,

bible studies and retreats focused on the subject on holiness, worship and altar experience on what is expected have helped on guiding the members and altar worshipers to do what delights the Lord.” Pastor A.A. explained, “I believe that young members begin to grow according to their Church experience and [elders’] testimony. They need to know that the altar is sacred, and if they come [to church] they need to please God.”

Overall, the previous information provided general findings obtained from print/ electronic sources and five (5) web conference software interviews (via Zoom) allowed the researcher to draw conclusions and recommendations on the selected topic.

### Findings

Among the study’s findings, several assertions can be pointed out. First, worship is an important part of the Christian service to God. Among its many definitions, Andrew Hill described it as an “essentially spiritual, an attitude and habit of the heart.”<sup>210</sup> When worship is genuine and led by ministers empowered by the Holy Spirit, we will find the presence and Shekinah of God; just as the priest did in the Tabernacle. As Edwards indicated, “God’s presence is the distinguishing factor among His people—His real people.”<sup>211</sup> On the other hand, when worship is centered on the people, we will not find healing or anointing because God does not share His glory (Isa. 42:8). As Lewis states, “Whenever we edify, we glorify, but when we

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<sup>210</sup> Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 11.

<sup>211</sup> Edwards, *Worship Three Sixty-Five*, 45.

glorify we do not always edify.”<sup>212</sup> “God’s presence will only reside within and upon those who have come to Him in faith through the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>213</sup>

Interviewed participants also stated (first question) that “worship is the process of entering into God’s presence. It is a manner of believers recognizing God’s greatness and love.”; it is “the maximum expression of praise a Christian can express...”, and “[it]is the maximum exaltation to the Lord.” In general, “worship is the Christian believers’ lifestyle...” When asked about the importance of worship within the church experience (second question), they recognized that “it is essential because worship is the first step in communicating with God...”; “it is indispensable. When we want to have an experience with God...”, “worship is the key to enter God’s presence. It pulls believers away from world interactions and inserts them in His presence...”, and that “it is essential for in a church where there is no worship, the church does not exist.” Both, the literature review and interviewed participants acknowledge the powerful significance true and reverent worship has when entering the Holy presence of God.

Second, the Holy Scriptures clearly state that the altar of God belongs to God, and those who yearn for an encounter with Him must follow what He has established through His Word. Any type of distortion accepted and performed through time violating God’s standards is considered an abomination and a demonic counterfeit that distances the presence of God (Gen. 3:24, Num. 16:32, Num. 20:26, Lev. 10:2, 1 Sam. 4). As Paul spoke to the Romans, he speaks to God’s people now, “...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of

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<sup>212</sup> C. S. Lewis, “*On Church Music*,” in *C. S. Lewis, Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces*, ed. Lesley Walmsley (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 403.

<sup>213</sup> Edwards, *Worship Three Sixty-Five*, 45.

your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

When reviewing the interviewed participants’ responses (third question), they stated that “the Lord’s altar has always had a high level of importance for it is where God’s presence dwells. We must be respectful to it.” “In the past, there was respect and devotion in the altar experience...” “The Lord’s altar was and is sacred. Not everyone is called to occupy it; it is a privilege for those who are called to stand on it. God does not change, and He is just. The altar is not to be taken lightly.” However, one of the participants also indicated, “...the place where we minister is a holy place because it has been separated to worship God; it is holy. The message should not change, but the methods can. The message is sacred, but the methods are not.” Largely, the literature review and interviewed participants understood that the altar of God needs to be highly respected; nevertheless, cultural differences reported in and out of the Holy Scriptures need to be examined according to the times.

Third, there is consensus that the altar of God is holy; nonetheless, there is also a defined contrast on how the altar worship experience should be conducted. According to the literature review, there is one group that understands that the altar of God needs to be respected according to biblical standards; others are more open to the change produced by society through the decades. When reviewing the interviewed participants’ responses (fourth question), they understood that there had been a “sudden change of view” concerning the altar”, “... that many have lost the respect towards the altar and what it represents.” “In today’s congregation there is too much irreverence...” and “... worship and the [sacred] meaning of the altar is being shaken. This is not positive but negative...”

When analyzing how worship was currently conducted among the interviewed participants (fifth question) indicated the use of a variety of musical instruments (e.g. drums, acoustic/electric guitar, electric guitar, bass, piano, minor percussion, electronic sequences). The majority used casual/modest dress code and uniforms for special occasions. Their worship experience mainly consisted of four songs (hymns, praise and worship songs and *coritos*). Overall, they divided the worship experience in three parts: praise, petitions, and offerings.

When responding specifically to the changes the worship experience has undergone through time (sixth question), the participants indicated various viewpoints: "...there has been a total transformation. Now, many do not go to church to worship the Lord, but to be entertained..." On the contrary, "knowledge has increased in resources, techniques, repertoire, and musical genres...I have witnessed this transformation... generations change." Overall, "...our music ministry has evolved; we have higher standards for altar worshipers. They need to rehearse; worshipping is not about lovely singing... The altar experience has evolved, and it is now difficult to have a profound spiritual experience due to worldly distractions..."

