Pepperdine University

THE SONIC SACRAMENT:
AN EMERGING SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY OF MUSIC IN CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

A Paper

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REL 541 Worship and Witness

by

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Today's church is plagued by a question: how can we remain relevant? With church attendance in America plummeting and an increased desire for secular spirituality in millennials, many churches have turned to one thing that we can all agree on: the power of music. This focus on music in church has come to dominate the evangelical Sunday experience. We are now equally, if not more, likely to discuss the appeal of the music in a service than the content of the sermon. With this shift towards a music-centric church, it became our impression that scholarship in the area of the contemporary liturgical use of music was necessary in order to assess how faithfully the church is carrying out its mission.

In order to address this, Dr. Lemley and I selected three churches in the Los Angeles community based on their cultural influence, local relevance and strength of their music publishing divisions. In looking at this we settled on Mosaic, Hillsong and Reality LA. After selecting these, we began equipping and sending students out to observe services in these churches as well as record data in a survey that we developed in order to assess various aspects of their weekly practice. Once we began assessing the data, what began to come to light was the possibility of music functioning sacramentally in place of Eucharist in these churches. The essay that follows is a summary of our findings as well as the implications that arose from our study both for further scholarship as well as the practical implications for the modern worship leader.

Structurally, I will begin by providing a theology of worship, sacrament and participation in order to ground the reader in the scholarship and thought that this study rests on. Then we will move into a discussion of the content of our study. This will include details about our research process as well as a further exploration of the relationship of music and sacrament. Finally, we will finish with some concluding remarks on the implications of this study for today's liturgists. It is my hope that through this study, both the leaders and members of today's churches will gain an understanding of their worship heritage and practice and will use our findings to critically assess their practice in hopes of crafting worship environments that are even more ripe for divine encounters.

I. A theology of worship, sacrament and participation

In order to understand the implications of this study, it is necessary to first have a theological foundation for both worship and sacrament. In order to create this foundation I will first examine the biblical basis for a theology of worship. Then I will briefly look at the thoughts of a few significant scholars in the field. After this, I will examine how other scholars have approached the development of a liturgical theology and finally will conclude with a theology of sacrament and eucharistic participation specifically.

A Biblical foundation for a theology of worship

In her book *The Worship Architect*, Constance Cherry presents what she calls a dialogical model of worship.[1] In explaining this she asserts that, "in its basic form, corporate worship is a real meeting between God and God's people. Like any meeting, this one takes place through

1. Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), Kindle, 44.

dialogue."[2] In order to outline the biblical foundation for this view of worship, she draws the readers attention to the story of the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35.[3] In this story, Jesus meets two disciples who are confused and distressed by the crucifixion, he engages them in a dialogue which includes explaining the scriptures to them, he breaks bread with them, they finally recognize who he his and what he has done and go out rejoicing.[4] Cherry uses this example of a dialogue with Jesus as a Biblical foundation for developing a theology of worship. If we desire to encounter and speak to God in our worship then it makes sense for us to model our meetings after the biblical examples of divine conversations.

With closer examination, these human-God dialogues reveal a pattern. Across the Bible, these interactions consistently begin with some sort of gathering initiated by God, they involve the hearing of His word, there is an opportunity for His people to respond to this word and finally they are sent out into the world changed. Cherry refers to this as the four-fold ordo of worship and spends much of her book explaining it.[5] This understanding of biblical worship is foundational to this study. Using this model as a template provides a basis for comparing liturgies to one another as well as assessing what areas of spiritual development certain traditions excel in or fail to meet.

A theology of worship from scholarship

In addition to the dialogical models that are presented in the Bible, many scholars have commented on the nature and content of worship. As a contemporary theology of worship must

2. Cherry, 44.

3. Ibid., 15.

4. Luke 24:13-35, NRSV.

5. Cherry, 53-120.

rest on both a firm biblical grounding as well as an understanding of contemporary scholarship, I will examine two scholars' definitions of worship.

Ruth Meyers has been an important scholar in the field in relation to bringing a missional understanding to worship. In *Missional Worship, Worshipful Mission*, she defines worship as the proclamation and celebration of the Good News of God's love for the world.[6] As basic as it seems, this understanding of the proclamatory and celebratory nature of worship is crucial. Without this, worship loses its intrinsic requirement for participation. Here we gain another important aspect of Christian worship.

