

ABSTRACT

BEAUTY IN WORSHIP:

THE PERCEPTION OF QUALITIES OF BEAUTY AND THEIR RELATOINSHIP TO EVALUATING WORSHIP AS BEAUTIFUL, FULFILLING, AND INSPIRING

Wayne Allen Price

Evaluating excellence in worship is similar to evaluating art insofar as they both involve subjective judgment based on objective qualities. The perception of specific qualities provide reasons for a person's judgment. Twenty-five qualities were chosen in this study as potentially contributing to excellence in worship. The qualities were divided into categories of presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, God's relational love, and God's holiness. When tested in six western Michigan churches, most of the chosen qualities occurred in a similar manner to worship being evaluated as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. Respondents strongly perceived many specific qualities that were minimally influenced by subjectivity.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Considering Qualities Sufficient for Excellence in Worship

Excellent worship, like excellent art, is evaluated in both objective and subjective ways. Similar to a public artistic performance such as a play or concert, worship is a communal presentation. Both worship and artistic performance include forming an idea, planning how to communicate the idea effectively to an audience, and then enacting the idea in space and time.

The process of judgment begins when a person perceives certain qualities in a performance or work of art. The person should be able to describe the qualities to demonstrate an understanding of them. Then the person forms a response to the qualities, which is considered an interpretation. Lastly, the person makes an evaluative judgment about the performance, comparing it to other performances and information the person has experienced.

The absence or presence of perceived qualities is the objective portion of the observer's judgment. Excellence requires certain qualities to be present in the work of art. For example, in an excellent symphonic performance, the different instrumental sections complement one another. If the objective quality of balance between strings, winds, brass, and percussion is not present, then the symphony would not be judged as excellent. The subjective portion of evaluation is the observer's mental process through which he or she makes judgments about the work of art or the worship service. The person mentally interacts with what is perceived by interpreting and then evaluating it according to information gathered over a lifetime.

One of the main questions in the field of aesthetics is, “What is beauty?” For this study beauty was defined as an object or event with pleasing qualities that evoke a response of delight, satisfaction or fulfillment. In American culture glamour is often interpreted as beauty. Glamour is different, insofar as it is based on transient and superficial appearances. In contrast with superficial glamour, the qualities of beauty are based on such things as truth and excellence, in addition to physical appearance. The qualities of beauty evoke feelings of satisfaction as well as delight. Biblically, transient glamour is mocked while the glory and beauty of God is exalted.

Divine beauty is expressed in God’s creative works in nature, yet beauty is also found in the truth of God’s revelation, his holiness, and his love. The qualities of God’s beauty reach their apex in Jesus’ incarnation. Jesus reveals the beauty of God’s wisdom in his teachings. He reveals God’s love in his compassion and sacrifice. Jesus also embodies God’s glory in the resurrection. God’s presence—Jesus—is the highest manifestation of goodness and beauty.

Beautiful worship is not necessarily visually attractive, as something glamorous might be. Beautiful worship may include attractive appearances, yet its manifestation is primarily found in the deeper qualities of beauty such as holiness, truth, and love. This study measured aesthetic qualities of worship in presentation, coherence, and unity of form and content, as well as the incarnational qualities of beauty, such as divine love and God’s holiness.

The nature and discernment of beauty is much debated in the field of aesthetics. Some question whether measuring goodness, or beauty, in an object or event is possible. For these reasons, a standard method of evaluation cannot be assumed, and so in this

study I sought to explain the components of my paradigm and why I chose them. In addition, I explored various philosophies of aesthetics and found how their ideas might potentially contribute to the evaluation of worship. Lastly, I addressed how the quality of beauty might be quantified. I drew largely from the work of Alan Goldman in the field of aesthetics, to discern how to quantify beauty.

Categories of the Qualities of Beauty

Three of the five categories of qualities used to measure beauty in this study were from the field of aesthetics: presentation, coherence, and unity of form and content. No one method is agreed upon in the field of aesthetics for judging an object or event as beautiful. Because no universally accepted method to judge beauty exists, I chose standards I believed were necessarily present for a worship service to be judged as beautiful.

Excellence in the category of presentation conveyed a sense of completeness and perfection. Philosophers such as G. W. F. Hegel and the Earl of Shaftesbury assert that excellence leads the observer closer to God because God's nature is perfect. I believe if the presentation is excellent, then the observer is more likely to experience the excellence of God's beauty.

One of the attributes of excellent presentation is for the work or performance to be complete and without missing parts. Thomas Aquinas points out that the integrity of an object is flawed if part of it is missing. Thus, if something is missing from a presentation, it is short of excellence. In contrast, if all parts are included in a presentation, then the object or event is more likely to be judged as beautiful.

In this study, coherence referred to the purpose and content of a worship service.

Whereas presentation is concerned with appearance and performance, coherence was concerned with substance, meaning, and order of the content. Within the content of the service, coherence indicated orderliness and an appropriate beginning, middle, and end. Excellent coherence enables a person to understand and make sense of the purpose of the worship service.

Another aspect of coherence in worship was the centrality of the triune God. By its nature the purpose of Christian worship is to worship the distinctively triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The evaluation of coherence in any worship service necessarily included content centered in the worship of the Trinitarian God.

The final aesthetic category, unity of form and content, measures the effectiveness of the form to express the content. Even though some artists use forms of expression that are dissimilar from the content (when they wish to express irony, for example), overall content is enhanced if it is expressed with appropriate forms. For instance, if a worship leader wanted to express the celebration of the resurrection, a lively and upbeat song would have been preferable to a dirge for expressing unity in form and content. Many of the qualities in the category of the unity of form and content addressed the appropriateness and correct proportion of the components of the worship service.

Divine beauty is not limited to aesthetic appearances. Two primary expressions of God's beauty in Scripture are in his righteousness and his love for creation. In this study, qualities of God's holiness included truth, reverence, glory, and righteousness. The study sought to measure the presence of these qualities as they were perceived in the content of worship and the witness of the worship leaders.

The study's questionnaire measured the qualities of God's loving relationship

including kindness, joy, grace, peace, and love. The study took into consideration the content of worship and the expression of God's love through worship leaders and members of the congregation. Because these qualities were relational, some of the perceived presence was affected by the respondents' past interactions with the worship leaders outside of the worship service.

Base Properties Contributing to Worship

Interpretation and evaluation are largely subjective. Even so, the judgments must be founded on observable qualities. Goldman refers to the observable qualities as "base properties" (Aesthetic Value 45). Base properties are the objective and elementary properties (i.e., color in visual art, pitch in music, alliteration in poetry, etc.) in a work of art and are nonevaluative. The base properties provide the grounds on which observers can form evaluations. In an evaluative judgment such as, "It is beautiful," the person perceiving the object should be able to point to specific elements of the work as reasons for the evaluation. These reasons should be founded upon base properties. In this study I chose twenty-five qualities that might be considered as reasons for worship to be evaluated as beautiful or fulfilling. Some of the qualities, such as pace of worship, involve a degree of subjective interpretation and, therefore, cannot be considered purely nonevaluative. Nevertheless, I believe that art criticism often involves some element of subjectivity when giving an objective reason for evaluation. Examples of subjective interpretation being present in objective reasons include when a critic believes the plot of a play developed too quickly or too slowly. Many of the qualities I chose for the study cannot be considered pure base properties, but they did provide observable reasons the respondents could identify as the basis for their judgments.

Beyond Aesthetics to the Evocation of the Holy

Christian worship is a distinctive communal gathering with the expressed purpose of paying homage to the triune God and seeking communion with him. In contrast to worship, the purposes of art are varied, and an artist may choose from a multitude of meanings for a specific work of art. The intention of a specific worship service may be unique, yet the underlying purpose of worship is always the same: to honor the triune God.

The teleological purpose of worship is to experience the immanent and transcendent presence of the Divine. The nearness of God's immanence is found in worship through sensory experiences, as well as mental reflection upon God's immediate presence. Many times, God's immanence is manifest in interactions with other people, images, sounds, and other modes perceived by the senses. While immanence conveys the nearness of God, transcendence draws a person's attention beyond the immediate experience to the holiness of God. The experience might occur when a worshipper hears a scriptural truth, is in deep prayer, or perceives excellence in the presentation of an element of the worship service.

Worship consultant Sally Morgenthaler and I discussed that the contemporary worshipper wants not only to experience worship, but to be propelled to an experience with God. If such is the case, excellent worship helps compel the worshipper to experience the immanence and transcendence of God's beauty in worship. If the qualities of God's beauty are present, then the worshipper is more likely to experience the presence of the Holy.

Data from the study indicated that if worship evoked such a response, the

worshipper was more likely to evaluate worship as fulfilling or beautiful. Transcendence was experienced in a flawless performance, because presentation without flaws enabled the worshippers to focus on God. Purposeful coherence clearly communicated profound content in a manner the worshipper understood. The worshippers expended less energy on clarifying the message and could focus attention on understanding the message. With clarity of presentation and coherence, the worshippers were more likely to be able to rise above the worldly distractions and experience God's transcendent presence.

Excellence in unity of form and content, in the context of this study, occurs when the perceived form conveys God's presence. The physical expression of God's truth creates an awareness of the incarnational presence of God. Good choices by the worship leaders regarding the appropriate expression of the content in worship assisted the respondents to experience God's presence. The Bible tells of many times God's holiness and love were manifest through physical forms (e.g., Matt. 17:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). In a similar manner, the worshipper experiences God incarnationally through the forms used in worship. In an example of unity of form and content outside of this study, a pastor asked worshippers to place their left hand on the pew in front of them. The pastor then offered one woman \$50 for her wedding ring. She refused his offer and said she was unwilling to let him have it at any price because it was so valuable to her. The pastor then told the congregation how God valued them beyond any price.

The presence of beauty in worship, specifically God's beauty, consists not only of performance or appearance. The presence of God's beauty awakened the worshipper to the transcendence and immanence of God. If qualities of God's beauty were present and expressed in an excellent way, the worshipper was more likely to experience the beauty

of God. Worship had the potential to be transcendent and incarnational as it embodied the image of God.

Purpose Statement

The first purpose of the research was to measure the respondents' perception of positive qualities in worship and the evaluation of beauty, fulfillment, and inspiration in the worship services of six United Methodist Churches in the West Michigan Conference. The second purpose of the study was to examine if there was a correlation between the evaluation of worship and the qualities of worship. For the purpose of this study the perceived positive qualities (qualities of beauty) in worship were divided into the categories of presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, qualities of God's relational love, and attributes of God—holiness.¹ Each of the categories had five specific qualities I believed manifest God's beauty as experienced in worship.

The third purpose of the study was to measure the cohesiveness of the categories in order to verify the validity of the instrument. Lastly, the study sought to create a paradigm for evaluating worship in a manner similar to the evaluation of art.

Research Questions

The focus of the research questions centered on the purposes of the study to evaluate the worship services, to discern the perception of specific qualities in worship, and to find any correlation between the evaluation and qualities of worship.

Research Question #1

Did the respondents experiencing the worship service evaluate the worship

¹ I used the term relational love, because it denotes the relational aspect of God's being, focusing on his loving relationship with his creation. The term attributes of God focuses more on who God is, instead of what God does. A key descriptor of God's being, as found in Scripture, is the quality of holiness. This

service as beautiful?

Research Question #2

Did the respondents experiencing the worship service evaluate the worship service as fulfilling?

Research Question #3

Did the respondents experiencing the worship service evaluate the worship as inspiring?

Research Question #4

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of presentation correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Research Question #5

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of coherence correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Research Question #6

To what degree did the respondents' perception of presence of qualities of unity of form and content correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Research Question #7

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of God's relational—love correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Research Question #8

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of attributes of God—

specific quality will hopefully help the reader understand the nature of the attributes in this category.

-holiness correlate with evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Definition of Terms

I am defining **worship** as a communal service with the purposes of paying homage to the triune God and seeking communion with him. **Beauty** is found in an object or event with pleasing qualities that evoke a response of satisfaction. Delight, on the other hand, is a favorable or pleasing response to an object or event. **Satisfaction** is a response of fulfillment to an object or event.

The term **qualities** in this study refers to regional, or intrinsic, elements of an object or event. **Base properties** are objective elements present in an object or event. Qualities can be base properties if they have objective elements.