When analyzing the interviewed participants' answers on what factors caused this transformation (seventh question), they indicated: "...the present economic crisis has greatly impacted the church... Social factors have also hindered worship; we perceive a family disintegration... We [also] have a more reluctant and apathetic generation." "Without a doubt, social factors have caused this transformation... now there are more resources (academic preparation, technology evolution, etc.) that have allowed the Christian community to evolve with the new generations." "Global communication/media invasion, economic recessions and social-family turmoil are the constant factors influencing these new generations' identity, social alliances, fashion style and view of life." "These changes come from other countries that have

great influence over the new generation. Whatever is shorter and easier to do is considered... As a believer, I can do whatever pleases me and I will still be saved.” In other words, this altar experience dichotomy will depend on what standards (e.g. music, instruments, dress code, etc.) are to be established by each congregation/denomination.

Fourth, congregations in general search to establish a worship experience that pleases God while keeping updated with the times. Among the literature review, White acknowledged the importance of the public worship space and its relationship to the worship experience. The liturgical space will determine the proximity to having a personal encounter with God in the worship experience.<sup>214</sup> On dress code implementation, Kirkpatrickk observed: “the inner life matters...there is no one single answer to church dress code. [However,] this takes humility and heart to make it about values and principles, rather than rules and laws. We should hold ourselves to be righteous Christ followers, not legalistic rule followers.”<sup>215</sup> To conclude on this issue, Phifer indicated, “each new generation must be allowed to test everything by the Word and make changes that cause the church to conform to the principles of Scriptures, shaking off cultural influences.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 83-91.

<sup>215</sup> Rich Kirkpatrick, “Church Dress Code: Rules vs. Values.” *ShareFaith.com*, 18 Oct. 2017, [www.sharefaith.com/blog/2016/07/church-dress-code-rules-versus-values/](http://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2016/07/church-dress-code-rules-versus-values/).

<sup>216</sup> Phifer, Stephen R. WRS 505 Student Guide Spring 2017. Retrieved from [https://my.valleyforge.edfrom/ICS/icsfs/WRS\\_505\\_Student\\_Guide\\_Spring\\_2017.pdf?target=5e5bcfca-a7f546d6-be5c-099f7ce9fe2d](https://my.valleyforge.edfrom/ICS/icsfs/WRS_505_Student_Guide_Spring_2017.pdf?target=5e5bcfca-a7f546d6-be5c-099f7ce9fe2d). (n.d.). p.45.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has served to: 1) define worship as a divine experience, 2) establish the relevance of the altar of God, and 3) to explain how the Old Testament Levites' worship experience has evolved through time. At first, all experiences aimed to an encounter of salvation through Jesus' atonement; however, through time, they have become for some congregations a distorted worship presentation of entertainment. Multiple reasons, elements, and viewpoints have been obtained and examined from both literature review and questionnaire responses.

#### Strategies

When asked about the strategies established in their churches to bring back young worshipers to the altar experience (eighth question), they responded: "we use the Bible; it offers fundamental truths..." "First, we have motivated the congregation to increase their spiritual quest through praying and fasting. Second, sermons, bible studies and retreats focused on the subject on holiness, worship and altar experience on what is expected has helped on guiding the members and altar worshipers to do what delights the Lord." Third, at the music/attire level, they stated, "we have planned and offered teachings/education focused towards music/worship/voice, and retreats for spiritual issues. We have also offered and established a dress code. The church testimony serves as a physical and spiritual model to the younger generations. It can be done in the Lord."

#### Limitations

Several limitations to the study should be noted and taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. First, due to time factors, this study mainly focused on the literature review available and five local CMRUPR pastors' disposition to answer the given questionnaire.

It is suggested that a higher number of participants and more female pastors be considered to obtain a broader response to the questions being asked. Second, a representation of pastors from the coastal/urban sector should also be considered, so that a comparison among the rural/mountain versus urban/coastal perception be accomplished. Both suggestions allow for an expanded and solid conceptualization on the selected topic be researched.

### Conclusion

After reviewing biblical teachings, Christian traditions, literature reviews and local responses on the significance and evolution of the altar of God, the following conclusions can be presented. First, the worship to the Triune God is a vital element in Christianity. As previously stated, a Christian service without worship is no service to God at all. Worship needs to be led and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Pentecostal Worship), and this can only take place when believers are willing to become Spirit and Truth worshipers.

Second, according to the Bible, the designer and owner of this holy altar, Jehovah God, is still requesting reverence and sanctity to enter His presence. Those who want to lead or be part of this worship encounter need to examine their garments and present themselves approved by Him.

Third, there is a clear dichotomy between the perception of holiness in the altar of God and what some contemporary churches are promoting in their altars. Some congregations have retained the reverence and sanctity required; others, have been more open-minded in accepting new waves of music, lyrics and attire that serve to entertain religious crowds. These changes have silently, but persistently entered the Holy Place, distorting God's original request. Social, economic, and generational factors are the key influences provoking this transformation. Overall, leaders will be the ones called to decide if God will be present or absent during their time of worship.