Finally, Alexis Abernethy provides the final component to Christian worship. In "A Study of Transformation in Worship," Abernethy asserts that the primary focus of worship is the adoration of God.[7] With this, we nuance the proclamation and celebration of Meyers by adding the contemplative. This focus allows Christian worship a space to sit and gaze upon the beauty of God. The combination of an active celebration and a more passive contemplation allows for Christian worship to come alive with meaning and vibrance. The contemplation gives reason for the celebration while the celebration draws us into deeper contemplation. This cyclical nature of Christian worship comes to embody the trinity. Just as God delights eternally in Himself, the beauty of worship that He has revealed to us is that, when practiced faithfully, it draws us deeper and deeper into His presence.

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6. Ruth A. Meyers, *Missional Worship, Worshipful Mission: Gathering as God's People, Going Out in God's Name* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 5.

7. Alexis D. Abernethy and Charlotte vanOyen Witvliet, "A Study of Transformation in Worship: Psychological, Cultural, and Psychophysiological Perspectives," *Worship that Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregational Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation,* ed. Alexis D. Abernethy, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 197.

With this theological grounding I will define a theology of worship for this study as: a celebration and proclamation of the love of God that is grounded in divine adoration. The Bible provides us with a dialogical model for this kind of worship through the episodes of God in dialogue with humans. These examples can lead us to a four-fold understanding of worship: gathering, word, table and sending. With this grounding for a theology of worship, I will now move into a discussion that centers more specifically on liturgical theology and provide a precedent for the approach that we have taken in this study.

James White and the phenomenological approach to liturgical theology

Liturgical theology differs from a theology of worship in that it has to do with the practice of worship. If our theology of worship is the address where we will meet God, liturgical theology is our rules of engagement, the customs and traditions that enable a meaningful dialogue to take place.

When approaching the question of how to develop a faithful liturgical theology, James White comments, "I have increasingly come to feel that the most adequate approach is a phenomenological one, which simply describes what Christians usually do when they come together for worship."[8] As we have undertaken this study with a desire to examine just what it is that contemporary churches are doing when they worship, we have implicitly absorbed White's method of liturgical theology into our own.

As we observe what it is that churches are doing, we have followed in White's footsteps by paying specific attention to the language of space and sound.[9] The importance of these two

8. James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), Kindle, loc. 160.

9. Ibid., chapters 3 and 4.

aspects can not be overstated. The space that we worship in colors our experience while the sounds we hear seamlessly merge into the overall worship experience. As we observed this, it became clear that, rather than observations of disparate elements of Christian worship, what was truly emerging was a new sonic sacrament. We will detail this more thoroughly later but for now let us direct our attention to a discussion of sacrament so that we have a foundation on which to judge the creation of a new one.

A theology of sacrament and eucharist

In the conversation of a theology of sacrament, James White again becomes an important voice. In *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith,* White defines sacramentality as, "the concept that the outward and visible can convey the inward and spiritual. Physical matters and actions can become transparent vehicles of divine activity and presence. In short, sacraments can be God's love made visible."[10] This concept of God's love made visible helps us understand the reason we have sacraments in the first place. If we view the Bible as a series of demonstrations of divine love, it is only natural that God would give us actions that help make that love visible. As White continues the discussion of sacrament by summarizing some of Martin Luther's writings, he arrives at another key component of sacrament, "Sacraments are scriptural promises to which Christ has given a visual sign."[11] In Luther's view, only two true sacraments remain under this definition: Baptism and Eucharist.[12] Our study is more concerned with Eucharist.

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10. James F. White, *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 13.

11. Ibid., 18.

12. Ibid.

In *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church*, Laurence Stookey provides this explanation of Eucharist: "The meaning for our eucharistic participation is this: We cannot earn from God an invitation to the Table of the Lord. But what is done there is intended to show us God's faithful ways of justice and mercy, and what is received there is meant to strengthen us for responsible and faithful service to God."[13]

With this foundation for a theology of the sacrament of Eucharist, this study will move into a discussion of how contemporary worship music relates to this timeless tradition and how it is changing the way the church practices the eucharistic sacrament today.