Regarding the holy, **divine beauty** is beauty with its first cause being in God, which conveys the attributes of the triune God through sensory, ethical, virtuous, and loving expression. **Incarnate beauty** is beauty that manifests the presence of God in a particularly visceral manner. **God's glory** is the awe-inspiring, physical presence of God's beauty. Glory is often experienced as sublime, which is an object or event with qualities that evoke feelings of awe or reverence.

Earlier in the paper the dynamic of evaluation was presented. The first aspect of evaluation is **perception**, which is the ability to experience an object or event through the senses. **Description** is the ability to perceive something correctly and then communicate about the object or event as it appears. **Interpretation** is the ability of people to understand and then explain their response regarding the properties or characteristics of an object or event. **Evaluation** is the ability to make a judgment about an object or event in comparison with other things, and to then ascribe a value to it.

When the term **aesthetic** is used in this paper it refers to the sensory appearance of an object. **Aesthetic judgment** is attributing a value (such as beautiful, indifferent, or ugly) to an object or event, based upon evaluation of the sensory experience. **Taste** does not refer to a person's attributing value to an object, but does refer to a personal preference to qualities in an object or event, based on previous history or cultural influences.

The qualities of worship were divided into five categories for the purpose of this study. **Presentation** is the quality of enacting worship by the worship leaders. **Coherence** is the level of meaning and purpose as perceived in worship. **Unity of form and content** refers to the degree to which the expression of the content of worship is assisted or hindered by the form used to convey the content. **Attributes of God—holiness** is the expression and perception of reverence and holiness, glory, truth, and righteousness of God in the worship service. The final category, **God's relational love** is the expression and perception of the loving nature of God in the worship service.

Description of the Project

The project was a descriptive study in measuring the correlation of the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring with qualities of worship. The project described and assessed the perception of God's beauty in worship in six United Methodist churches in the West Michigan Annual Conference noted for their excellence in worship. The volunteer facilitators of the data collection were from outside of the churches surveyed and from throughout western Michigan. Each was trained as to the purpose of the study, the definitions of terms, and methodology of the study. The training was given either in face-to-face conversations or telephone conversations. A letter was

also given to the facilitators detailing the responsibilities and protocol of the time with the sample groups (see Appendix B).

One congregation was selected from each of the six districts of the West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church. A letter was sent to each of the district superintendents asking to identify three churches known for excellence in worship. After the district superintendents responded, one church was selected and asked to participate in the study. The pastor from the church was contacted by letter (see Appendix I), which explained the purpose of the study and requested the church's participation. The pastor was contacted by phone or e-mail, given a further explanation of the project, and requested to participate.

The facilitators participated with the congregation in the actual worship service. Following the worship service the volunteer respondents were gathered together on the church premises, asked to complete the questionnaire, and then participated in a guided group interview led by the facilitator. The facilitator filled out a questionnaire at the same time as the respondents. Through the guided interview the facilitator debriefed the respondents to discover the underlying reasons for their evaluations of the worship. One service was assessed at each of the six target churches. All testing was completed in a time span of six weeks.

The assessment of worship in the questionnaire was based on the qualities of God's beauty (see Appendix A). The qualities were equally balanced among the five categories.

Methodology

The study was descriptive, measuring the respondents' perception of specific

qualities in worship and the correlation of those qualities with the evaluation of worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, or inspiring.

Model and Instrumentation

In each setting, worship was observed by the facilitator who met with the volunteer focus group after worship. The role of the facilitator was as a participant-observer. Because the facilitator visited the worship site only once, the emphasis of the facilitator's role was as an observer instead of participant. The facilitator administered the questionnaire to the focus group and then conducted a guided interview.

The goal of these methods was to measure the level of beauty, fulfillment, and inspiration in worship as perceived by the facilitator and focus group, and why they responded the way they did. An additional goal of the facilitator was to understand some of the preferred styles of the focus group.

The guided interview was semi-structured and qualitative. The intention was to ask specific questions, allowing the respondents to tell their experience of worship in their own terms, and discover answers to questions not covered in the questionnaire. The guided interview was especially helpful to gain deeper understanding in the categories of relational beauty and righteous beauty, which tended to be influenced by the respondents' personal perception of the leaders and congregation.

The questionnaire used ordinal measures on a semantic differential scale in a matrix question format (see Appendix A). The five categories of qualities of God's beauty in worship were used as the general headings of the five sections of the questionnaire. Participants were asked to respond to questions within the five sections. Each line contained two opposite terms chosen for their descriptive and antithetical

qualities of God's beauty. The respondents chose from five responses that most accurately described their response as to the presence or absence of the qualities of beauty.

Population and Sample

Six churches, one from each district in the West Michigan United Methodist Annual Conference, were recommended by the district superintendents. The district superintendents were asked to pick churches known for their excellence in worship. The senior pastor of each was contacted by letter explaining the nature of the study and then contacted by phone or e-mail and asked to consider being part of the study. All of the pastors were male. After the pastor agreed to allow his church to participate in the study, he was asked to procure a group of volunteers who would take the survey and participate in the debriefing session. The respondents were asked to be present at the worship service being evaluated. They participated on a voluntary basis and thereby created an arbitrary sample. Each church was asked to provide a minimum of ten adult volunteer participants not on staff or immediately related to the staff. A total of ninety-four volunteers participated in the study.

Data Collection

Facilitators collected the data from the focus groups on site. The facilitators took detailed notes during the interview. Notes and verbal reflections were relayed to me, and I compiled and reviewed the results from the questionnaire.

Delimitations and Limitations

The results of this study were not applied to a larger population because it used arbitrary sampling, not random sampling. The study was used to describe and discern the

relationship between perceived beauty and the evaluation by the respondents to the worship service experienced in the particular churches.

CHAPTER 2

SELECTED REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Evaluating worship involves elaborate mental processes in making judgments. In assessing and deciding if worship is good a person must investigate the underlying reasons why he or she believes something is good, and his basis for value judgments. The term “beauty” is often considered to be the embodiment of what is valued as good. The word beauty was used in this study to denote supreme value. This chapter explores the question of why worship may be judged as beautiful and then presents a system of how one might reach such judgments.

An object or event is described as beautiful if it is valued for its excelling attributes. The attributes of beauty are pleasing to the mind and evoke a favorable response from the observer. A beautiful worship service is one that produces satisfaction and a pleasing or favorable response.

The Delightful Response to Beauty in Worship

A response of satisfaction is far greater than a reaction to stimuli in worship. Thomas Aquinas believes that God is the primary cause of beauty (Summa Theologica 1: 288). If God is the primary cause of beauty, then worship that incarnates and reflects God’s beauty will evoke a response of delight in God’s presence and righteousness. The author of Psalm 16 writes of this delight in verse 3: “My Lord is excellent, in whom is all my delight.” The Hebrew word for delight means to find pleasure and value. The author values and finds pleasure in the Lord’s presence. I believe worshippers who perceive, understand, and experience the presence of the Lord’s beauty in worship experience this

same pleasure.

Worship is the praising and honoring of God. I believe neither the size nor the complexity of the worship service determines whether the worshippers experience satisfaction. In worship the presence of God's beauty is a primary cause for the sense of delight in a worshipper. Worship leaders cannot simply invoke God's presence through manipulation; however, they can prayerfully plan and prepare to present worship to God as an excellent offering to him. The worship leader and the congregation intentionally reach towards God, while he reaches towards them.

The Process of Discerning Beauty

Identifying and quantifying the qualities of beauty in worship is a daunting task. The field of aesthetics helps explain beauty. Four mental steps determine how a person assesses the aesthetic value of an object or an event: perception, description, interpretation, and evaluation. Perception is the observation of a specific object or event through the senses. Description is the ability to understand an object through reflection, and then accurately describing the object as it appears. Interpretation is the explanation of what a work means. Evaluation ascribes a value to an object or event and then makes a judgment about it in comparison to other objects. The ascription of beauty belongs to the evaluative thought processes; however, judgment is primarily based on the objective criteria of the object or event experienced at the levels of perception and description.

Thus, the subjectivity in evaluation is based on objective qualities that are observable through perception. University of Miami professor Goldman asserts that "evaluative aesthetic properties are constituted ultimately by relations between nonevaluative properties of artworks, which we can call base properties, and the positive

or negative reactions of certain observers” (Aesthetic Value 45). The first step in a person’s discernment of worship as beautiful is to find nonevaluative objective base properties. The second step is to judge if the properties are sufficiently present to evaluate the worship as beautiful.

An Overview of Beauty in Worship

No standard answer exists as to how a person defines beauty in worship. A commonly held opinion is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Such an opinion indicates that beauty is a socially conditioned matter of subjective taste. If beauty is indeed a matter of such taste, then beautiful worship is a matter of subjective taste and preferred style, rather than a matter of objective qualities that produce delight.

George Will cites music critic Terry Teachout in the reemergence of the relevance and objectivity of beauty:

“Beauty,” Teachout wrote in early January, “is becoming fashionable again.” Which means it has become mentionable again. The idea of beauty was another casualty of the silly socialization—“Everything is relative,” meaning “socially conditioned” and a mere matter of opinion. Then, says Teachout, came Sept. 11’s brutal reminder “that some things aren’t a matter of opinion.” (10)

To call something beautiful is to assign aesthetic values of goodness and desirability. A common view holds that the locus of beauty is in the internal processing of what is observed. Such an opinion is the easy way out of a complex issue. If beauty is a completely subjective opinion, striving to create beautiful paintings or beautiful worship would be pointless. Teachout, on the other hand, points out that beauty, is not a matter of opinion, implying that some objects have a universal and objective quality of beauty.

Aesthetic Value.

Goldman believes in the possibility of assigning aesthetic values (such as beauty)

to works of art based on specific base properties:

In my view base properties are nonevaluative, but they do provide reasons for evaluations via interpretations. They provide reasons despite the fact that a noneliminable element of taste is involved (what will strike one critic one way will strike another in a different way). The normative factor (providing reasons) comes in because a defensible ascription of an evaluative property makes an appeal to the reaction of an ideal critic to a base property. Even ideal critics will differ in taste. (“re:Aesthetic Values”)

Goldman’s assertions merit further examination. Base properties are the objective elements of a work of art (i.e., color in visual art, pitch in music, alliteration in poetry, etc.). They simply exist without the evaluative question of whether they are good or bad. Base properties provide the grounds, or reasons, on which to make evaluations and interpret them. If interpretation exists prior to evaluation, as I assert, evaluation is based on how well the object achieves its purpose. If someone says, “It is beautiful,” the person perceiving the object, in Goldman’s view, should be able to point to specific elements of the work as reasons for this evaluation.

The element of taste (personal preference) is a necessary part of any examination of Goldman’s assertions. One’s history, and hence one’s interior associations as well as culture and subculture, interacts with a style or object to influence one’s delight or disinterest with the base property. An example of the former might be a favorite color derived from a cherished childhood toy; an example of the influence of subculture might be found in an older person’s negative reaction to rap music. Even so, defensible norms point to objective base properties on which people found positive evaluation. Evaluation begins with one detecting the base properties; without a good base property, no positive reaction occurs.

Base properties may evoke a reaction within an observer, whom Goldman

identifies as the critic (“Re: Aesthetic Values”). Philosopher Charles L. Stevens points out that the critical activity of an observer consists of his giving reasons for what he or she believes (qtd. in Muelder Eaton 112). If the critic is astute, he or she is able to give reasons for negative or positive evaluative judgments of worship. The collection of data included a questionnaire distributed to worshippers who then served as critics of the corporate worship service they observed. The questions directed the worshippers to specific aesthetic elements, and they judged whether those elements were or were not present to varying degrees. If the elements were present, then, ideally, worshippers found the worship service to be pleasing. The experience of worship has the power to evoke responses of delight and pleasure. If people feel delight or satisfaction when they respond to aesthetic stimuli, such delight leads them to evaluate the experience as beautiful. I believe the specific elements can provide reasons, and thus be sufficient conditions, for a person to judge worship as beautiful.

The Complexity of Biblical Beauty

The common understanding of beauty is one of physical appearance. A physical aspect of God’s beauty was his observable presence in the Temple, which was experienced as delightful and graceful (Ps. 27:10). Nevertheless, the biblical concepts of God’s beauty are far more complex. God’s beauty also signifies the Lord’s actions of kindness and love, as he promised in Isaiah 61:3 that he would give the Israelites beauty for ashes.