Fourth, congregations at large search to establish a worship experience that pleases God while keeping updated with the times. Times and generations change; nonetheless, the Word of God remains intact forever. For this reason, ideas, trends, styles must be scrutinized according to the Holy Scriptures. The main requirement of God for His pastors, leaders, staff, and all congregations is the willingness to listen to His Voice and follow His Word; this is the only way redeemed humanity will truly please God. Second of Chronicles 7:14 states: "...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: English Recruitment Template

#### Recruitment Sheet

Dear Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Worship Studies degree. The purpose of my research is to determine what strategies pastors are practicing in the worship service to maintain an altar pleasing to God; I am calling to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be pastors serving Christian communities in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a telephone or video conference interview. These participants will provide the answers of a three-part questionnaire regarding their lived experiences and the strategies used to support their congregation's worship/altar setting.

It should take approximately one hour per participant to complete the procedure[s] listed.

- Part I: Personal Information (2 minutes)
- Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience (2 minutes)
- Part III: Research Questions (56 minutes)

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please let me know at this time at 939-256-2394 that you wish to participate, and we will schedule your interview.

A consent document will be sent to you (the participant) via email for you to read, sign and return. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me via email ([lerosado@liberty.edu](mailto:lerosado@liberty.edu)) prior to your scheduled interview.

Sincerely,

Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez  
Doctoral Student  
939-256-2394/ [lerosado@liberty.edu](mailto:lerosado@liberty.edu)

## Appendix B: Spanish Recruitment Template

### Hoja de Reclutamiento

Querido Participante:

Como estudiante graduanda de la Escuela de Música de la Liberty University, estoy desarrollando una investigación como parte de los requisitos para el grado Doctoral en Estudios de Adoración. El propósito de este estudio es determinar qué estrategias están practicando los pastores durante los servicios de adoración para mantener un altar que agrada a Dios; estoy escribiendo para invitarle a participar de mi estudio.

Los participantes deben de ser pastores sirviendo en una iglesia cristiana en la Región Central Montañosa. Los participantes, si así lo desean, van a participar de una entrevista por teléfono o video conferencia. Los participantes proveerán las contestaciones de un cuestionario de tres partes respecto a sus experiencias personales, y estrategias utilizadas para promover en sus congregaciones una experiencia de adoración/altar.

El periodo de la entrevista será, aproximadamente una hora por participante.

- Parte I. Datos sobre Información Personal
- Parte II. Datos sobre Ocupación/Académico Experiencia Ministerial
- Parte III. Preguntas de Investigación

Los nombres y otra información de identificación será requerida comparte del estudio, pero la información se mantendrá confidencial.

Para participar, por favor avíseme en este momento al 939-256-2394 que desea participar, y programaremos su entrevista.

Se le enviará un documento de consentimiento por correo electrónico para que pueda leer, firmar y reenviar. El documento de consentimiento contiene información adicional sobre mi investigación. Por favor, firme el documento de consentimiento y devuélvalo por correo electrónico ([lerosado@liberty.edu](mailto:lerosado@liberty.edu)). Al hacerlo, indicará que ha leído la información de consentimiento y le gustaría participar en la encuesta.

Sinceramente,

Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez  
Estudiante Doctoral  
939-256-2394/ [lerosado@liberty.edu](mailto:lerosado@liberty.edu)

## Appendix C: English Consent

### Consent Sheet

**Title of the Project:** Reinstating the Altar that Pleases God in the New Generations of Worshipers Located in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico

**Principal Investigator:** Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez, D.W.S., Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a pastor serving a Christian community in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this qualitative-descriptive case study is to establish the importance of the altar, and how its sanctity needs to be reestablished among the new generations of worshipers. Moreover, this research will examine the perceptions pastors have on the biblical altar experience, and how it has been modified to suit human standards and needs.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a recorded interview with the researcher by phone or video conference. The interview will take approximately xx minutes to complete.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

#### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her 939-256-2394 or by email [lerosado@liberty.edu](mailto:lerosado@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [name], at [email].

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

## Hoja de Consentimiento

**Título del Proyecto:** Restituyendo el altar que agrada a Dios con la nueva generación de adoradores localizados en la Región Central Montañosa de Utuado, Puerto Rico

**Investigador Principal:** Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez, D.W.S., Liberty University

### Invitación para ser parte del Estudio de Investigación

Es usted invitado a ser parte en un estudio de investigación. Para participar, usted debe ser un pastor sirviendo en una comunidad cristiana en la Región Central Montañosa de Utuado, Puerto Rico. Ser parte de este estudio de investigación es voluntario.

Favor de tomarse el tiempo de leer todo este documento de consentimiento y hacer preguntas antes de decidir si desea participar en el estudio de investigación.

### ¿De qué es el estudio y porqué se lleva a cabo?

El propósito de esta investigación tipo cualitativo-descriptivo estudio de caso es establecer la importancia del altar, y cómo la santidad del mismo debe de ser reestablecido entre la nueva generación de adoradores. Además, este estudio va a examinar las percepciones que los pastores tienen sobre la experiencia del altar bíblico, y cómo ha sido modificado para adaptarse los estándares y las necesidades humanas.