II. The content of our study: an emerging sonic sacrament

In light of this theology of worship and sacrament, this study attempts to synthesize the discussion of eucharistic participation with the current musical practice of contemporary churches. Our argument is that the modern church has begun to replace Eucharist with song, filling the eucharistic needs of intimacy and response sonically rather than through the consumption of a meal. In doing this, we are largely building off of the work of Sarah Koenig who first introduced the concept of song as sacrament.

Relating contemporary worship music to sacramental participation

If we are to assert that song is replacing Eucharist, the first question that naturally arises is: what is the content of the symbol? What are the criteria that a song must meet in order to function satisfactorily as Eucharist? In order to answer this we must look for the content of the sacrament itself. Koenig refers to the work of Gordon Lathrop when dealing with this issue,

13. Laurence Hull Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 19.

"For Lathrop, the Eucharist is the setting of encounter, invocation, anamnesis, thanksgiving, locality and universality, and charity. But for many evangelicals, the setting in which these things happen on a weekly basis is the Praise and Worship time."[14] This understanding combined with Stookey's description of a place where we are strengthened for service to God provides us with a good set of criteria for understanding what the content of Eucharist should be. It also serves as a solid foundation for our assessment of the songs that we are singing and whether or not they are functioning eucharistically.

With the requirements for the content of the symbol set, the next question is: Is the symbol meeting these standards? Koenig argues in the affirmative, "Christ is made present in the congregation through the work of the Holy Spirit, whose presence is invoked in Praise and Worship songs as it is invoked within the Eucharist."[15] One argument that has been used to contest the notion that song could function as sacrament is by those who adhere to transubstantiation. If Eucharist allows us to literally digest the substance of Christ, how can song replace this? Koenig explains that "instead of appealing to the Spirit to dwell in the bread and the wine, which then enters the bodies of the congregants when they ingest the elements," in praise and worship "the congregation asks the Holy Spirit to dwell directly in their hearts."[16] In this way we can begin to understand a new experience of divine presence. If Eucharist is God's love made visible, eucharistic song is God's love made audible. Both seem to function as a means to the same end.

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14. Sarah Koenig, "This is my daily bread: toward a sacramental theology of evangelical praise and worship," *Worship* 82, no. 2 (March 2008): 141-161, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed April 25, 2017), 148.

15. Ibid., 150.

16. Ibid.

While Koenig's arguments are landmarks in the development of a contemporary evangelical theology of sacrament, a major component she lacks is data to back up her claims. Thus, this study finds its niche is in providing data to help sort through the practical implications of a sonic sacrament. In doing this we hope to both substantiate and refine the progress that Koenig has made with her ideas.

Defining contemporary worship music, our case study churches and our observation process

A. The Praise and Worship Movement and contemporary worship music

Before we move into the details of the churches we observed, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of contemporary worship music. The term "praise and worship" has already been mentioned earlier by Koenig. While this classification certainly does not completely define the churches we are looking at, all of our churches have exhibited characteristic P&W traits. In light of this, here are a few important things to know about the P&W movement. Robb Redman explains that an important factor in P&W services is an emphasis on flow.[17] This is further explained by Cornelius Plantinga who says that in P&W, "vigorous praise" prepares the heart of the worshipper for divine intimacy.[18] Redman sums this all up, saying that P&W "emphasize[s] progression in worship, from a beginning point as the congregation gathers to a desired objective, whether "intimacy with God" or "the holy of holies."[19] This focus on a flow towards intimacy is central in the way all three of the churches we observed uses music. Understanding this helps us grasp the way these churches think about

17. Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 34.

18. Cornelius Jr. Plantinga and Sue Rozeboom, *Discerning the Spirits: A Guide to Thinking about Christian Worship Today,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 20.

19. Redman, 35.

music and the specific reasons that they use it for. Now that we have an idea of the worship heritage that these churches are a part of, let us look at the songs they are using within this flow.

Contemporary worship music (CWM) can be defined as, "worship music in the *genres of popular music* produced over the past thirty years by North American Protestant recording and publishing companies, churches and individuals."[emphasis mine][20] The key concept presented here is the connection to popular genres. This music is imitative in nature, taking its cues from the sonic environments that are currently drawing the most listeners in the mainstream.