When Jesus announced his ministry in Luke 4:18-19, he quoted the verses that precede Isaiah 61:3. Jesus’ ministry was the fulfillment of the promise of beauty for ashes, and its culmination was his sacrificial love on the cross. The two times Jesus used

the word *beauty* illustrate Jesus' disdain for the superficial beauty of the Pharisees, whom he likened to white-washed tombs (Matt. 23:27), and his appreciation for the virtuous beauty of the woman who poured costly ointment on Jesus' head (Mark 14:3). In addition to these references, the Greek word *doxa* (glory) referred to the splendor of God's beauty and was used in the Transfiguration (Luke 9:31), and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:11).

Divine Relation through the Transcendence and Perfection of God

From the Christian perspective, God's beauty is sometimes understood as transcendental and as the essence of perfection. If God is the first cause of beauty, then the finite created expression of beauty could transcend the physical to show God's infinite beauty and thus offer a glimpse of God. While modern philosophers no longer presume this logic, it may be presumed by the Christian in worship who seeks to find incarnational representations of the divine.

The *doxa* of God is one of the highest expressions of beauty in the Bible. Augustine merges the idea of the supreme beauty and goodness of God with Plato's belief of beauty as the highest good, and in this manner perfection of presentation gives one a glimpse of God because God is a perfect being and perfectly good (Confessions 629). The danger facing one who admires beauty, according to Augustine, is in praising the creature instead of the creator (Of Music, 364). Worshippers might make this mistake if they focus more on performance in worship than on God's presence through the performer.

The objective of worship is to praise and glorify God. Beautiful worship invites transcendence from the beauty of this world to the beauty of God and reflects the

perfection of God in excellent performance. Beauty in worship includes elements of aesthetic value as well as observable elements that express God's love and righteousness. Such incarnational elements lift one's eyes to allow perception of the Extraordinary in the ordinary.

The Ever-present Factor of Taste

Even if the transcendent and incarnational presence of God elicits a delightful response, Goldman cautions that "there is a noneliminable element of taste involved" ("Aesthetic Values" Goldman). Philosopher David Hume addresses the influence of taste on the evaluation of an object or event as beautiful:

Two sources of variation, which are not sufficient indeed to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is different humors of particular men; the other the particular manners and opinions of our age. (19)

Such different humors or personal taste cannot be eliminated, and they impact perception, description, interpretation, and evaluation of art or worship. One of the factors is an individual's history, while another is his or her culture. Experiences and genetic makeup give all individuals unique responses to what they perceive. Because of such unique individuality, rarely do two people respond exactly the same way to a given stimulus. The culture of a particular location at a particular point in time also influences aesthetic value. What was considered innovative and fresh one hundred years ago may no longer be considered so.

In his book Religious Aesthetics, theologian/philosopher Frank Burch-Brown offers helpful guidance on the issue of taste when he breaks it down into apperception, appreciation, and appraisal. Apperception is the "mental process that not only raises

subconscious or indistinct impressions to the level of attention, but also forms them into a coherent imaginative and intellectual order” (140). Apperception is absorption of the stimuli and the mental processes of making sense of them. The process may be descriptive rather than evaluative. In terms of apperception, some people have better innate abilities to perceive qualities in objects than other people, and therefore they have the potential to see more.

Burch-Brown goes on to assert that appreciation is the critical and evaluative aspect of taste, in which one seeks to discover aesthetic excellence in a work. Students of the arts are more likely than others to have highly trained abilities to discern and appreciate the structural qualities of a work. For instance, a person trained in the visual arts may be more able to appreciate an artist’s use of composition and perspective than a person with an untrained eye (140). Therefore, although the two may have differing tastes, the person with the trained eye has a more highly developed sense of taste.

Burch-Brown’s third aspect of taste is appraisal, which is a strictly “private response and a personal evaluation” (Religious Aesthetics 140). Appreciation uses apperception and appraisal based on personal responses that can be separated from apperception and appraisal. For this study, taste was primarily defined as the personal response of appreciation and was mindful of Burch-Brown’s inclusion of apperception and appraisal as key components of the evaluative processes. As Burch-Brown helpfully points out in his book Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste, appreciation that involves enjoyment and appraisal (evaluation) can be separated, thereby allowing one to distinguish between the easy emotion of sentimentality and aesthetic value (19-20).

Both taste (as appreciation) and aesthetic judgment involve the appraisal of the

perception of a work. The qualities must first be perceived and then they are mentally evaluated through appraisal. Both the person who bases judgment on appreciation and the person who bases his or her judgment on the knowledge of aesthetic qualities use evaluative processes. A key question that must be asked about the worshippers who participated in this study was, “*Why* did they have responses of delight to the specific work?” The question was addressed specifically in this study through a debriefing time after the questionnaires had been filled out. The interviewer asked the respondents to give reasons for their responses in the hope that these responses might afford a determination of the amount to which each person based his or her judgment on appreciation or on aesthetic qualities. In other words, I wanted to find out the bases of their judgments as well as whether they were able to separate appreciation from appraisal.

In a similar manner to art criticism, this study used aesthetic judgment as a guide to assessing value to worship. Nevertheless, making a direct correlation of fine art and worship would be difficult. Worship has characteristics and purposes different from fine art. Key purposes of worship include glorifying God as well as nurturing the believers’ relationship with God. Art does not share the same prerogative of worship and therefore is not under the same parameters as worship.

Even though differences exist between art and worship, similarities also abound. The purpose of both worship and art is intentional communication of a feeling or an idea. In a broad sense, creators of worship seek to communicate the nature of God and his relationship to the worshippers. Like artists, the creators of worship engage in a creative process to communicate through the use of specific media. While banal art can be merely a re-presentation of another person’s idea, worship that is not creative can be a mere re-

presentation of another person's liturgy or idea. Good worship, like good art, is not a mere re-presentation; it is an intentionally creative communication of an idea, using an appropriate medium, executed with an excellent presentation. In light of these similarities, three of the categories of aesthetic judgment (presentation, coherence, and unity of form and content) were used to assess if worship is valued as beautiful by the respondents.

The first category was the aspect of superior and inferior presentation. As noted earlier, superior presentation can evoke an awareness of the transcendent perfection of God. One of the goals of worship is to enter into the holy presence of the divine, and a good presentation of worship has greater potential to do so. Such worship is considered good and can be classified as beautiful.

While the qualities considered to be beautiful are primarily aesthetic in the field of art, the qualities of beauty in the Bible are also rooted in the relationship of love and righteousness of the divine-human relationship. For this reason, beauty in worship cannot be limited to presentation. The beauty of the Lord in worship may be present in the message and bearing of those leading worship. In the questionnaire, worshippers, acting as critics, had an opportunity to express whether they perceived God's love and righteousness in the worship leaders.

Discerning the effects of subjective taste or objective properties that can impact the evaluation of worship as beautiful is a complex task. A person's understanding about beauty is greatly influenced by culture. The next section addresses some of the cultural understanding of beauty.

The Cultural Understanding of Beauty as Glamour

North Americans annually spend billions of dollars on beauty products.

Anthropologist Dr. Darrell Whiteman asserts that Americans are culturally conditioned to accept beauty as one of their world values. The concept of beauty is defined in large part by the culture, which creates a lens through which people define what is beautiful (Morgan 10). The primary cultural influences on Americans are found in the media, which is driven by commercial interests. Unlike many thinkers before our time—such as Plato, Augustine, Hegel, and Tolstoy, who believe the essence of beauty is derived from the spiritual—modern cultural influences place the essence of beauty on the physical appearance. The evaluation of something as beautiful is assigned to transitory, physical forms. A model may grace the cover of Glamour magazine, and someone may say she is beautiful. I believe a better term for this cultural understanding of beauty is glamour.

Glamour is primarily based on the cultural definition of external appearance. As seen in the fashion industry, the American concept of beauty is largely commercially driven; thus, producers seek to create new definitions of glamour to sell products. Glamour is never satisfactorily defined because the industry anticipates the next fad, changing from one season to the next what is valued. The transitory nature of glamour creates an ideal that is never realized.

The cultural understanding of beauty as glamour confounds the question of which worship is considered beautiful. If worshippers' understanding of beauty is mainly defined by a cultural understanding of beauty as glamour, they may be prone to judge worship as beautiful if it is attractive in appearance. Although worship of God may include beautiful objects and performances, the essence of worship that is pleasing to

God is in the faithful hearts of the worshippers and the substance of the liturgy, music, and message. Beautiful worship goes beyond the external appearance of glamour to the internal beauty of holiness.

Asian theologian Kosuke Koyama contrasts the glamour of air hostesses with the interior beauty of older Russian women:

The hostesses are beautiful. Their beauty is obvious. They are attractive.... Watching the Russian women I saw Romans 5:3-5. In their wrinkled faces and rough hands I saw trouble that produced endurance.... How eloquent are those rough, tired hands.... The old Russian women are “theologically beautiful “ They show me the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. The beauty of the New Zealand air hostesses is direct and immediate. The beauty of the Russian women is hidden. It can be found only after much living. (37-38)

From outside of the American culture, Koyama articulates the difference between the immediacy of glamour and the deeper hidden beauty of the Russian women. The beauty of the Russian women is perceived by Koyama as the “presence of the Holy Spirit in the world” (38). Augustine is leery of temporal, immediate beauty, believing people might worship the beauty of the creation, instead of worshipping the creator of the beauty (Of Music 364). Koyama looks beyond the temporal beauty provided by the aid of beauty products to the interior beauty of the Russian women’s holiness.

The Earl of Shaftesbury asks, “Who can admire the outward beauties and not refer instantly to the inward, which are the most real and essential, the most naturally affecting, and the highest pleasure?” (Characteristics 264). Shaftesbury proposes that inward beauties were the most real and essential as opposed to the outward beauty of glamour. The inward beauty creates the highest pleasure because it goes beyond superficial to the meaningful. While this study examined the outward beauty of the presentation of a worship service, it also examined the inward beauties. In this study, coherence and the

presence of God's righteousness and love were representative of inward beauty.

Review of Philosophical Thinkers on Beauty

Though one cannot say how long humans have reflected on the nature of beauty, certainly such consideration goes back to Plato, whose philosophical system is a beginning point for much of the subsequent reflections on beauty (Symposium, 66). As mentioned previously, the evaluation of an object or event is both subjective and objective. The philosophers in this review collectively offer a balance of the subjective and objective. In addition, many of them integrate elements of a deity or faith into their paradigms.

Plato (427-347 BC): Essential and Perfect Forms

Plato believes in an ideal of beauty, which was the essence and perfect form of beauty. He states, "[The highest form of beauty] exists for all time, by itself with itself. All other forms of beauty derive from it" (Symposium 66). Concrete manifestations of the abstract, perfect form of beauty fade or lose some of their qualities of beauty. A rose may be judged in a rose show as beautiful in color and form; however, the rose will eventually wilt, but the ideal of beauty will not.

Plato uses the analogy of a wing to illustrate how the ideal of beauty allowed the person to soar, participating in the true perfect form of beauty that was only known to the gods (Phaedrus 95). The corrupted person experiences only the earthly manifestations of beauty instead of being lifted up into the beatific vision of the gods, who wish for the person to obtain likeness to themselves. Earthly beauty, then, is a means to perceive the truth of ideal beauty and, by understanding this truth, to rise above earthly things.

Beyond physical beauty to the concept of beauty in the mind. The beauty of

one form is akin to the beauty of another, and recognition of one allows a person to become a lover of all beautiful forms (Symposium 65). The absolute truth of beauty experienced in the mind is a greater form of beauty than physical beauty; therefore, the person who understands truth values virtue more than comely appearance (Laws 49). The apprehension of beauty creates an ascension to the higher beauties until one beholds beauty in the mind's eye and then is able to bring forth the realities of beauty.

According to Plato, one could detect beauty in the particular qualities of sensory experience. Among those he espoused were appropriateness and proportion (Laws 35, 49). These particulars enable the person to perceive the truth of beauty in concrete manifestations. An example of appropriateness is a suitable expression. Proper proportion is seen in the skill of a sculptor who carves a figure in the correct dimensions of the body. Plato's focus was to provide clarity to philosophical issues and to propose a system of ideas with which to understand human's highest ambitions. Nevertheless, Plato was vague about how to measure specifically the qualities of beauty.