### ¿Qué pasaría si usted forma parte de este estudio?

Si acepta participar en este estudio, le pediría que haga lo siguiente:

1. Participe en una entrevista grabada con el investigador a través del software de conferencia web (es decir, WebEx, Zoom, Skype) para evitar procedimientos en persona. La entrevista tomará aproximadamente 60 minutos (1 hora) en completarse.

### ¿Cómo podría usted y otros beneficiarse de este estudio?

Los participantes no deben esperar recibir un beneficio directo por participar en este estudio.

### ¿Qué riesgos podría experimentar al participar en este estudio?

Los riesgos involucrados en este estudio son mínimos, lo que significa que son iguales a los riesgos que enfrentaría en la vida cotidiana.

### ¿Cómo se protegerá la información

Los registros de este estudio se mantendrán privados. Los registros de investigación se almacenarán de forma segura, y solo el investigador tendrá acceso a los registros.

- Las respuestas de los participantes se mantendrán confidenciales mediante el uso de seudónimos / códigos. Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en un lugar donde otros no puedan escuchar fácilmente la conversación.
- Los datos se almacenarán en una computadora con contraseña bloqueada y pueden usarse en futuras presentaciones. Después de tres años, todos los registros electrónicos serán eliminados.

- Entrevistas/grupos focales serán grabados y transcritos. Las grabaciones se almacenarán en una computadora con contraseña bloqueada durante tres años y luego se borrarán. Solo el investigador tendrá acceso a estas grabaciones.

### ¿La participación en el estudio es voluntaria?

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar no afectará sus relaciones actuales o futuras con Liberty University. Si decide participar, es libre de responder a ninguna pregunta o retirarse en cualquier momento sin afectar esas relaciones.

### ¿Qué debe hacer si decide retirarse del estudio?

Si decide retirarse del estudio, comuníquese con el investigador a la dirección de correo electrónico/número de teléfono que se incluye en el siguiente párrafo. Si decide retirarse, los datos recopilados de usted se destruirán inmediatamente y no se incluirán en este estudio.

### ¿Con quién se comunica si tiene preguntas o inquietudes sobre el estudio?

La investigadora que realiza este estudio es Luz Estelle Rosado Méndez. Puede hacer cualquier pregunta que tenga sobre el estudio en este momento. Si tiene preguntas más tarde, **le animamos** a que se comunique con ella al 939-256-2394 o por correo electrónico a [lerosado@liberty.edu](mailto:lerosado@liberty.edu). También puede comunicarse con el patrocinador de la facultad del investigador, Dr. Thomas Allen Seel, en [taseel@liberty.edu](mailto:taseel@liberty.edu).

### ¿Con quién se comunica si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participantes de la investigación?

Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud con respecto a este estudio y desea hablar con alguien que no sea el investigador, **le animamos** a que comunicarse con la Junta de Revisión Institucional, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 o envíe un correo electrónico a [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

### Su Consentimiento

Al firmar este documento, usted acepta participar en este estudio. Asegúrese de comprender de qué se trata el estudio antes de firmar. Se le entregará una copia de este documento para sus registros. La investigadora mantendrá una copia con los registros del estudio. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio después de firmar este documento, puede comunicarse con el equipo del estudio utilizando la información proporcionada anteriormente.

*He leído y entendido la información anterior. He hecho preguntas y he recibido respuestas. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en el estudio.*

La investigadora tiene mi permiso para grabarme en audio / video como parte de mi participación en este estudio.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed Subject Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature & Date*

Appendix E: English Questionnaire

**Academic Research**

**Reinstating the Altar That Pleases God in the New Generations of Worshipers**

**Part I: Personal Information**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience**

1. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Academic preparation: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Years of conversion: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Years of ministry experience: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Years of pastoral experience: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part III: Research Questions**

1. How would you define worship?

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2. Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience? Explain.

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3. Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your years of spiritual growth. Explain.

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---

---

4. Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.

---

---

---

5. How is worship conducted in your church?

a. number of worshipers \_\_\_\_\_

b. number of musicians \_\_\_\_\_

c. type of instruments \_\_\_\_\_

d. attire (casual, formal, uniform) \_\_\_\_\_

e. worship format (number of hymns or songs) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you noticed any form of transformation concerning the worship experience through time? Explain.

a. worshipers \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

b. altar \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

c. music \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

7. What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused this transformation?

---

---

---

8. What strategies would you establish to bring back young worshipers to the altar experience? Explain.

---

---

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**Estudio Académico**

**Restituyendo el altar que agrada a Dios con la nueva generación de adoradores**

**Parte I. Información Personal**

1. Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Edad: \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Género: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parte II. Ocupación/Académico Experiencia Ministerial**

1. Ocupación: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Preparación Académica: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Años de conversión: \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Años de experiencia ministerial: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Años de experiencia pastoral: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parte III. Research Questions**

1. ¿Cómo usted define el concepto de la adoración?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. ¿Considera usted que la adoración es esencial para la experiencia eclesiástica? Explique.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describa brevemente cuál era el nivel de importancia del altar de Dios durante sus años de crecimiento espiritual. Explique.

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4. ¿Percibe usted la misma experiencia de adoración en el altar de Dios actualmente? Explique.