CWM is not only imitative sonically, but also in how it is produced and distributed:

> CWM comes from a world other than that of denominational agencies and publishers, and it is the product of a commercial production "culture," that is, a network of songwriters, artists, producers, publishers, and distributors. Their assumptions, beliefs, and goals have shaped not only the sound of CWM since the early 1970s but also its theological content and attitude toward worship. To understand the worship awakening, it is important to understand this production culture.[21]

This commercialization is central to the way CWM functions. Since it has been both crafted and packaged in the same way that pop music is, it is free to become part of a lifestyle much like pop music. CWM music can be consumed and played over and over again and can be taken with you anywhere you go. This trend towards music becoming a lifestyle has been most clearly exhibited in both Hillsong and Mosaic which have strong music production divisions and large global fan bases. A more telling mark of a member in one of today's contemporary churches can be found in their Spotify playlists rather than their weekly attendance record.

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20. Redman, 47.

21. Ibid., 48.

B. Our observation process

In approaching this study, Dr. Lemley and I began a dialogue about what churches would be the most useful to observe and what data would be the most useful to collect. In the end, we decided to select churches that were both significant to the Los Angeles community in terms of their influence as well as have released music as a worship label. This led us to focus on Mosaic LA, Hillsong LA and Reality LA. In determining what data we would collect, we developed a survey which focused on an online description, on-site description, liturgy description, participation, and music. We then used members of Dr. Lemley's Religion 541 class and trained them to be participant observers. When carrying out their observations they input information they found online before going, took notes on the survey during the worship service and then filled out a post-visit evaluation. After collecting this data, Dr. Lemley and I began to sift through it and see what the data was pointing to. This essay is the result of that research.

C. A description of the churches we observed

As mentioned earlier, the three churches observed were Mosaic LA, Hillsong LA, and Reality LA. Here we will provide a brief overview of each of these churches by looking at both their theological and liturgical background as well as some of the data collected from their worship services.

1. Mosaic

Mosaic is located on the corner of N. La Brea Ave and Hollywood Blvd at the base of the Hollywood Heights neighborhood and the Hollywood Hills. It was repeatedly affirmed by our

observers that the church is located in the heart of Hollywood and and meets the needs and wants of its primarily Hollywood neighborhood audience. Their commitment to contextual service is evidenced in their description on their Facebook page:

> We are a community of followers of Jesus Christ, committed to live by faith, to be known by love, and to be a voice of hope. The name of our community comes from the diversity of our members and from the symbolism of a broken and fragmented humanity which can become a work of beauty under the artful hands of God. We welcome people from all walks of life, regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey. Come to Mosaic, and discover how all the pieces can fit together!

The body of believers that makes up this mosaic were reported to be mostly 20-35 year olds of creative/artistic professions. They were largely middle class, culturally and ethnically diverse, equally male and female, and primarily single or dating. One of the characteristics that seemed central in our data on Mosaic is their attention to fashion. Our participant observers used phrases like "follow the trends of fashion" and "hip and stylish" to describe the worshipping body.

The theological background of Mosaic is much much more ambiguous than it seems on the surface level. While on their Facebook page they are listed as a "nondenominational church," some of our observers traced a connection to the Southern Baptist Denomination, particularly through founding pastor Erwin McManus and his education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

When asked to describe Mosaic's ordo, our observers reported a mix of frontier tradition and p&w characteristics. In general, Mosaic's ordo revolves around song and word, with an overall focus on a general flow towards intimacy with God.

2. Hillsong

Where Mosaic is in the heart of Hollywood, Hillsong finds itself in the heart of downtown LA. Hillsong currently rents its space and switches between the Mayan Theater and the Belasco which both double as concert venues the rest of the week.

The surrounding community was noted as being "classic downtown" with "multi-cultural shops and restaurants" and "a large homeless population." The community inside the church seems to reflect this. The cultural diversity of the members was frequently noted as we observed many "African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans" and "European Americans." Like Mosaic the focus on fashion seemed to be a defining factor in membership. One observer commented that "the majority dressed in the "trendy" style, including piercings, tattoos, ripped jeans, and more expensive clothing."

Hillsong's liturgical family is much more readily apparent than that of Mosaic and Reality. On their website, they note that they descend rom the Australian Christian Churches movement which is connected with Pentecostal influences in that area of the world. It was also observed that "they believe in the authority of Scripture, spiritual gifts" and "baptism of the Spirit." With this influence it is natural to see that their ordo shows influence of both the frontier tradition as well as the Praise and Worship emphasis on flow.

