

A Brief History of Christian Worship

ASSIGNMENT #1

Hollingshed, Tracey

DM 906 LEADING WORSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP | DR. CARLTON MAY

Chapter **one** deals with *Worship in the Churches of the New Testament Era*. Early worshipping communities were found in the rural parts of Palestine. Eventually as people emerged into the Greco-Roman world a much more sophisticated way of doing things replace the village worship. For the early church Christians were identified through baptism. Baptism became the response for an apostle's preaching. According to the author, "the word is preached, hearers become believers, they repent, and they are baptized." Therefore, preaching the word of God was a chief responsibility of the apostles. Preaching was done in the synagogue along with reading scripture from the law and prophets.

Chapter **two** talks about *Worship in the Churches of the Early Christian Centuries*. (133 A.D - 604 A.D) According to the authors, during this period Christianity spread across the entire Mediterranean world and the rest of the Roman Empire. That meant people from different cultures and backgrounds and ethnicities became a part of the household of faith. Worship went from homes to basilicas. Christians went from being persecuted to becoming the predominant religion in Rome under Constantine, who divided Christianity into the East and West. The book informs us that Christianity became a legal religion in 313 and the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380. Also, during this time, the process of becoming a Christian changed. It was Justin Martyr in 155 A.D who said, "new Christians first are examined as to creedal; and ethical commitment, then they "are brought by us where there is water and are reborn; for they are then washed in the water in the name of the Trinity. This washing, he tells us, is called illumination. The newly baptized are then led to the assembled community where prayer is offered for them, they are greeted with a holy kiss, and initiation concludes with the Eucharist. Since baptism in in the nude at this time, the washing is not public. But once

baptized and re clothed, they are welcomed for the first time to the community's Eucharist. By the 4th century baptism was tied into paschal celebration.

Chapter **three** sheds insight on *Worship in the Churches of the Middle Ages*. (600 to 1500) This is an important period for Protestant worship and Roman Catholics. Medieval roots were very much a part of the Protestants. Becoming a Christian was different for the east and the west. In the East it was a single occasion. There were prayers for naming infants on the eighth day after birth. Then on the fortieth day they are ritually made a catechumen and exorcised, water is blessed as is oil, the candidates are anointed with the oil of gladness, baptized and they receive anointing with the sign of the cross and the words "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Eucharist begins and the newly baptized receive communion. For the West, initiation was divided up into three occasions, often separated by years, and usually involving two or three different orders of ministers.

Chapter **four** talks about *Worship in the Churches of the Reformation Period* (1500-1700). The most obvious change for Christianity during this period was the explosion to a worldwide faith. A very conservative Martin Luther and John Calvin came on the scene. Regarding initiation into Christianity, the Quakers believed that baptism was not necessary. Robert Barclay, the great Quaker theologian argued that "baptism with was a figure, which was commanded for a time, and not to continue forever, since the professing of faith in Christ, and a holy life-answering thereunto, is far better badge of Christianity than any outward washing."

Chapter **five** teaches us about *Worship in the Churches of Modern Times* (1700 - present) This period is better known as the Enlightenment Period, or the age of reason. According to the authors, the human mind underwent a paradigm shift and has never recovered. During this period there were three major worship

traditions to western Christianity: the Methodist, the Frontier and the Pentecostal. Regarding baptism, the issue with infant baptism is sparked and debated. The leading Reformed theologian, Karl Barth delivered a strong attack on infant baptism and recently Roman Catholic theologians have questioned this practice. John Wesley introduces the importance of conversion. He eliminated the practice of confirmation, but allowed pouring and sprinkle on infants. Baptism continues to be an item of increased concern in the twentieth century.

Conclusion

This book is significant because it shows how Christian worship has traveled from Africa to Europe now to America. It also shows how worship has changed tremendously from the New Testament church. Throughout the various periods, the author describes how various theologians came up with their own interpretation of worship, especially about baptism. When I read the notes on Justin Martyr, I was completely surprised because I had no idea baptism had taken place in the nude. I'm really trying to grapple with what does this have to do with the heart. Washing a person on the outside does nothing for the inside where sin takes place. Honestly, this leaves me to wonder if the Holy Spirit was in operation for such a ruling to take place. I appreciate the efforts this author has taken to enlighten us on the history. I can only hope that in this century we are led by the Spirit of God when it comes to holy worship.