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5. ¿Cómo se desarrolla la adoración en su iglesia?

a. Cantidad de vocalistas: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Cantidad de músicos: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Tipos de instrumentos: \_\_\_\_\_

d. Vestimenta: (casual, formal, uniforme): \_\_\_\_\_

e. Formato del servicio (número de canciones): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Ha notado usted alguna transformación en la experiencia de adoración a través del tiempo. Explique.

a. Vocalistas: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

a. Altar: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

a. Músicos: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

7. ¿Qué factores (sociales, económicos, generacional, etc.) cree usted que han causado esta transformación?

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---

---

8. ¿Qué estrategias ha establecido para atraer a los adoradores jóvenes de esta generación a la experiencia del altar?

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## Appendix G: Participants Translated Transcriptions and Transcribed Interviews

### 1. **Part I: Personal Information**

2. Name: D.R. (changed for confidentiality)

3. Gender: male (M1)

4. Age: 50 years-old

5.

### 6. **Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience**

7. Occupation: Pastor

8. Academic preparation: BA in Theology

9. Years of conversion: 36 years

10. Years of ministry experience: 25-26 years

11. Years of pastoral experience: 12 years as a Pastor

12.

### 13. **Part III: Research Questions**

14.

15. Q: How would you define worship?

16.

17. A: Worship is the Christian believers' lifestyle. In a specific moment of time, we will  
18. stop being ministers, but we will always be worshipers. In eternity, there will be  
19. no ministers, but there will be worshipers. Worship should transcend the altar; it  
20. should not be limited because it does not begin or end there. The altar is the place  
21. where we encounter God; it operates and functions according to the Scriptures. It  
22. is possible that the altar where you encounter God is not the physical altar found  
23. at church. [This experience] is not limited to the church experience.

24.

25. Q: Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience? Explain.

26.

27. A: Yes It is essential because worship is the first step in communicating with God. If  
28. we examine the model of prayer found in Mathew 6: "Our Father ...", first I  
29. address the Father. Then, I find Him in the heavens to later adore Him ("...in  
30. heaven, hallowed be your name") ... In general humanity has been designed to  
31. worship something. Every person adores a being; this explains why within the  
32. human heart there is an urge to worship someone or something greater than  
33. himself/herself; this can be offered vertically (to God) or horizontally (to the  
34. people and/or things).

35.

36. Q: Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your  
37. years of spiritual growth. Explain.

38.

39. A: Through time, I have been able to refine many things. I consider that after my  
40. years of study, I still carried Catholic theology. For example, priests carried the  
41. Holy Sacraments wherever they go to offer mass. The majority of us still have  
42. that vision. However, when Jesus spoke about the temple and Tabernacle there  
43. was a place dedicated to God where He manifested Himself; but now, He would  
44. be the tabernacle and our bodies would become a place where the Holy Spirit

45. would dwell. The place where we minister is a holy place because it has been  
46. separated to worship God; it is holy. The message should not change, but the  
47. methods can. The message is sacred, but the methods are not.  
48.
49. Q: Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.  
50.
51. A: Yes, there has been a sudden change of view.  
52.
53. Q: How is worship conducted in your church?  
54.
55. A: We are a total of thirteen altar worshipers (six musicians). Among the  
56. instruments played are drums, acoustic/electric guitar, electric guitar, bass, piano,  
57. minor percussion and electronic sequences. They mainly dress casually, but have  
58. uniforms for special occasions. Their worship experience mainly has four songs  
59. (hymns, praise and worship songs, and coritos). Occasionally, they also present  
60. music videos during worship.  
61.
62. Q: Have you noticed any form of transformation concerning the worship experience  
63. through time? Explain.  
64.
65. A: Praise aims towards what the Lord *does*. Worship aims towards what the Lord *is*.  
66. Knowledge has increased in resources, techniques, repertoire, and musical  
67. genres. I have witnessed this transformation; generations change. According to  
68. my perspective, we are not better worshipers than others because of our  
69. preparation and/or resources. Innovation does not mean that worship will be  
70. better. Technology has caused a transformation that can contribute positively,  
71. but can also become a distraction. At times, we need to emphasize the need to  
72. keep focused.  
73.
74. Q: What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused  
75. this transformation?  
76.
77. A: Without a doubt, social factors have caused this transformation. In the  
78. beginning here in Utuado, the Christian community was of low minimum  
79. resources. Eventually, things have changed, and now there are more resources  
80. (academic preparation, technology evolution, etc.) that have allowed the  
81. Christian community to evolve with the new generations.”  
82.
83. Q: What strategies would you establish to bring back young worshipers to the altar  
84. experience? Explain.  
85.
86. A: We use the Bible; it offers fundamental truths. The altar and the microphone are  
87. quite alluring; hence, even though we have had members that can sing, they do not  
88. have to belong to the worship ministry. One of our strategies is education and Bible  
89. teachings. One [person] sings to the masses, but we are a mass singing to the Lord.  
90. I humbly worship the King. It is important for the church to have members who

91. know how to sing, but it is also important for the Church to understand that we are
  92. all worshipers. We are practicing what we will do for eternity.
  - 93.
  94. Translated transcription ended
- 

1. **Part I: Personal Information**

2. Name: M.C. (changed for confidentiality)
3. Gender: female (F1)
4. Age: 50 years-old
- 5.

6. **Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience**

7. Occupation: Pastor
8. Academic preparation: Three years of Mizpa Biblical Institute
9. Years of conversion: 40 years
10. Years of ministry experience: 20 years
11. Years of pastoral experience: 1 year
- 12.