When looking for their mission, our observers repeatedly found the phrase: "shine the light of Jesus brighter than any other big lights in this city." This mission statement shows both their commitment to Christocentric worship as well as contextual grounding.

In observing their space, Hillsong is unique in that they meet in a concert venue. The outside of both theaters is well decorated and the inside is a typical small-scale concert venue.

With this concert atmosphere it was noted that they were very intentional with their use of lights and screens, having a very large screen in the center of the stage that commanded the audiences attention. It was noted that it was generally dimly lit and had special colored lights for the worship leaders. As worship began at one service, "lasers and dramatic artsy videos played while other screens zoomed in on the performers." As far as symbols go, Hillsong was consistent with Mosaic in that they had no explicit symbols of the cross or other religious figures. Overall it was noted that "the space was definitely made for music." Again the concert venue style defines the experience.

Musically our participants described Hillsong as "Rock, electronic dance" and at times "ambient." This emphasis on energetic music strongly influenced the way that participants engaged in worship as the leadership "implicitly and explicitly encouraged dancing." It was also noted that the pastor would ask the congregation to participate by raising their hands or by taking notes.

3. Reality

As we turn to our final church, we begin to notice some more divergent characteristics. For one, Reality LA meets at Helen Bernstein High School off the 101 freeway. It is in a residential community that is near the center of Hollywood.

Its congregation seemed to be less diverse as it was almost wholly made up of Caucasian and Asian english speakers. The majority of the congregation is middle-class economically and is largely made up of college students, young adults, and young families.

In determining their theological heritage, our observers again ran into some difficulty. Their official statement in regards to their denomination is that they are "part of Reality Family of Churches." Although it was hard to find a historical connection, Reality is very clear online about what they believe. It was noted that they place faith in "the teaching of the Bible and proclamation of the gospel to prepare people's hearts to respond to God in worship," and want to help facilitate that response. Members of this church also noted that they have a more literal interpretation of the Bible. Theologically Reality was the most conservative of all the churches we observed.

Their ordo is one place where they are very unique and this will be our focus in the following sections of this paper. Where the other two churches easily fit into the "song, word" ordo that is typical of American churches, Reality demonstrated the traditional four-fold ordo that we explored earlier. This means that their service is structurally centered around the table and therefore they spend more time there than on any of the other aspects of their ordo.

As far as their space goes, their location in a high school auditorium naturally led their set up to largely resemble a concert or theater show. Again, we noted the absence of any Christian symbols. During praise, the lights in the auditorium functioned very differently than at our other churches. While both Mosaic and Hillsong focus large lights on the stage during worship, Reality turns all of the lights down and instead backlights the stage so that the worship leaders can not be seen. When exploring the reason for this it was discovered that they do this in order to draw attention away from the leaders and more towards God.

Musically our observers again found Reality to be influenced by both rock and ambient traditions. During their worship it was also noted that, while everyone was standing, there were

not many hands raised and in general Reality seemed to be the least physically demonstrative of our three churches.

Now that we have a solid understanding of the churches that we are observing, I will move into a discussion of the findings of our data as well as the factors that contribute to our understanding of this data.

A changing ordo

While Cherry has presented the fourfold ordo of gathering, word, table and sending as biblically faithful, we are increasingly seeing churches move away from this flow. Two of the three churches in this study, Mosaic and Hillsong, display a shift away from this traditional pattern. Here, we will examine the historical factors that have led to this shift in ordo, the issues that this change has created, as well as a discussion of the ways the churches in our study have transformed Eucharist in order to solve these issues.

A. The frontier influence

James White introduced the concept of the frontier ordo in his *Introduction to Christian Worship*. In essence, he explained that as churches began developing on the American frontier, a shift began to occur in ordo. The connection of these churches with charismatic revival movements led to a shift from word and table at the center of the ordo to word and song. Just as word and song became the focus of the frontier ordo historically, this emphasis has carried over to today's major churches and is evidenced by our data. Today, instead of the word preparing our hearts to respond to God, song now prepares our hearts for the word.

B. The issue of response

Due to the fact that Eucharist has traditionally been the opportunity in the service for the congregation to respond to God, it would be natural to conclude that the church is no longer providing members the opportunity to respond to God in worship. The liturgical scholar could easily see the experience of receiving the word as severely hindered because of the lack of opportunity for the congregation to respond to it. On the contrary, our data suggests that what is happening instead is that churches have begun filling the need for response through music.