The Platonic view of the truth of beauty as being manifest in concrete forms is referred to as the *essentialist tradition* (Batin et al. 5). Followers of the essentialist tradition believe in a metaphysical system in which beauty is realized through philosophical reflection on essences of particular things. If a person reflected on the qualities of the rose, which the person considered beautiful, the person would reach a better understanding of the metaphysical truth of beauty. The importance of the essentialist tradition for this study was the idea that qualities in worship manifest the ideal of beauty. These qualities can be perceived and may lead the worshipper upward to a realization of the ideal of beauty found in God.

The application of Plato in this study. Plato provides a number of important foundational philosophies for this study. He believes that the manifestation of the absolute truth could be revealed in the beauty of this earth (Phaedrus 95). The qualities of beauty are found in the visceral manifestation. If God is perfect and everlasting, then incarnational beauty of this earth reveals his truth and love to those who are aware of his presence. In witnessing his beauty, the observer rises above the things of this earth to comprehend the things of heaven.

Plato creates a dichotomy between divine truth and visceral beauty that in its pure form is foreign to Christian theology and is similar to the Docesist heresy of separating the divine from the human. I believe, in the incarnation, the divine is intermingled with the human in ways that cannot be separated. The presence of the divinity of God in visceral form cannot be sectioned off as two distinct entities, yet it can reveal divine truth in its presence. In worship, praise and glory are given to God through visceral form and expression. In order to be experienced in a sensory manner, the expression to, and of, God takes on incarnate form. The incarnate qualities of beauty used in the tool of this study have the potential to reveal God to the worshippers.

Plato believes the concept of beauty realized in the truth of the mind is of greater importance than visceral beauty. In the same vein, biblical and Christian theologies of beauty place the higher value on the beauty of God's righteousness as compared to visceral beauty. Thus, the expressions of God's goodness through his love, truth, and righteousness are given greater importance than his beauty as witnessed in nature. An example of the expression of God's goodness is that Jesus Christ is considered to be the foremost expression of God's presence on earth. He is not praised for his appearance (Isa.

53:2), but is praised for the truth of his teaching and for his love through his sacrificial and redemptive death.

Two of Plato's attributes of beauty, appropriateness and proportion, are found in the sections concerning unity of form and content and presentation. These sections measured the proportion and appropriateness of the form in expressing the content. Other attributes of beauty, which may be classified as beauty of the mind, such as virtue and love, are measured in other sections. If beauty in worship becomes incarnational expressions of divine beauty, then the worshippers were able to experience ascension to the higher beauty of God

Augustine (AD 354-430): A Christian Perspective on Beauty

Plato (427-317 BC) and Augustine (AD 354-430) were separated by seven centuries, yet Augustine relies heavily on Plato's philosophical system and interprets it through the lens of Christian faith. Like Plato, Augustine believes in an ontological view of beauty in which the corporal manifestations of beauty lead to the higher metaphysical truth of beauty. Augustine comments, "[T]hose only are the true objects of enjoyment which we have spoken of as eternal and unchangeable. The rest are for use, that we may be able to arrive at full enjoyment of the former" (Confessions 629). He further quotes Matthew 6:21 to assert that the object of the heart's delight is one's treasure. If a person did not put the lower things in their right place, then his heart was in misery. If a person delighted in the higher form of God's beauty, then he knew the blessedness of the Lord.

Augustine believes the psyche (his term for the mental processes) could respond to the lower types of beauty through the body's affects or passions; however, he cautions that to live only on the basis of the passions is to live a life of "mere opinion" (Of Music

357). Such a life is mere opinion because delights based on passion are temporal, not permanent in terms of true and absolute beauty. Carnal delights could reveal divine beauty when minds are made free of the fleshly influences by suppression of sinful thoughts, thereby fixing the mind on spiritual things.

The danger of carnal delights is that they can divert attention from spiritual beauty. The distraction of visceral beauty is one of Augustine's gravest concerns about beautiful objects: that they draw attention away from the Creator to the creation. Worshipping the creation instead of the Creator he deems idolatry and revolting to God, and arose from the sin of pride (Of Music 364). Such adoration creates separateness from God. For this reason Augustine, while believing God could be revealed in earthly beauty, is very suspicious of art, especially if it does not glorify God (371).

To explain why things are beautiful, Augustine, like Plato, looks to proportion as a quality of beauty, asserting that beauty is in the balance of things being equal (Of Music 359). The aspect of Plato's "appropriateness" is also found in Augustine's belief in harmony and his supposition that humans seek agreeable things. The assessment of beauty rests firmly on a belief that God is a god of order and law. The ability to exhibit the transcendent qualities of God's beauty requires an object to reflect the appropriateness and harmony characteristic of the God who brought order out of chaos. The appropriateness relates to Augustine's concept of proportion, insofar as an object needs appropriate proportion to be considered beautiful (359). Harmony is understood in Augustine's other key concepts of unity, equality, and order. For Augustine, all things are related through a greater unity (377). When ordered properly, they reflect God's creating order out of nothing.

For Augustine, the highest form of beauty is the expression of God's love. Like the proper movement away from fleshly beauty, the soul in right relation moves away from earthly love to temperance found in the righteous love of God (Of Music 365). (Augustine believes in giving all honor and glory to God, at some expense to the enjoyment of visceral objects and pleasures.) This divine love, referred to by Augustine as *charity*, provides an aspiration to love the things that God loves, allowing people to be called sons of God (1 John 3:2). This thought is similar to Plato's belief that to focus on the truth is to allow one to desire what the gods desire and to become more like them. Augustine makes the thought distinctively Christian when he puts it in the context of sanctification and Christ's sacrificial love. A person can love another person, yet only in the right context is it done out of the enjoyment of God through the experience (Burch-Brown Good Taste 113). Godly love also emphasizes the justice of God and a life without defilement, which can be understood as holiness or righteousness.

The application of Augustine in this study. To Augustine, earthly beauty is the visceral representation of divine beauty. His focus on divinity in beauty points to the common error in American culture of praising the creation rather than the creator. In worship, a musician, speaker, or artist may be praised only at the expense of the glory given to God. Augustine warns of the distraction when focus is on the performance instead of on the Lord. Without a Godly focus, a worship service could resemble a secular performance. The performer or director could place a vision of worship on such a level as to cause it to become an idol and the primary standard of worship. Augustine rightly asserts that the emphasis should be on praising God through beauty (Confessions 631). This emphasis is especially true in worship, and some of the options respondents

could choose in the section on cohesiveness measured whether the worshippers found an emphasis on God by the leaders of worship.

In terms of the qualities of beauty, Augustine's belief in the importance of proportion and harmony is foundational to this study. Correct proportion implies a proper balance among the components of the worship service. Examples of this proportion may include prayers that are not over-extended, announcements that are succinct, and songs that are not cut short without compelling reason. This attribute was measured in the section on unity of form and content. Harmony was seen in beautiful worship when the different components of worship related to one another as an integrated whole and was measured in the section on cohesion.

Lastly, Augustine's view on the utmost importance of love in his paradigm of divine beauty is found in the section on God's love (Of Music 365). The distinctly Christian ideal of love's being found in the sacrificial death of Jesus as the paramount expression of God's beauty was key to this study. Beautiful worship is not only pleasing in appearance, or in connection with godly love; it is uniquely centered on the incarnational love of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in a worship service, God's love may be mentioned a number of times, yet the connection with the love of Jesus Christ is the highest expression of God's beauty. Anything short of an expression of Christ's love may represent vague sentimentality rather than an incarnation of Jesus' sacrificial love.

Aristotle (384-322 BC): The Successful Imitation of Truth

Key to Aristotle's view on beauty is that beauty is a pleasurable response to art. For Aristotle, pleasure is mostly found in one's learning or revealing a truth. Both comedy and tragedy can bring pleasure, though they are different pleasures. The pleasure

comes by the observer's recognizing that the narrative successfully imitated the natural world or human nature. The pleasure experienced in one's recognizing beauty is an experience of learning a universal truth (Peotics 231).

Beauty in orderliness and balance. Aristotle believes that beauty is not only found in imitation and the learning of truth, but it is also experienced through balance. Aristotle maintains that "[t]he chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree" (Metaphysics 193). This passage hints at the importance of proportion and appropriateness to Plato as well as the focus of order to Augustine. Aristotle believes that beauty is found in the balance and representation of an object. This sense of balance can also be seen in his thoughts on plot, which he believes is essential to a tragedy or comedy:

Now a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end.... to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts, but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty is a matter of size and order.
(Poetics 233)

A beautiful plot has an intentional order of beginning, middle, and end. The orderliness of the plot also includes a certain proportion as well, for each part of the plot needs to be appropriate in its length, depending on the content of the play.

The application of Aristotle in this study. To apply Aristotle's belief about plot to worship requires that beautiful worship have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Effective worship design leads people into worship with an appropriate beginning, focuses the congregation on the theme of worship in the middle of the service, and sends them forth at the end of the worship service. Effective worship planning takes into

consideration the amount of time appropriate for each part of the worship. The input from a pool of worshippers was helpful at this point because the appropriateness of the length of the worship components and the content of worship were judged by a group that could provide a consensus.

Aristotle's belief that different expressions of beauty reveal universal truths about reality is also helpful to explain how something could be sad or somber, yet pleasing. A painting that portrays Jesus bleeding, pierced, and suffering on the cross is distressing, even ugly to look upon, but the same painting also depicts the beautiful truth of God's love through the suffering. In worship, learning is not only about human nature; the learning is also about the nature of God and how he loves those who worship him. The divine expression of beauty and of ugliness goes beyond appearance to the beauty of God's truth and providence. God's beautiful truth can be found even in things that are revolting to the senses.

The nature of God is also revealed in the truth of God through Scripture and testimony about him. This aspect of revelation is somewhat similar to Aristotle's assertion that beauty is revealed in the learning of greater truth. Imitation is the successful portrayal of a universal truth and may be expressed in several forms, including comedy and tragedy. In worship, the highest expression of beauty is the true expression of God's being. Thus, beautiful worship is also the revelation and imitation of God's truth. The expression of beauty may be in joyous celebration of the resurrection or in somber reflection upon the cross. Beauty in worship is not limited in types of expression, as long as God's truth is in the expression.

Aquinas (c. 1225-1274 AD): God as the First Cause of Beauty

Aquinas asserts that God is the first cause of all things; therefore, God is the cause of beauty (Summa Theologica 1: 238; Philosophical Texts 282). Visceral forms, though important, are limited. They can only resemble and never fully realize the absolute ideal of beauty. Through participation in divine being, the form can resemble the divine, thereby transcending the finite form to reveal an aspect of God (Summa Theologica 1 210).

Aquinas asserts that an object is desirable “insofar as it is perfect” (Summa Theologica 1: 26). Such desire is the feeling aroused by the beauty of God. According to Aquinas, beauty is perceived through physical qualities and thus is apprehended by sight or hearing. Though beauty is perceived, it can transcend the physical if it possesses three qualities: integrity, clarity of light and correct proportion (211). According to Aquinas, integrity is something whole, rather than something that is incomplete or broken. The term *clarity* reflects Aquinas’ belief that God’s being is uncreated light and that he causes the clarity by illuminating physical manifestations with his light (211). The creation through God’s illuminating light gave some visceral objects a similarity to God’s being. The concept of God’s presence through light is similar to the idea of God’s glory or *doxa* seen in the Bible. Aquinas also believes beauty can be found in the correct proportion of physical qualities. The form is the physical presence and is how a person perceives and understands the existence of God in his creation.

One can perceive the form within the context of the world. To perceive the transcendent reality of the form, one has to go outside the finite world to the infinite nature of God (Summa Theologica 1: 211). One looks for qualities of God in creation and

in art, yet the forms have their first cause in God. If one understands the forms in right perspective, the forms might lead a person to the first cause, revealing the truth of God. Aquinas believes that Christ created the world and was the most perfect incarnation of God's presence, therefore he asserts that to perceive beauty is not only to see God, it is to see his Son, Jesus Christ (211).

The application of St. Thomas Aquinas in this study. Modern secular philosophers disregard Aquinas' belief that God is the first cause of all created things, including beauty, because they do not presume the existence of a divine creator. Christian theology does require God as creator, so, in the context of a Christian system, one may assert that God is the first cause of all things. For the purposes of this study, Aquinas' threefold position that (1) God is the first cause, (2) creation reflects his clarity, and (3) proportion also communicates his beauty, is central (Summa Theologica 1: 238; 231; 211). If one goes beyond the perceived beauty to contemplate the Creator who made the beauty, one may experience the transcendent presence of God.