13. **Part III: Research Questions**

- 14.
15. Q: How would you define worship?
- 16.
17. A: It is the moment when you pour your heart to the Lord. The moment where you express to God who He is to you.
- 18.
- 19.
20. Q: Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience? Explain.
- 21.
22. A: Scripture clearly states that God is looking for true and spirit worshipers. In other words, there are twenty people with white robes, but you say “we are looking for one with a red shirt.” Your focus will be in the one who you are looking for... the one with the red shirt. This is exactly what God does; He is looking for the true and spirit worshipers. He is looking. Their many who are wanting to worship Him, but He is seeking those who are genuine, real, the one who shakes His throne.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.
- 29.
30. Q: Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your years of spiritual growth. Explain.
- 31.
- 32.
33. A: The altar is and will always be holy; this is not negotiable. Let us look at it this way, Scripture narrates a valley of dry bones and the voice of God said: “Son of man prophecy!” By the word of God through man, the dry bones will recover life. This is how it is with the altar. Through what flows from the altar, people receive life or death. We have to give the altar its rightful place. This is where the holiness of God is manifested, and it has to be in each person that stands on it. They have to have the respect and project the reverence God deserves. This is the importance I saw and learned to have when as little girl. However, this
- 34.
- 35.
- 36.
- 37.
- 38.
- 39.
- 40.

41. prerequisite has been flexible because now you can stand at the altar with ripped  
42. jeans and miniskirts. Many say why not? I tell you why not... because God  
43. demands respect. Sanctity is not negotiable.  
44.
45. Q: Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.  
46.
47. A: The same passion? No. There is always one that loves God above all things; but,  
48. there are some that think that is the is a talent show. They think that because they  
49. have the talent, they should jump over true worshipers. This is not the way it is  
50. suppose to be like! Looks and talent are nothing, this is not important in God's  
51. presence, what is essential is that the lives receive life with what the one standing  
52. at the altar is imparting.  
53.
54. Q: How is worship conducted in your church?  
55.
56. A: We have constituted people who sing, they are not part of a group, but have  
57. participation in the singing. We have approximately seven musicians. Among the  
58. instruments we have conga, bongo, drums, tambora, tambourine and a bass. We  
59. also use music tracks, especially during the kids' services. Our wardrobe is  
60. usually formal, but every society/group (women, man and children) have  
61. uniforms.  
62.
63. Q: Have you noticed any form of transformation concerning the worship experience  
64. through time? Explain.  
65.
66. A: There have been positive and negative transformations. There was a time where  
67. the worship team fasted together because they felt the longing of the Sprit to be  
68. sought. However, now it has been flexible or oriented to when the worship team  
69. has the time to fast and look for God's presence. Also, the title of "artists" given  
70. to those in the worship team seems secular. I have experiences of hearing these  
71. artists express when you invite them to your church: "I can worship in your church  
72. for an offering of \$3,000 and if you have a large crowd." When you bring the  
73. world to the church you damage everything. The altar view and respect has also  
74. been transformed. I can testify that by having the altar closer to the audience has a  
75. positive transformation. However, I have also seen churches where members are  
76. there are secluded from the reserved sections for pastors, musicians, prophets,  
77. etc. It is almost secluded and elitist.  
78.
79. Q: What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused  
80. this transformation?  
81.
82. A: Every nationality has its customs and traditions, but there has to be some rules for  
83. order. If a Muslim comes to me and says, "Allah is God," I respect Him, but I do  
84. not share his view. I cannot negotiate what I have learned. As a pastor, I cannot  
85. expect for outsiders that visit my church to establish their point of view.  
86. Q: What strategies would/have you establish to bring back young worshipers to the

87. altar experience? Explain  
88.  
89. A: We have done everything according to the Word. The young generations that  
90. come to our church fall in love with God and the church. They tell me: “we want  
91. to participate” and I give them the opportunity. We have a service that is called  
92. “The Friend’s Service” each person has to bring a friend to the service. If we use  
93. secular strategies to bring the new generations, it will be like going back to Egypt.  
94.  
95. Translated transcription ended
- 

1. **Part I: Personal Information**

2. Name: J.P. (changed for confidentiality)  
2. Gender: male (M2)  
3. Age: 54 years-old  
4.  
5. **Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience**  
6. Occupation: Business Administrator, now Pastor  
7. Academic preparation: BA Business Administrator  
8. Years of conversion: 38 years  
9. Years of ministry experience: 36 years  
10. Years of pastoral experience: 15 years as Associate Pastor/Pastor  
11.