Even with this answer, the question remains: what are we responding to? If in this frontier ordo, song precedes word then we are still losing the opportunity for response, right? Sarah Koenig again brings insight into this issue. She argues that song both invites God and responds to Him.[22] What this points to is the power of music to create its own context. With music, Eucharist is no longer bound by strict structure that is crafted to move our hearts into a position of intimacy. It seems that the affective power of this eucharistic music is so great that it transcends the traditional limitations of Eucharist and allows us experience eucharistic response anywhere in the structure of our services.

C. The Reality model

In order to understand what our data says about this, I have chosen to use Reality LA as a model. Out of the three churches in our study, Reality is the only church that adheres to the traditional fourfold ordo of gathering, word, table and sending. They are also the only church that serves communion weekly. But what is most interesting about them is how they use music to aid eucharistic response. Where Mosaic and Hillsong both open their services with longer

22. Koenig, 150.

worship sets and usually have only one song after the sermon, Reality divides their musical worship into two sets, usually four songs at the beginning and then five to six songs after the sermon. The set that comes after the sermon is where we will focus our attention. What is interesting about this second set is that it accompanies an extended time of responsive worship that includes Eucharist. In assessing our data I have become convinced that Reality's use of music is a model for how other churches participate in eucharistic worship without the practice of communion. In order to examine this, I will now move into a discussion of the themes found throughout songs that Reality uses in this second eucharistic set and then turn our attention to how we can understand the way that Mosaic and Hillsong use music eucharistically.

In our data from Reality, we had five visits across four different Sundays, giving us a total of four eucharistic worship sets with 21 total songs. In assessing these songs for eucharistic themes, we paid attention to lyrics, participation, performance and sonic space. Looking at these categories revealed some statistically significant trends.

Lyrically, 9 of the 21 songs observed are distinctly about Jesus. Songs like "God with Us" by All Sons and Daughters and "Nothing But the Blood" were examples of this. Additionally, half of the songs about Jesus were specifically about his death. This means that on average, every other song in this slot will be specifically about Jesus and of those, every other one will be about his death. This begins to point us towards a eucharistic understanding of the songs in this slot.

In the area of participation, we asked our participant observers to pay attention to the crowd engagement, perceived familiarity with the song as well as activity of the worship leaders throughout the service. Of our 21 songs, 15 were marked as "more familiar" or "increased

participation" relative to the rest of the service from either the congregation, leaders or both. This represents just over 71 percent of the songs in this set. Additionally, 11 of these songs were identified by our participant observers as moments that uniquely functioned as opportunities for response/table as opposed to gathering, word or sending. What this shows us is that on average about 3 out of every four songs in this worship time demonstrated higher levels of participation than other areas of the service, and that 1 out of every 2 songs here was experienced as a time for response. This further moves us toward an understanding of how these songs are encouraging eucharistic response.

When observing performance we received less total data due to the more ambiguous nature of assessing a performance as opposed to lyrics. The data we do have seems to suggest that the flow of this worship slot generally alternates between powerful songs and calmer ones to allow contemplation. Interestingly, any song that was identified as "powerful" was also identified as having "increased participation." If nothing else, this at least shows us that Reality worship leaders pay careful attention to flow in these slots and always ensure that there will be a mix of powerful music and more subdued songs for reflection. Reality's sonic Eucharist both overwhelms and caresses the emotions of the worshipper.

In the area of sonic space, there were no noticeable differences between this section and other areas of Reality's service. Part of the issue that contributes to this is the homogeneity of CWM. Because many songs sound so similar, if there is even a small variety in song selection within a certain slot, it is likely that those songs will be representative of nearly all the prevailing sonic trends in CWM. In light of this, it becomes necessary to pay attention to the characteristic sonic qualities in CWM. The primary aspect that is relevant to our study is

that almost all of CWM has a high focus on atmosphere. The spacey synth sounds and reverb laden electric guitar chords that dominate most CWM have come to be known as the "soundscape." The preoccupation with atmosphere that dominates today's Christian tunes has created a unique atmosphere for eucharistic worship: room for response. Where in the past, worship music was defined by highly metrical congregational hymns and the occasional instrumental interlude, today it is common practice to have a synth player hold a single note for a full minute or more. In this space, worship leaders often talk about "waiting for the spirit." This sonic trend has created an environment that is ripe for eucharistic response as participants are given the space and time to listen to what God is saying to them and respond in song.