The worshipper may hear a beautiful song, see a beautiful wall hanging, or experience a transcendence that lifts his or her mind to something greater than himself or herself. Such an experience is similar to the experience of the Hebrews in seeing the glory of the temple. Not every form can create such transcendence. The form must have qualities that are considered beautiful. For Aquinas, those qualities are integrity, clarity, and proportion. Some of those qualities were used in the questionnaire as qualities of beauty in worship. If those base properties are present, they provide a way for worshippers to experience the transcendent nature of God as the first cause of beauty. It also leads to God as the last cause of beauty because all things were created in order to

give glory to God (Summa Theologica 1: 241).

Kant (1724-1804): The Locus of Beauty

Immanuel Kant believes the internal judgments of the observer form the primary locus of beauty. Through understanding and imagination, the observer makes an aesthetic judgment as to whether something is beautiful (Critique of the Power of Judgment 89). In the field of aesthetics, many espouse the belief that internal processing of the observer is broken down into perception, description, interpretation, and evaluation. In Kant's systematic, perception and description would be in the realm of understanding, while interpretation and evaluation are in the realm of imagination. Understanding is the gathering and comprehension of information about the object or event (219). Imagination is the synthesizing and comparing of it to other information (192).

The dynamics of taste. For Kant, taste, in its right form, is based upon how the observer perceives and understands the presence of beauty (Critique of the Power 91). Kant's view of taste contrasts with the common contemporary understanding of taste as a personal preference. Taste, in Kant's philosophy, is the imagination's ability to judge beauty and ugliness. Levels of taste include the logical judgment of perception (the object is red) as well as deeper levels such as subjective satisfaction that evoke the sense of beauty (92). Satisfaction is different from pleasure, insofar as pleasure excites an inclination, whereas satisfaction is a subjective reaction to a universal quality of beauty. Aesthetic satisfaction is achieved when the object or event adheres to a universal form or purpose. Although the satisfaction is experienced subjectively, the purpose or form is universal. Taste, as it is commonly understood today, is what Kant refers to as an experience of the pleasure of inclination. Kant understands taste to be the experience of

universal truth of satisfaction rather than an experience of pleasure or personal preference. One can only make a claim of universal validity of the beauty of a given object based upon the features of the object (Critique of Judgment 481).

In Kant's opinion satisfaction is disinterested because the object is valued for its own aesthetic qualities instead of being valued by observers for the benefit they can receive from it. The disinterest creates a distance from the object, making the subjective experience somewhat objective in the evaluation of it. By distancing one's interpretation from personal preference or benefit, the observer is able to judge the object for its qualities (Critique of the Power 91).

The immediacy of beauty. Pure beauty is understood by Kant to be in the immediacy of the object, and the definition of beauty in this study has consequences beyond the aesthetic experience. Unlike Aquinas, Kant does not believe perceiving beauty can lead one back to the first cause of beauty or enlighten the observer with a moral truth. The immediate experience of beauty is empirical rather than transcendental (Critique of the Power 93). Kant does not believe that beauty has any consequences other than the immediacy of the experience (97). In Christian worship, beauty is provided to evoke a sense of transcendence to the Lord, and for that reason would have not been considered by Kant to be pure beauty. Therefore, Kant's ideas of pure beauty cannot be fully applied to the study of beauty and worship.

Kant theorizes a second kind of beauty with consequences he terms "dependent beauty." Dependent beauty is perceived and evaluated by influences outside of the object itself (Critique of the Power 114). Such influences include the observer's history, culture, religion, and anything else outside of the aesthetic experience. Theologian Burch-Brown

comments about Kant that “he claims that the beauty of an object having a built in purpose such as the enhancement of worship can be pure.... only if one has no idea of the object’s purpose” (Good Taste 65). For Kant, beauty is only pure if it is exclusively attributed to the aesthetic form. Any other beauty is dependent beauty. As applied to worship, such a definition requires disassociating one’s perception and evaluation from one’s faith or any purpose other than purely aesthetic experience.

The application of Kant in this study. Worshippers might find disassociating beauty in worship from personal history nearly impossible given the integration of their faith with their evaluative thinking. To isolate an aesthetic experience so that it has no consequences upon the other aspects of the worship service artificially detaches the worship from its purpose. A worshipper who looks upon an adorned cross might evaluate the cross to be adorned beautifully, yet the influence of faith history is still present and providing meaning. In addition, the cross cannot easily be extracted from the context and purpose of the worship service.

Difficulties may arise for worshippers when they try to distill aspects of the worship service from the dependent strands of faith, history, context, and purpose. One possible solution is for the worshipper to acknowledge the dependence of evaluation upon variables outside of the aesthetic experience. Besides asking if the worshipper thought the sanctuary was beautiful, the worshipper could be asked, “*Why* did you believe the sanctuary was beautiful?” Through the answer, one can learn if the worshipper is influenced more by the aesthetic experience or by personal preference and if dependent factors contribute to the evaluative judgment. In this study, the debriefing time offered the chance to discover the presence and strength of dependent factors on the

respondents' judgment of worship. The examination of the presence of dependent factors enabled me to see if the respondents' judgments were based on the satisfaction of beauty or on the eliciting of a pleasurable response of subjective taste.

Kant distinguishes a didactic relationship between pure beauty and dependent beauty (Critique of the Power 93). I believe the relationship between the two is more of a continuum. Pure beauty may not have been 100 percent disinterested, yet the judgment of an object as beautiful could nonetheless be valid. Pure beauty is unattainable, but one can aspire to it. One can qualify a judgment of something as beautiful by ascertaining dependent variables influencing the judgment. If beauty is indeed the incarnational and transcendent presence of God, then all beauty includes some dependent influences because objects and events are always contextual in their earthly forms. These contexts interplay with the contexts of the observer's history, beliefs, and conditioned responses to the object or event. An object may be isolated in the setting of a museum; worship is a dynamic, fluid experience presented in the context of faith traditions and community. Even if a person is an objective observer from outside the worship setting, a faith tradition of the denomination, or even of the local congregation, may confound a distilled judgment of pure beauty. Nevertheless, some factors can facilitate an intimacy with the Lord in experiencing the beauty of the Lord's presence in worship.

Kant's emphasis on satisfaction rather than on delight shifts the focus of aesthetic value from the subjective feeling of delight and pleasure to satisfaction based on the object's fulfilling the attributes of beauty. My hope for this study was to guide the worshippers to specific reasons for their judgment based more on worship fulfilling the qualities of beauty in a satisfactory manner than on the worshippers basing the worship

service on the inclination of their own preferences.

I believe if worshippers' judgments of beauty in worship are more objective, they are then able to distance themselves from their preferences. Kant makes a good point that, in evaluation, a certain distance needs to be present in order to allow an object to be judged on its own merits. If the worshippers distance themselves from their personal preferences, they would be able to evaluate the worship service on its own merits. Such distance would ideally lead them to reflective considerations of worship.

Kant explains the judgment of worship on its merits alone, distinguishing it from personal preference (Critique of Judgment 481). He also shows how the mind might find understanding beyond the level of pleasure. Although I use the term *pleasure* to describe the worshipper's favorable response to an aspect of worship, satisfaction is based upon the qualities of beauty in worship. I looked for these tendencies in the debriefings to determine if respondents were able to give reasons for their responses.

Hegel (1770-1831): Beauty as Divine Truth

Hegel believes the highest ideal is *truth*, a living unseen absolute reality. He theorizes that beauty is the sensuous way in which the truth is experienced. Art is the main means to perceive and experience beauty, even greater than creation insofar as it is begotten by the imagination of humans. For Hegel, truth is in the realm of the divine, and only humans can commune and reveal the mind of the Spirit in sensuous fashion. Through the contemplation of the artist upon an ideal, and then through the form given to the ideal, the artist is able to bring the ideal to consciousness by giving particular form to the abstract truth. Hegel proposes that "[a]n idea of the beautiful must indeed be our starting point for the philosophy of art; but our conception must reconcile ... combining

metaphysical universality with what is genuinely particular” (Hegel: On the Arts 3).

Metaphysical truth exists only in the mind until words, music, or images give it a particular concrete expression. The truth is begotten by the artist’s connecting it to his understanding of the ideal of the truth. Thus a work of art reaches a religious plane when it embodies the beauty of what Hegel believes is divine truth. Such an idea is similar to the concept of truth in the Gospel of John. Jesus repeatedly identifies himself as the Truth of God thus, the metaphysical truth is given concrete expression through the incarnation of Jesus (John 1:7; 8:45; 14:6).

The three strata of beauty. Hegel believes beauty evokes pleasure and in its lowest experience is related to desire. In the lowest, desirous form, beauty is valued for satisfying an emotional or physical need. Examples of the base forms of beauty are a person seeing pictures of wood and thinking how he or she might use it, or of meat and thinking how it would satisfy his or her hunger. The satisfaction is self-serving and did not direct the person to the higher plane of divine truth. The second level satisfies intellectually, when the observer obtains knowledge of the truth. The highest level of the experience of beauty is to enter into communion with the divine presence of truth. Hegel posits that “[i]ts [materia’s](sic) aim of sensuous presence ... is equally entitled to be delivered from the framework of its purely material substance” (Lectures 51). He goes on to say, “[T]he work of art occupies a midway ground, with the directly perceived objective world on one side and the ideality of pure thought on the other” (52). Beautiful art becomes the bridge constructed by the artist to the ideality of pure thought. The artist participates with the divine, freeing the materia from its material substance and transforming it into an incarnation of God’s presence.

Hegel also believes the greatest sphere of beauty is love, reaching its apex in the person of Christ. Hegel explains, “[T]his third great sphere of art, in its essentially religious phase, is supplied by the history of redemption—Christ’s life, death, and resurrection” (Hegel: On the Arts 39). This ideal of beauty is not in opposition to the finite world but enters into it. Through the embodiment of Christ, God descends into the world so that finite humans can have a direct encounter with the divine.

Beauty as love is a spiritual beauty and, according to Hegel, is most profoundly expressed in the self-giving love of Christ (Hegel: On the Arts 42). The particularity of the Christ-like love happens in the present as God’s kingdom penetrates worldly matters “in order to transfigure them” (44). The manifestations can be witnessed in the life of the church. The depth of this love is not primarily experienced through visceral appearance; rather, it is experienced in feeling. Thus, beautiful love as content is experienced as a feeling, evoked by the presence of God and the perception of self-giving love.

Divine beauty in ordinary objects. One who believes that concrete, empirical objects do not have any other properties outside of the perception may think Hegel to be an ethereal dreamer. Nevertheless, one of the goals of a worship leader is to take the material substance of this world and communicate the message and presence of the divine. One example of the divine being present through material objects is the bread and wine of communion. They are ordinary objects used by the worship leader and by God to communicate the divine ideal of Jesus’ mercy and grace. If the worship leader is aware of the profundity of the divine presence and has the creativity to communicate it effectively to the congregation, then the truth can be even more present for the congregation. The communion service can go beyond beauty, satisfying a self-centered desire of the

worshipper or simply offering an intellectual truth about God. Like Hegel, I believe the highest level of beauty is to use particular content to commune with the divine truth of God's presence.

The application of Hegel in this study. Hegel's three-tiered progression of the experience of beauty also speaks to why people might experience pleasure in a worship service. Some people have mentioned that they attend worship to "feel different" (Lectures 39). Their attitude suggests that they believe they should feel happier or more at peace after they have worshipped. I believe this attitude is indicative of the culture that leads people to expect to experience feelings that benefit their emotional health when they read a book or see a show. These people expect the artist or author to please them in a way similar to Hegel's first level. Other people come to learn something, such as better ways of coping or ethical truths that help them live with more integrity. These people still miss the point of worship, which is to glorify and give praise to God as well as to enter into communion on his terms.

Only the third level reaches God's purpose of worship. Material objects and language allow people to use the things of this earth to go beyond its framework and to participate in abstract divine truth. As Hegel believes, people perceive through the objective world the spiritual content of the element only when they are free from focusing on satisfying their own desires through the beauty. In this experience of intimacy are truth and God revealed (Lectures 108).

Hegel also describes the dynamic between material beauty and divine beauty (Lectures 52). His belief that divine beauty must take on a particular form is similar to the incarnational presence of God in human form. The belief that the divine takes on

particular form parallels my belief that divine beauty is manifest in particular forms in worship, especially as the spiritual beauty of love. Hegel helps to bridge the divine and the earthly as well as to explain the different levels of pleasure that might be experienced in worship.