12. **Part III: Research Questions**

13.  
14. Q: How would you define worship?  
15.  
16. A: It is the maximum expression of praise a Christian can express. It is when we are  
17. able to praise God with all our soul and in each action of our lives. Not only  
18. raising our hands; but also, with offerings and service.  
19.  
20. Q: Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience? Explain.  
21.  
22. A: It is indispensable. When we want to have an experience with God we need to  
23. have that goal: become a worshiper.  
24.  
25. Q: Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your  
26. years of spiritual growth. Explain.  
27.  
28. A: The Lord’s altar has always had a high level of importance for it is where God’s  
29. presence dwells. We must be respectful to it.  
30.  
31. Q: Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.  
32.  
33. A: I believe that many have lost the respect towards the altar and what it represents.  
34.  
35. Q: How is worship conducted in your church?

- 36.
37. A: There are three music ministries, with a total of twenty altar worshipers (five musicians). Among the instruments played are drums, electric guitars and bass.
- 38.
39. There is a required formal dress code, but we have uniforms for special occasions.
40. We divide the worship experience in three parts: praise, petitions and offerings.
- 41.
42. Q: Have you noticed any form of transformation concerning the worship experience through time? Explain.
- 43.
- 44.
45. A: In the past, we used to sing many coritos. Now, we are more aware of the lyrics; there were coritos that did not focus on praise. We are focusing on preparing ministry leaders for worship. They have been musically trained; we emphasize on the leader's spiritual life. Overall, our music ministry has evolved; we have higher standards for altar worshipers. They need to rehearse; worshipping is not about lovely singing. The altar experience has evolved, and it is now difficult to have a profound spiritual experience due to worldly distractions... We have tried to keep worship music to what is expected according to Christian standards.
- 46.
47. ministry leaders for worship. They have been musically trained; we emphasize on
48. the leader's spiritual life. Overall, our music ministry has evolved; we have
49. higher standards for altar worshipers. They need to rehearse; worshipping is not
50. about lovely singing. The altar experience has evolved, and it is now difficult to
51. have a profound spiritual experience due to worldly distractions... We have tried
52. to keep worship music to what is expected according to Christian standards.
53. Now, there is more variety, but we still conserve coritos and introduced worship
54. songs.
- 55.
56. Q: What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused this transformation?
- 57.
- 58.
59. A: First, the current economic crisis has greatly impacted the church. In the past, people enjoyed a more simplified life. We currently have members who work late and on Sundays. The current economical need affects worship. Social factors have also hindered worship; we perceive a family disintegration. Parents would educate their children at home; they would establish a family altar at home. Now, the Church is called to have a mayor role on these issues. Finally, the generational factor has also been affected. We have a generation that has confronted serious problems in understanding how to have an intimate relationship with the Lord. People come to Christ but are easily pulled away. It is a more reluctant and apathetic generation. Overall, we are influenced by many factors.
- 60.
61. people enjoyed a more simplified life. We currently have members who work
62. late and on Sundays. The current economical need affects worship. Social
63. factors have also hindered worship; we perceive a family disintegration. Parents
64. would educate their children at home; they would establish a family altar at
65. home. Now, the Church is called to have a mayor role on these issues. Finally,
66. the generational factor has also been affected. We have a generation that has
67. confronted serious problems in understanding how to have an intimate
68. relationship with the Lord. People come to Christ but are easily pulled away. It is
69. a more reluctant and apathetic generation. Overall, we are influenced by many
70. factors.
71. Q: What strategies would/have you establish to bring back young worshipers to the altar experience? Explain.
- 72.
- 73.
74. A: We have planned and offered teachings/education focused towards music/ worship/ voice, and retreats for spiritual issues. We have also offered and established a dress code. The church testimony serves as a physical and spiritual model to the younger generations. It can be done in the Lord.
- 75.
76. worship/ voice, and retreats for spiritual issues. We have also offered and
77. established a dress code. The church testimony serves as a physical and spiritual
78. model to the younger generations. It can be done in the Lord.
79. Translated transcription ended
- 

## 1. Part I: Personal Information

2. Name: J.C.R. (changed for confidentiality)
2. Gender: male (M3)
3. Age: 71 years-old
- 4.
5. **Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience**
6. Occupation: Retired Vietnam war Veteran, Human Resources director,
7. Academic preparation: Juris-Doctor
8. Years of conversion: 33 years
9. Years of ministry experience: 30 years
10. Years of pastoral experience: 13 years
- 11.
12. **Part III: Research Questions**
- 13.
14. Q: How would you define worship?
- 15.
16. A: Worship is the process of entering in God's presence. It is a manner of believers recognizing God's greatness and love."
- 17.
- 18.
19. Q: Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience? Explain.
- 20.
21. A: Worship is the key to enter God's presence. It pulls believers away from world interactions and inserts them in His presence. It is also lets us develop agape-love among the congregation.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
25. Q: Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your years of spiritual growth. Explain.
- 26.
- 27.
28. A: In the past, there was respect and devotion in the altar experience which motivated me to go another level. Therefore, I decided to join the church choir in order to learn more about the depths of altar worship. I also understood that learning the church hymns was the opportunity of being able to enter the Lord's presence.
- 29.
- 30.
- 31.
- 32.
- 33.
34. Q: Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.
- 35.
36. A: In today's congregation there is too much irreverence. Travelling as a preacher for twenty years before becoming a pastor let me notice how church members spent more time talking, texting and expecting for the cellphone to ring instead of aiming for God's presence and visitation.
- 37.
- 38.
- 39.
- 40.
41. Q: How is worship conducted in your church?
- 42.
43. A: The church has one worship group of seven altar worshipers (three musicians). The instruments used are three acoustic/electric guitars, piano and a cajon with a minor percussion set. For every service, a uniform or formal dress code is
- 44.
- 45.