As we have seen, the finding of our study in the areas of lyrics, participation, performance and sonic space have led us to conclude that we can faithfully say that music in the second set at Reality LA is functioning eucharistically. Now that we have this understanding of a sonic eucharistic response within the traditional fourfold ordo, let us turn our attention to Mosaic and Hillsong to see how they have adapted a sonic Eucharist while abandoning the traditional ordo.

Mosaic and Hillsong: A P&W-Frontier Hybrid

As mentioned earlier, the P&W movement is characterized by a steady flow towards increased intimacy. Where Koenig argues that this becomes distinct from White's frontier ordo in that the musical worship time and the sermon are distinctly separate, our data has shown us that Mosaic and Hillsong seem to exhibit a hybrid of these influences. While all of their services exhibit an increased flow towards intimacy with God, they also consistently place the sermon at the peak point of intimacy in the service. In this way the music and sermon work together in creating one arching movement towards God for the participant.

With this understanding, the method for selecting songs that could potentially be functioning eucharistically at Mosaic and Hillsong had to be amended from the system that worked with Reality. Where Reality exhibits a distinct four-fold movement with their second worship set fitting within the boundaries of table, Mosaic and Hillsong have the traditional frontier ordo of song and word. With this, the natural question that arises is that if song is all grouped into one category, how are we to know if a song is functioning eucharistically or not? This is where Reality's data was helpful. When observing the data from Mosaic and Hillsong and comparing it with the data we had from Reality's eucharistic worship set, we found that both Mosaic and Hillsong exhibit a consistent pattern in the song section of their ordo. Generally both Mosaic and Hillsong open with a more upbeat song that function to gather people in the assembly. After that there is consistently a shift in the atmosphere of the room that is marked by all of the characteristics we saw at Reality: increased participation, an increased lyrical focus on Jesus, a consistent mix of powerful songs and more contemplative ones, along with an overarching theme of a sonic environment that allows room for response. This shift is where Mosaic and Hillsong experience eucharistic worship. In the following paragraphs I will take a closer look at the data from these observations.

Mosaic's eucharistic worship

At Mosaic, we received 6 observations across 5 services. Of these we were able to identify between 1 and 3 songs in each service that were both consecutive and immediately preceded the sermon that displayed the characteristics of eucharistic worship that we saw at Reality. The following observations are from those songs.

Lyrically, we again saw that just over half of the songs that we identified in these slots were distinctly about Jesus. This time however, none of the songs spoke specifically about Jesus' death. Most of these songs were about Jesus in mostly abstract terms that described His love or power. The only way for the participant to know who they are singing to is usually the inclusion of the name "Jesus" in the bridge of the song. All of the other lyrical categories that we found at Reality were displayed at Mosaic as well.

Participation at Mosaic was one of the largest indicators that eucharistic worship was happening. Of the songs we observed in this slot 100 percent demonstrated either increased participation from the leaders or the participants or were marked as "more familiar" to the congregation. This shows that in this later slot in the worship set, Mosaic has successfully moved people to a more visible level of participation.

In the area of performance we again received less data but it still demonstrated a mix of powerful songs and quieter ones to allow reflection. We received comments all the way from "powerful and meaningful" to "reflective."

Finally, as mentioned earlier the sonic space was not a significant factor in the identification of eucharistic themes. Again, the emphasis on atmosphere was a relevant aspect that contributed to the ability of Mosaic's songs to function eucharistically.

Overall, Mosaic confirmed our hypothesis that music is functioning eucharistically in today's churches. In comparison to the data from Reality, it is significant to note the lack of lyrics that explicitly address Christ's sacrifice and death in Mosaic's worship music. This is to be expected though as Reality's songs were part of a set that included the actual practice of Eucharist whereas Mosaic's were not. This begins to point us towards some critiques for those

worship leaders who craft the music in services that do not have the traditional service of Eucharist in them. We will address these critiques at the end of the paper.

Hillsong's eucharistic worship

At Hillsong we were able to acquire 4 observations spanning 4 Sundays. Again, we found the traditional P&W flow towards deeper intimacy with God to be evident in their ordo. With this we found the songs that led up to the sermon to be functioning eucharistically.