Shaftesbury (1671-1713): The Depth of Beauty

The Earl of Shaftesbury shows how the qualities of beauty might be interpreted and measured. Shaftesbury endeavors to free the idea of the human spirit from the “asceticism of the Puritans and the crippling influence of the mechanical philosophy” (Hofstadter and Kuhns 240). His answer to those beliefs is to emphasize the divine beauty in nature as perceived and understood as beautiful to the human mind. Beauty is found in “honesty and moral truth” as well as true features such as proportion and harmony (Shaftesbury, Sensus Communis 112). For Shaftesbury, beauty is not only in the “truth” of proper proportions but also under the surface in the form of moral truth.

Shaftesbury includes symmetry, order, and proportions to his complete list of beautiful attributes. As Aristotle, Aquinas, and others believe, beauty has a certain orderliness and balance to it. Terrestrial beauty has an aspect of excellence that is able to attract the observer (Shaftesbury, Characteristics 318). The excellence and order in a work of art is crafted by the artist, who develops his or her understanding of beauty and uses the understanding and the skill to proper proportion in the work of art.

A critical understanding of beauty. The ability to perceive beauty is acquired over time, requiring training to understand composition, symmetry, and other aesthetic qualities. Shaftesbury quotes Quintillian, who states, “The learned understand the art of composition; the unlearned enjoy the pleasure from it” (Second Characters 116). Through

training the learned observer is able to understand why a work of art is beautiful. The unlearned person simply enjoys the experience without being able to say why.

Shaftesbury comments that pleasure can warp proper aesthetic judgment in one of three ways: (1) The person can love something because it flatters him or her, (2) the observer might have a fondness for one particular artist or style, or (3) the person might be ignorant of what is beautiful. Acquiring taste, especially sensitivity to aesthetic judgment, enables the person to make an educated evaluation about what is beautiful and what is not. This special sensitivity guards against judgments biased by personal preference or ignorance (Shaftesbury, Characteristics 318).

The special sensitivity to beauty not only allows one to enjoy beauty for its own sake but also to experience the divine in beauty. The terrestrial beauty of nature is only a “faint shadow” of the divine beauty (Shaftesbury, Characteristics 318). The transcendent beauty in earthly objects leads the observer to the first beauty, the absolute beauty of God. The mystery and power of God are also experienced through the sublime. Thus, religious experience is in the excellence of beauty and in the sense of awe.

The application of Shaftesbury in this study. I agree with Shaftesbury’s assertion that terrestrial beauty can lead to the first beauty, God. The incarnational presence of God in worship was measured in this study by two of Shaftesbury’s qualities of beauty: excellence in presentation and proportion as measured in the unity of form and content. Shaftesbury’s belief that beauty is found in moral truth and other virtues was measured in the observer’s perception of qualities of God’s holiness in worship. I defined moral truth and other manifestations of the incarnational righteousness of God as more profound expressions of God’s beauty than glamorous expressions. The distinction

between Godly and glamorous beauty are further explained below in the section on the biblical presentation of beauty.

The presence of beauty, whether in presentation or in righteousness, must be perceived and understood as beauty by the observer. Even if beauty is present, if the observer does not perceive it, then he or she does not regard the object or event as beautiful. The necessity of perception is one of the potential pitfalls of asking worshippers to measure the presence of qualities of beauty. Some worshippers did not possess special sensitivity to beauty, which, as Shaftesbury states, can be acquired only through training over time (Shaftesbury, Characteristics 318). His warnings about merely finding pleasure, rather than understanding it as beautiful, is a point well taken. His further explanations as to why people make errors in judgment (flattery, bias, and ignorance) are also helpful. These explanations, combined with Hegel's levels of beauty, provided a rubric to distinguish whether worshippers based their judgments on the bias of personal preference or the understanding of beauty.

I interpreted "a special sensitivity," as Shaftesbury terms it, not only as aesthetic sensitivity, but a faith sensitivity as well. A trained eye may be able to understand if something is aesthetically beautiful, yet perception of God's beauty goes beyond visceral perception and experiences as divine truth of virtue. Thus, worshippers also need to have a faith sensitivity and to be alert to virtuous qualities such as faith, hope, self-control, patience, and love. How well they were able to perceive these things was observed in the debriefing time when worshippers provided their reasons for their judgments.

Burke (1729-1797): Beauty and the Sublime

God may be experienced through the sublime, even if the usual qualities of beauty

are lacking. Edmund Burke's definition of beauty is "a social quality; for where women and men, and not only they, but when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them" (42). He distinguishes pleasure as having a positive experience, while delight is the absence of pain. The pleasure "causes love," attracting the person to another person or to an object (91). The feeling of love arises when the person contemplates anything that is beautiful. The appearance of beauty is causative in evoking love as naturally as ice cools down hot water.

Proportion is a quality of beauty that could be applied only as was fitting for the specific type of object, and proportion alone is not a sufficient reason to regard something as beautiful (114). For instance, the proportion of a rose is different from the proportion of an orange blossom. Within the types, forms are well proportioned or deformed. Deformity arises when the object is not well proportioned, and deformity is a quality of ugliness. Ugliness, as opposed to beauty, revolts rather than attracts. Between beauty and ugliness is mediocrity, which has no effect upon feelings.

The dynamic of beauty: from sense to mind. According to Burke, "beauty is ... some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses" (112). Beauty is the presence of qualities, but it is not limited to the qualities. Beauty is a dynamic in which qualities intervene with the senses to produce a feeling. People experience beauty by sight, touch, and hearing. The stimuli produce pleasure through the chain of sensations. Beautiful stimuli are mostly found in diminutive objects individuals can control, whereas the sublime dwells in larger objects.

In Burke's view contrasting beauty and the sublime, beauty evokes a feeling of joy while the sublime provokes feelings of astonishment and fear. While beauty's source

of feelings is pleasure, the sublime is based in pain. The inferior effects of the sublime are admiration, reverence, and respect (57). Burke believes that some qualities of beauty include smoothness, polish, lightness, and delicate features. In contrast, the sublime qualities include ruggedness, vastness, and massiveness (57). Even though the qualities of beauty and the sublime contrast, beauty can be grafted onto the sublime. According to Burke, different responses of human bodies are so alike that the pain of the sublime and pleasure of beauty similarly affect the passions of the mind (103). The similarity of responses can be further understood in light of Burke's belief that delight is found in the absence of pain (35). Both the sublime and beauty evoke strong feelings in the mind (103). Mediocrity does not evoke such strong feelings.

The importance of Burke in this study. Burke points out how beautiful stimuli interact with the mind to produce pleasure and evoke the feeling of love. The questionnaire measured whether the worshippers had positive or negative responses to worship and in the debriefing sessions they were able to express if feelings of pleasure and love were evoked. These responses gave evidence as to their pleasure or displeasure with the worship, which was a result of their minds perceiving and responding to beautiful stimuli.

The interaction between the perceived object and the mind of the worshipper is multisensory and can be perceived by sight, sound, touch, smell, and perhaps even taste. The total sensory experience of worship affects the perception of all the senses and is acknowledged by the presence of pleasure of the feeling of love.

Beautiful or sublime stimuli in worship evoke feelings of pleasure and, perhaps, pain. Synthesizing Burke's thoughts on beauty evoking feelings of love with Aquinas'

thoughts on God's being the first cause of beauty, one might say that beauty not only evokes feelings of love, but may also lead to love of God, who is the first cause of beauty. The presence of beauty may draw the person to God and evoke feelings of love and adoration for him.

Feelings toward God evoked in worship are not limited to love and adoration. In the Bible, people such as the shepherds in Luke's infancy narrative experienced fear and awe when confronted with the divine power of angels. Burke's "inferior effects" of admiration, reverence, and respect are also found in the biblical responses to God. Shaftesbury helps to bridge the gap between the effects of the sublime and the presence of God in his belief that "the experience of the sublime provides the religious experience upon which man's positive concept of the infinite rests" (Hofstadter and Kuhns 240). The experience of the sublime evokes the inspiring feelings of reverence for the majesty of God.

Building on the premise that Burke's qualities of the sublime and beauty may evoke a sense of God's presence illustrates how qualities such as vastness and ruggedness, as well as delicacy and gracefulness, may both evoke a sense of God's presence. Through Burke's assertions, the attributes that comprise beauty can be broadened to include sublime qualities. One of the reasons the nature of the qualities can be broadened is the dynamic interplay between the perceived objects in worship and their effects on the mind.

While attending a concert by the Christian musical trio Phillips, Craig, and Dean, I experienced the presence of God through the sublime. The concert stage was not well lit, and the sound was erratic. The audience responded to the initial disorganization with

uncertainty and reserve. Later in the concert, during their performance of I Am Proud to Be a Christian, the concert changed. By the end of the song, the whole audience stood reciting the main line of the chorus in a loud combination of singing and shouting. The audience's singing probably would not be judged as beautiful by even the kindest critic, yet the heartfelt singing of the audience evoked feelings of awe and reverence in me. Feelings of love were grafted onto the feelings of reverence as I focused on the object of my reverence: Jesus Christ. I agree with Burke that beauty and the sublime are similar in how they evoke feelings, and these feelings create an intimacy with God in worship. I also believe that when worshippers identify these qualities, they judge the worship service to be pleasing and, therefore, beautiful.

Hume (1711-76): The Principles of Beauty

Hume and Burke both emphasize the importance of disinterested or nonprejudicial aesthetic judgment. All "sentiments" or personal aesthetic judgments are correct insofar as persons determine for themselves what they believe is beautiful or ugly. Not every person's understanding is right because every person's understanding needs to refer to a standard beyond his own sentiment (Hume 6). A first glance at an object could leave a favorable impression and confound the judgment of beauty. Upon subsequent reflection, an observer with "delicate taste" is able to evaluate whether the attributes of the object followed valued principles and if the object attained its purpose.

Hume focuses on principles rather than the forms in the object because he does not believe in the *a priori* influence of form as beauty. While beauty does not exist in the mere presence of the form, it exists when the sensations perceive it and the mind beholds it. Principles about the attributes of what comprises beauty come from the reflections of

people with “soundness of understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind” (19). Qualities based on the principles of beauty are necessary conditions for an object to be judged as beautiful. The principles are not based on capricious individual opinion. They are based upon generations of thinkers who carefully reflected beauty and identified areas such as proper composition and perspective as being conditions necessary to beautiful art.

The influence of different humors. Hume’s assertion that understanding’s capacity and potential to elevate one’s ability to judge beauty also takes into consideration the inevitability of “different humours”:

[T]wo sources of variation, which are not sufficient indeed to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is different humours of particular men; the other the particular manners and opinions of our age. The general principles of taste are uniform in human nature. Where men vary in judgement proceeds from prejudice, from want of practice, or want of delicacy. (19)

Opinions about beauty differ with individual temperaments and from culture to culture. Such differences of opinion are evident in the prolific discussions of contemporary Christian music and more traditional or classical music. People with understanding in music may be able to find beauty in both kinds, yet they are inclined to find more pleasure in one kind of music than in the other. People with limited understanding of music may simply make their judgments based on what appeals to them in accordance with the cultural influences that primarily shaped their understanding of music. Hume helpfully acknowledges the influence of preference or “taste” in creating differences in judgment, but he does not leave the dynamics of judgments at that. Hume identifies the reason for some differing judgments as some people’s lacking the practice or the

capability to understand the principles of beauty.

Persons who make judgments based primarily upon their temperament or cultural influences may benefit from the understanding of someone who points out the principles of beauty. Hume believes if a person is confronted with the principles about how objects conform to the principles of beauty, the person would conclude that any faulty judgment lay within himself or herself (Hume 12). Hume's trust in people's ability to rise beyond their own preferences when confronted with principles is optimistic, yet he acknowledges the value of people being given guidance in making their judgments. Hume's reflections on individual taste and understanding are invaluable in any examination of a person's reaction to a worship service because they facilitate an understanding of the dynamics of taste in judgments about worship.

The importance of Hume in this study. Worshippers' perception and judgment of a worship service are greatly influenced by their temperament and cultural influence. Some people feel invigorated when they attend an expressive worship, while others find a lively service to be overwhelming. The temperament of the person influences his or her disposition toward certain styles, creating a prejudicial judgment. Hume warns against the influence of personal preference in the evaluation of beauty based on principles and asserts that a "disinterest" in the object creates an objectivity that is more likely to free one from the making an incorrect judgment prejudiced by personal preference.