46. required. The worship service mainly consists of five songs (depending on the  
47. move of the Holy Spirit), inserted with offerings, petitions and other  
48. congregational prayers.  
49.
50. Q: Have you noticed any form of transformation concerning the worship experience  
51. through time? Explain.  
52.
53. A: Worshipers are less committed to the church and the Lord. In the altar, there has  
54. been a transformation in the physical appearance; many worshipers wear  
55. inadequate dressing. Music now is more varied. I perceive that the lyrics focus  
56. on various themes on the Lord, and the spiritual life of the believer.  
57.
58. Q: What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused  
59. this transformation?  
60.
61. A: Global communication/media invasion, economic recessions and social-family  
62. turmoil are the constant factors influencing these new generations' identity,  
63. social alliances, fashion style and view of life.  
64.
65. Q: What strategies would/have you establish to bring back young worshipers to the  
66. altar experience? Explain.  
67.
68. A: First, we have motivated the congregation to increase their spiritual quest through  
69. praying and fasting. Second, sermons, bible studies and retreats focused on the  
70. subject on holiness, worship and altar experience on what is expected have  
71. helped on guiding the members and altar worshipers to do what delights the  
72. Lord.  
73.
74. Translated transcription ended
- 

1. **Part I: Personal Information**

2. Name: A.A. (changed for confidentiality)

3. Gender: female (F2)

4. Age: 77 years-old

5.

6. **Part II: Occupation/Academic-Church Experience**

7. Occupation: Retired Elementary School Teacher

8. Academic preparation: BA Elementary School Education

9. Years of conversion: 59 years

10. Years of ministry experience: 59 years

11. Years of pastoral experience: 12 years as Pastor of Administration

12.

13. **Part III: Research Questions**

96. Q: How would you define worship?

97.

98. A: It is the maximum exaltation to the Lord.

- 99.
100. Q: Do you consider that worship is essential within the church experience? Explain.
- 101.
102. A: It is essential for in a church where there is no worship the church does not exist.
- 103.
104. Q: Briefly describe what level of importance did the altar of God have during your years of spiritual growth. Explain.
- 105.
- 106.
107. A: The Lord's altar was and is sacred. Not everyone is called to stand in it; it is a privilege for those who are called to stand on it. God does not change, and He is just. The altar is not to be taken lightly.
- 108.
- 109.
- 110.
111. Q: Do you perceive the same altar worship experience today? Explain.
- 112.
113. A: I truly believe that worship and the [sacred] meaning of the altar is being shaken to its core. And this is not positive but negative. Nonetheless, in our temple we try to keep its integrity according to how it is established in the Bible.
- 114.
- 115.
- 116.
117. Q: How is worship conducted in your church?
- 118.
119. A: Our church has seven altar worshipers (two musicians). Among the instruments we use are drums, a minor percussion set and a classical/electric guitar. Our wardrobe as casual but modest. Usually we have four songs during our worship time (hymns and *coritos*).
- 120.
- 121.
- 122.
- 123.
124. Q: Have you noticed any form of transformation concerning the worship Experience through time? Explain.
- 125.
- 126.
127. A: Yes, there has been a total transformation. Now, many do not go to church to worship the Lord, but to be entertained. Christian worship is now secular music. They copy what they see in the world with secular music."
- 128.
- 129.
- 130.
131. Q: What factors (social, economic, generational, etc.) do you believe have caused this transformation?
- 132.
- 133.
134. A: These changes come from other countries that have great influence over the new generation. Whatever is shorter and easier is considered. The problem is basically, that congregations have been taught about the love of God, and that He does not question what is wrong. As a believer, I can do whatever pleases me and I will still be saved. You can observe this during concerts. Leaders state, "raise your hands and you will be saved." And this is what makes them free from sin. On the other hand, many pastors will allow "certain things to happen" in church just to keep finances balanced and the congregation happy.
- 135.
- 136.
- 137.
- 138.
- 139.
- 140.
- 141.
- 142.
143. Q: What strategies would you establish to bring back young worshipers to the altar experience? Explain.
- 144.

145.  
146. A: I believe that they begin to grow according to their Church experience and  
147. testimony. They need to know that the altar is sacred and if they come [to  
148. church] they need to please God.  
149.  
150. Translated transcription ended
- 

Note: Transcriptions were organized according to participant's age.

Appendix H: IRB Approval

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 16, 2020

Luz Rosado  
Thomas Seel

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-223 Reinstating the Altar that Pleases God in the New Generations of Worshipers Located in the Central Mountain Region of Utuado, Puerto Rico

Dear Luz Rosado, Thomas Seel:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46: 101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. These forms should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent documents should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**