Lyrically, we again found that 50 percent of the songs observed were distinctly about Jesus. What is unique about Hillsong though is that of the songs about Jesus, 83 percent of them were about his death (only one song was not). Another new aspect that Hillsong brought to the table lyrically was the necessitation of an added category to our lyrical divisions. While the other lyrical themes were present, Hillsong added something that we did not see at either of the other churches: trinitarian songs. 25 percent of the songs observed demonstrated trinitarian themes. The songs that did this explicitly were "Your Word" and "Behold," both by Hillsong. In "Behold," the trinity is experienced progressively as the song opens by talking about the Father, continues with the Son and finishes with the Spirit. When we take this into account, the percentage of songs that feature Jesus increased to 75 percent. Clearly the lyrics at Hillsong move us toward a eucharistic understanding of their worship.

In participation we again saw dramatic increases in this slot. 100 percent of these songs were identified as either "more familiar" or having increased participation. Performance wise, Hillsong displayed a consistent diversity between power and reflection, while leaning more towards reflection in this slot than Mosaic did. With sonic space, the general observations mentioned earlier are again relevant.

As we can see, Hillsong is consistent with both Reality and Mosaic in exhibiting the characteristic qualities of eucharistic worship. Now that we have examined the data that points us towards a eucharistic understanding of worship at all three of these churches, I will move into a discussion of the conclusions that we can draw from this, as well as the implications for today's liturgists.

III. Conclusions of our study

If one thing has become clear throughout this study, it is the importance of Sarah Koenig's work in the effort to create a sacramental theology of evangelical worship. Nearly every step of the way her ideas have been confirmed by our data. The major finding of our study is one that Koenig found before us: music is functioning as Eucharist in today's evangelical churches. The data that we have collected serves to bolster and confirm the argument that she first set forward. In light of this, I would like to briefly direct the conversation towards today's modern liturgists.

The desire for today's church to remain relevant is truly understandable. As the American church continues to hemorrhage in attendance numbers, churches have rightfully sought new practices to make them appeal more to the next generation. While this pursuit is noble and even biblical, what is slowly becoming clear to us is that the church has lost sight of this important truth: Christ is the only thing that will be eternally relevant. Instead of grounding our search for relevance in Christ, the eternally relevant One, today's churches have become grounded in technological advancement and stylistic appeal. While these things are good and important to consider, they become worse than useless if they distract us from Christ.

With this in mind, I would like to appeal to today's worship leaders and liturgists. The inclusion of the traditional Eucharist in your meetings is likely not up to you. Most likely, you

inherited the eucharistic practice of your church from the leaders and elders who came before you. But, this study suggests that what *is* up to you is the inclusion of Eucharist in your music. Therefore, if you find yourself at a church that does not practice traditional Eucharist weekly, it is your responsibility to ensure that the music you select creates an environment for the body of believers present to have the eucharistic encounter with Jesus that the inclusion of a weekly Eucharist ensures.

Practically, this looks like selecting songs that speak explicitly about the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It looks like engaging in a dialogue with your pastor on ways to draw attention toward Jesus weekly. It even includes altering the way you pray on stage. What the shift in Eucharist from the elements to the music tells us is that it is now the job of the worship leader to ensure that Jesus is acknowledged and worshipped explicitly every week. If our worship leaders take these steps, I think we will find that it is more than possible to remain relevant while faithfully executing the eucharistic shift that seems to be taking place in some of today's growing churches.

It should now be clear that the concept of music as sacrament has not received enough attention or scholarship and it is my hope that this study will help to begin to fix that problem. The cultural power and popular appeal that both Mosaic and Hillsong wield can not be ignored. In light of their success and the success of many other churches that practice the same model, it has become the task of today's liturgical theologians to assess and strive to understand what is happening in these services on an intellectual level. The danger of allowing these churches to continue without devoting further scholarship to their practice is the same danger that passengers on a plane without a pilot would find themselves in. This kind of work is critical to

the edification of today's worship leaders and the development of biblically faithful worship gatherings. If nothing else, I hope that this study has helped the reader think more critically about the way they experience worship music. I have come to believe that through the environment we were raised in, many millennials have been unconsciously programmed to experience Eucharist sonically. When we understand this we will be able to not only reach them, but also faithfully move the sacramental practice of the church into the coming age.

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