The uniqueness of American fascination with ever-changing and disposable music and worship "styles" may greatly limit American worshippers' judgment as to the amount of beauty in a worship service. As stated above, people may have preferences in music styles based on the cultures in which they were raised. I enjoy contemporary Christian

music as it was three or four years ago. Much of the contemporary Christian music produced in the last two years seems too noisy and convoluted to me. If I base my judgment only on whether I prefer a certain style of music, then my judgment is limited by my temperament and cultural influences. If I study the discipline, then I can make judgments based on such principles, rather than judging the music in worship the way teenagers used to “Rate-a-Record” on American Bandstand: “Yeah, I like it, Mr. Clark. It has a good beat, and I can dance to it.”

Principles for beautiful worship go beyond judgment of aesthetic experience to the realm of faith. Hegel’s system of perceiving beauty selfishly at a base level and participating with the divine intimately through beauty on the highest level indicate that a person with a deep understanding of faith can give a better judgment of beauty in worship than one who has a shallow understanding of faith. A person with shallow faith may respond to what he or she can get from worship rather than seek to glorify God and to enjoy the beauty of intimacy in worshipping him. Depth of faith also helps one to be aware of the symbolic liturgy and treat the sacraments with reverence.

Participants of this study came to worship “as is.” The study did not include any training to help increase their understanding of faith or aesthetic principles. The questionnaire used in the study provided attributes of worship to serve as critical reasons for their judging worship as beautiful or ugly. The specific attributes were chosen and reviewed by people with a deep understanding of faith and a well-versed knowledge of worship. Thus, I believe these attributes helped the respondents to direct their focus away from the bias of personal preference to the presence or absence of specific qualities valued as “beautiful.” The study was not able to train the worshippers; it was able to

provide them with a tool to assist them in giving reasons based on understanding rather than personal preference. I hoped that directing the respondents' attention to specific qualities would reduce the effect of the prejudice of personal preference and base the responses on a deep understanding of principles of beauty and faith.

Hume also touches on one of the minor themes of the study—the difference between initial beauty and reflective beauty. Reflective beauty went beyond the initial beauty of the first glance to a deeper consideration and understanding of qualities that contribute to beauty in worship:

There is a flutter or hurry of thought which attends the first perusal of any piece, and which confounds the genuine sentiment of beauty. The relation of the parts is not discerned: the true characters of style are little distinguished. There is a species of beauty, which, as it is florid and superficial, pleases at first: but being found incompatible with a just expression either of reason or passion, soon pales upon the taste, and is then rejected with disdain, at least rated at a much lower value. (13-14)

The superficial quality may leave a good first impression yet simply be pleasing to the eye. When I was a child, my family frequented a department store where paintings for sale were prominently displayed at the entrance. I thought some of them looked attractive. I was one of those teenagers who really enjoyed black velvet posters. My mother, who taught art, derided them because they lacked the principles of good artistry. The attributes of the paintings pleased at first, but then soon paled. Some worship services are filled with sweet sentiment or have a glossy presentation that is initially attractive but which pales as one reflects on the meanings of God's beauty.

Tolstoy (1828-1910): From the Aesthetic to the Moral

Leo N. Tolstoy shifts the focus on beauty in art from perceivable aesthetics to communication of a religious message of uniting people with their neighbor and with

God by evoking in them identical feelings (149). Tolstoy believes good art infects the observer with feelings that gives him or her empathy for other people and influences them to be better people. For Tolstoy, Christian art is of higher form than non-Christian art because the common denominator of feelings for Jesus Christ unites people. Non-Christian art unites people in certain feelings and ideas, but the ideas are just as likely to cause separation by juxtaposing one group's ideas against those of another group.

Tolstoy understands the ultimate aim of art as sociological and religious. Beauty is not to be valued solely for its own presence but is to be valued in an almost utilitarian manner for its ability to unite people with each other and with God (150). Thus, beautiful art has a moral quality, and people became better persons for having viewed it.

The moral consequences of beauty. Moral consequences may be questionable as a primary basis to judge beauty in secular art; however, I believe they have a place in assessing whether worship is beautiful. One of the purposes of worship is to unite people with God. To achieve this goal allows them to become “new creations” (2 Cor. 7) who are called to “love their neighbor as themselves” (Matt. 19:19). Worship has moral purposes, based in God's righteousness.

The ideal of intimacy with Christ and loving responses to one's neighbor also changes the conditions to judge beauty (Tolstoy 147). Tolstoy believes what may appear unsightly to men is viewed beautiful to God. In support of his assertion, he quotes the Bible: “[T]hat which was exalted among men has become an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Thus Mary Magdalene was more beautiful on the day of her repentance than the day she was adorned in all her finery. This view is consistent with the biblical understanding of beauty.

The application of Tolstoy in this study. Tolstoy's emphasis on the apex of beauty uniting people to God and to one another offers a distinctively Christian view of beauty. If the beauty of God is realized in the holiness of his righteousness and love, then these attributes are more valuable than physical aesthetic attributes. In this study, three of the general categories concerned physical aesthetic attributes, while the other two, righteousness and love, concerned attributes based on the nature of God. If God is the first cause of beauty, then his beauty is revealed in the presence of these qualities.

The qualities include those that measure the presence or the reverence and love expressed for Jesus as well as the expressions of love for people. If these qualities are present, this study's premise is that the beauty of God is present as well.

Tolstoy's belief in what comprises beauty also applies to this study. His emphasis on beauty's capacity to unite people with God shifts the primary focus of beauty from physical aesthetic qualities to intimacy with God. As mentioned above, the beauty of God can be present in what may be considered unsightly, such as the crucifix. The beauty of Jesus' righteousness and love supersedes the physical appearances. As Tolstoy rightly points out, what is exalted by humans can be an abomination to God.

When Tolstoy's thoughts about faith and beauty are grafted onto Hume's focus on principles and standards, one can see how reflective beauty can reveal God's presence. Initial beauty may be pleasing for a moment; however, godly beauty is lasting and more significant because the beauty is an expression of God's presence. Additionally, the principles of God's beauty found in Scripture create some objective standards from which to identify qualities of beauty. Many of these standards were used in the questionnaire, especially in the categories of righteousness and love.

Lastly, Tolstoy illuminates the need for understandable worship: “Christian art must transmit feelings accessible to everyone” (150). Accessibility of content is essential when one considers not just if something is presented with beauty but that it must also be in a form that the worshippers understand. In the essay “Aesthetics and God,” Father Chad Ripperger uses a paradigm of beauty and worship, similar to the one in this study, to propose that the old rite of mass was superior to the new rite because it possessed superior clarity (among other qualities). Ripperger does well in stating his argument using the basis of perfection and meaning, yet he does not take into account how effectively the old rite may communicate to the contemporary culture (32). As powerful as the images may be, if they are not accessible in feeling or understanding to the worshipper, then they will not be perceived as beautiful. An object not perceived as beautiful does not necessarily negate the presence of beauty; it does, however, hinder the effect of beauty.

Various Philosophers of the Twentieth Century

Many of the aesthetic philosophers of the twentieth century examined the dynamics of the aesthetic experience, as well as qualities that contributed to beauty. The focus on different philosophers included art as an intentional act, perceiving specific qualities that contributed to beauty, and finding reasons for judgments. Worship can incorporate some of their ideas in the purposefulness of worship as well as why we evaluate worship as being excellent or lacking.

John Dewey (1859-1952): The Intentional Experience of Art

Dewey clarifies the idea that standards of physical measurements and standards of judgment are different insofar as physical standards are measured by quantity, while

judgment is measured by quality (307). In other words, in assessing physical measurements, an observer measures the quantity of attributes present. In assessing the standard of judgment, the observer evaluates whether certain qualities are present. Standards of physical measurements are concrete, empirical attributes experienced through perception and description. Standards of judgment are in the realm of interpretation and evaluation. The standards of judgment focus on the quality of an object and, therefore, are more subjective than standards of physical measurement, reflecting what is valued as good or beautiful. Nevertheless, standards of judgment are based upon the visceral qualities of an object. Criticism is the “search for the properties of the object that may justify” the judgment (308). Hume’s assertion that good judgment is based on principles combined with Dewey’s point that criticism is finding the qualities of the object to justify a judgment may lead to the premise that *judgment of an object as beautiful can be justified by standards of quality as they are perceived in an object or event*.

A person’s interaction with the artistic object is referred to by Dewey as an experience (37). The experience originates in the intent of the artist to communicate an idea through art. According to Dewey, the experience needs to have the coherent unity of a single quality that pervades the entire experience. Worship of inferior quality is often a shoddy compilation of assorted parts. This view is in keeping with Dewey’s thinking that beautiful worship is more than just the sum of the parts. It also has an intentional coherence in which the parts were interwoven for a general purpose or into a specific theme (44).

Dewey also believes a good artistic experience includes an orderliness to the art

(15). The structure of the various components distinguishes an artistic experience with a particular end in mind from a random event (65). In a similar manner, beautiful worship is orderly in structuring components with the purpose of leading the congregation in worshipping God. The questionnaire measured purposefulness in the section on coherence, where the respondents expressed their perception of a clear theme and purpose.

George Dickie: Attending to Qualities

Dickie proposes that aesthetic judgment is based on the observer's attending or not attending to aesthetic qualities (129). He believes that the difference in aesthetic judgment is rooted in that which the observer focuses his or her perception. Some aspects of an object or event require more attention than others, and the person with a sharp aesthetic perception attends to the right qualities. The questionnaire directed the worshippers' attention to specific qualities in the worship service.

Persons who may not have been aesthetically savvy were still directed to look for specific qualities to help them make informed judgments about the worship service. Dickie also believed one must have standards in mind when making judgments (130). If people are able to focus their attention on important aspects of worship, and understand their standards, then they might be shaped by the focus on God's holiness and love.

Charles Stevenson: Giving Reasons for Judgments

According to Stevenson, critical activity consists of giving reasons. Reasons are based upon specific perceived qualities. They are intertwined within interpretation and evaluation (Eaton 112). When a person evaluates an object, he or she may modify his or her interpretation, and sometimes perception when he or she compares it to other things.

In this way judgment can be fluid.

During the debriefing time, the worshippers were asked to give reasons for their judgments. If they could not give reasons, that fact was so noted. Reasons given for judgments provided specific qualities that could be identified as conditions sufficient for beauty in that particular instance. As Paul Ziff, an aesthetic theorist, contends, these reasons may in fact be relative to the context of the individuals (Eaton 117). The influence of the context in worshippers' responses could be determined by either principles of excellence or personal inclination or preference.

Alan Goldman: Aesthetic Value

Goldman posits that the relationship between sufficient conditions and beauty is based in objective qualities in a work of art. Goldman adroitly points out that the concept of beauty is an unspecific concept, difficult to measure because of its abstract nature. The task of the person making an aesthetic judgment is to move down the chain from evaluative properties toward identifying and describing specific, objective qualities of beauty (Aesthetic Value 25). He states, "[T]he task of justifying aesthetic judgments requires only being able to specify their objective bases in the contexts in which they are made" (26).

The person interpreting the object is active in identifying and reflecting on how the properties contributed to the judgment of the object as beautiful or ugly:

The task of the critic is to be an interpreter, not simply to evaluate on the one hand or to describe or pick out random properties on the other, but to select those properties that are value relevant and to guide the audience to appreciation and proper evaluation by showing how those properties are relevant. (Goldman, 93)

The respondents who filled out the questionnaire were directed to the specific qualities

that were relevant to the judgment of worship. These were what Goldman refers to as base properties, which in his view are nonevaluative (45). Although some of the qualities in the questionnaire could have been categorized as interpretations, most of the qualities were based upon descriptions, which brought them close to base qualities.

The categories of beauty used in this study were presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, divine love, and God's holiness. The first three categories focused on the composition of the worship service, while the latter two focused on the interactions with other people and with God in worship. The qualities focusing on the composition of the worship may be considered analogous to performance, content, and formulation.

One example of a base property of presentation is how well a musician performs. If an organist repeatedly hit wrong notes or was irregular in the timing of a piece, the worshipper could point to the specific instances and make the judgment that the performance of the piece was not aesthetically good. If the organist showed great skill and performed flawlessly, then the worshipper could, with reason, have said the performance of the music was beautiful.

Similarly, in regards to the coherence or content of worship, if the liturgy was well thought out and was meaningful, then the worshipper could cite these specific reasons when he or she asserted that the content of worship service was beautiful. The distinctive content of Christian worship is also related to the triune God and the Word of God, so another base measurement of content, or coherence, is the presence of content related to the triune God and Scripture.

In judging the unity of form and content, or the formulation of the worship, worshippers focused on the specific components as they effectively expressed the content

of worship. Specific examples about the judgment of the formulation of worship included ascertaining whether the observer believed that the music or other components of worship appropriately conveyed the meaning of the worship service. In addition to the appropriateness of the specific components was the issue of appropriate balance among all components of worship service. One question asked if the worship service were formulated effectively insofar as the individual components of the worship service helped in the expression of the content. If it was so, then the worshippers were able to give reasons that the formulation of the worship service was considered excellent or beautiful.

Divine Beauty from a Biblical View

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the words "beautiful," "beauties," or "beautify" are used to describe God, his temple, and his actions in the world or towards righteous persons (102). Most of these instances occur in the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament examples are more likely to use the term "glory" to describe God's majesty and splendor.

God uses the Hebrew word *hadarah* when he challenges Job to match his glory and beauty (Job 40:10). *Hadarah* signified adornment or splendor. It was also used to signify holy adornment in public worship, as well as the glory of a king. In Psalm 96:9 and 29:2 the psalmist uses it referring to the beauty of God's holiness. Beauty in these psalms has a moral quality of holiness as well as a physical attractiveness.

Psalm 27:4 is one of the best known references to God's beauty. The psalmist proclaims, "One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple." The psalmist uses the Hebrew word *no'am*, which is based on the root word *na'em*,

signifying pleasant, graceful, and delightful beauty. The psalmist proclaims the delightful beauty of God can be seen in the temple where the presence of God resides. In so doing he proclaims beauty is an attribute of God. In Psalm 90:17 the psalmist requests the beauty of the Lord fall upon the worshippers and bring prosperity. The beauty of the Lord is not only an attribute of God, but can be imparted as a form of favor. These two scriptures illustrate that the Israelites not only praised the beauty of the Lord, they also sought to receive it and be blessed by it.

The word *yophiy* signifying physical beauty is used to describe Esther's beauty (Esth. 1:11), and the Tyre's vain physical beauty in the lamentations of Ezekiel (Ezek. 27 and 28). Yet, it is also used to describe the beauty of the Lord shining forth out of Zion (Ps. 50:2). In Psalm 50 the psalmist exalts the visceral beauty of God's presence. The usage of *yophiy* in Ezekiel 27 and Psalm 50 illustrates the contrast between worldly glamour and God's splendor. Glamour conveys transitory beauty, while God's splendor conveys the physical manifestation of God's glory. God's beauty can be an aesthetic experience understood through sensory perception.

In Isaiah 61:3 the prophet proclaims that the Lord will give to the Israelites beauty for ashes. The word for beauty, *pa'ar*, means to beautify or adorn with boughs or deck with a wreath. The preceding two verses are Isaiah's testimony about the Spirit of the Lord anointing him:

¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn. (Isa. 61:1-3, KJV: Parallel Bible)

Isaiah testifies the Lord brings good tidings to the oppressed, binds the

brokenhearted, proclaims liberty, opens prisons, comforts those who mourn, and brings his year of jubilation. The images of freedom and healing are capped by the image of the Lord replacing the desolation of ashes with a beautiful adornment of a garland. The beauty of the Lord is granted to his children in an act of love, much in the same manner that the Lord frees, comforts, and heals the faithful. God's beauty is not only physical, but also relational. It is expressed in God's compassion and love for his children.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19, when he proclaims his mission at the start of his ministry. Christ's mission parallels God's promise through Isaiah centuries earlier. Jesus is not only a witness or proclaimer of God's beautiful compassion and love; he is the incarnation of the beauty.

Although Jesus rarely mentions beauty, he does use the term beauty once as a negative reference and once as a positive reference. When talking about the Pharisees, in Matthew 23:27, Jesus says they are like the tombs that appear to be beautiful on the outside and on the inside are full of bones and filth. His use of visual beauty as superficial and vain is similar to the Ezekiel's exhortation against worthless worldly beauty.

In Mark 14:3 a woman pours out costly ointment on Jesus' head. She is criticized for her loving act to which Jesus responds, "Let her alone, why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing for me" (NIV). Mark uses the word *kolon*, which means good, principally as beautiful and valuably virtuous. Jesus calls the woman's action beautiful in a kind and virtuous manner. The woman's inward beauty stands in contrast with the illusionary, outward beauty and inward filth of the Pharisees. Those who honor Christ express beauty through virtuous acts and words.

God's earthly beauty is seen in physical beauty that is often referred to as

aesthetic beauty. In worship God's beauty is found in the form and presentation of the worship setting, the music, the liturgy, and the sermon. The Gospel writer John states that all of creation was made through Jesus (John 1:3). If Jesus is the author of creation, then the highest form of incarnational beauty is the person of Jesus. Such attributes of the beauty of Christ are found in the references to the splendor of Christ in the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and Paul's expounding on Christ's glory in 2 Corinthians 3.

The relational beauty of Christ is found in his compassion and salvation with people. As previously noted, Jesus uses the proclamation of Isaiah 61:1-2 to initiate his mission, and it is a mission of loving compassion. Jesus gives to people beauty for ashes in his healing ministry to the bleeding woman (Luke 8:40-49), freeing a possessed man from demons (Luke 8:26-39), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11). The ashes of illness, evil, and death are replaced with wholeness and beauty of life in Christ.

Jesus' love is seen in his care for children, lepers, and sinners. In this way he replaces rejection with acceptance and grace-filled love. Jesus becomes the incarnation of the *no'am*, the pleasant, graceful, and delightful presence of God's beauty. The power of God's graceful love is so evident to John that he writes, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). The love is not limited to acts of compassion. It is fully actualized in God's loving action of sending his Son to be the atonement for sin, thereby reconciling humanity to him. All those who are born in Jesus Christ are atoned of their sins by his loving sacrifice (4:10). Christ becomes the incarnation of God's *no'am* beauty which reconciles humanity to God. John goes on to write that because humanity is saved by this love, people are to love one another (4:11). In worship the relational beauty of God and Christ is communicated

in verbal and nonverbal expressions of the worship leader's love for God and the people.

Patrick Sherry points out that the Hebrew *kabod* and the Greek *doxa* denote God's glory and are often used to refer to God's splendor, majesty, excellency, and beauty (66). In the New Testament, *doxa* is an especially important term used in describing the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2, 5), Jesus' Second Coming (Luke 9:26), and the cross (John 12:16). Paul uses *doxa* in a critical passage contrasting the glory seen by Moses to the glory Christians see in Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). In the Corinthians passage *doxa* is often translated as splendor. The New Testament is devoid of any reference to God's beauty, yet the glory and splendor of God are often mentioned. Splendor is both a quality of glory and beauty.

The Bible provides images of God's moral beauty in holiness, visual beauty in appearance, and relational beauty in his compassion and love. Each image proclaims the powerful splendor of God in a way that reaches deeply into the heart of a believer. Beauty of God provides not only sensory pleasure but meaning as well.

Theology of Worship and Beauty

Both the Bible and Christian theologians attribute beauty as having its truest essence in God. In this way God's beauty shares the transcendent quality of Platonic philosophy. The transcendent nature of God is seen by some in aesthetic earthly images, such as expressed by Peter Schaffer: "I acknowledge God lives, for example, in bars 34 to 44 of Mozart's Masonic Funeral Music" (qtd. in Sherry 75).

The uniquely Judeo-Christian concept of God's beauty is found in God's creative presence in earth as well as in the incarnational and imminent beauty of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This allows for the expression of God's beauty in the earth, but

does not limit it to a two-tier dichotomy. Even though it does have a transcendent quality, it is imminent in the incarnation.

Augustine adopts the concept of stratified beauty. He differentiates it on a numerical basis, where the lower numbers signify lesser forms of physical beauty, while the greater numbers signify divine beauty (Of Music 344). Using this paradigm Augustine asserts that beauty and ugliness are on a continuous spectrum, with no absolute dichotomy between beauty and ugliness. Rather, human perception of ugliness is failure to see beauty, because ugliness is a lesser degree of beauty (Battin et al. 39-40). In this sense, ugliness in worship can be understood as the absence of God's beauty.

Some theologians, such as Hans Rookmaaker, draw from Aquinas' parameters of wholeness and harmony in their assertion that God's beauty is expressed in the coherent order of creation. Beautiful art uses the orderliness of creation in set aesthetic laws to communicate God's beauty (Begbie 130). In this view, God's beauty is found in his created order and in the rules that govern his order. For Rookmaaker harmony is the coherent arrangement and interrelationship of the parts within the whole (130). Rookmaaker's thoughts about the orderliness and coherence of God's beauty are expressed in the category of coherence in this study.

Along with a focus on virtuous beauty as mentioned below, Fr. Thomas Dubay acknowledges the power of God's beauty in the handiwork of his created order. Dubay goes further, asserting all beauty in the created order, in both heaven and earth, derives its beauty from Jesus Christ. Many Christian theologians intricately connect incarnational beauty with the person of Jesus Christ (Begbie 139; Morgan 77, Sherry 81). The attributes of beauty ascribed to the fullness of Christ correspond with the Old Testament

attributes of God's beauty, which include physical, relational, and moral beauty.

In a similar fashion to Psalm 29:2 and 96:9, Jonathan Edwards focuses on the beauty of God's holiness in saintly people. Edwards states, "[H]oliness is in a peculiar manner the beauty of the divine nature" (qtd. in Sherry 37). He believes the saints' beauty was their embodiment of the moral image of God. St. Cyril of Alexandria believes the power of the Holy Spirit perfects in us the image of the Creator's virtue (37). Christian holiness is to be the image of God in Christ, as witnessed in the person's action and speech. It is imitating Christ through lifestyle and relationships with others. The woman whose act of kindness is called by Jesus beautiful exhibits the beauty of holiness (Mark 14:6). Holiness is similar to relational beauty in its striving to embody the love of Christ; however, it is more intentional in the qualities of piety.

Many theologians relate the beauty of God's holiness to the restoration of people's image in Jesus Christ. St. Cyril's beauty in humans' perfected image is the image of their original nature before the Fall (Sherry 37). For Balthasar, God's creating out of nothing and his saving economy together were the exemplar of true beauty (Begbie 224). Edwards understands this beauty as the excellency of "the consent of being to being" in which God consents humans to their restored state, and humans consent to the graceful love of God (qtd. in Dillenberger 78). This beauty restores humans to the original likeness of God. Associating beauty with the restoration and redemption gives beauty a deeper perspective of God's beauty in the created order. God's beauty becomes more than an analogy or a mere shadow of the Holy Presence. His beauty is interwoven with the beauty of the merciful love in Christ Jesus and better reflects God's incarnational relationship to the creation.

Christian beauty goes beyond visceral beauty; therefore, a beautiful work of art can have content that appears ugly and yet embodies a beauty through its meaning (Rookmaaker 233). Such beauty is found in the redemptive love of Christ in the horrifying image of the cross. Thus, Augustine states, “he hung therefore on the cross deformed, but his deformity is our beauty” (qtd. in Sherry 83). The beauty of Christ is through the crucifixion, even though there is no visceral beauty in it. Yet no glorious beauty of the resurrection is possible, unless there is the “ugliness” of the cross. Christ as the exemplar of God’s beauty is discovered in the character of his holiness and the grace of his sacrificial death. Beauty in worship is more readily perceived via the intentional and effective communication of Christ’s beauty to the congregation. It is witnessed by the congregation in the transparent integrity of the worship leaders, as well as aesthetic expression of God’s beauty in the artistic presentation of worship. The way in which the beauty of God brings the person into relationship with him is found by grafting the concept of God’s beauty with John Wesley’s beliefs about grace in the *Ordo Solutis*.

Wesley’s *Ordo Solutis*

Wesley’s concept of *Ordo Solutis* (the Order of Salvation) is similar in some ways to Augustine’s and other theologians’ ideas on beauty. Wesley uses the *Ordo Solutis* as a chronology to explain how people come to be saved and to know God (2: 154). It is composed of four different manifestations of God’s grace for human beings, including prevenient grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace, and glorifying grace (156-158).

Wesley sees prevenient grace as the way God initiates a relationship with a person. The Holy Spirit comes with prevenient grace to the person who is not aware of God through nature, acts of kindness, the revelation of God’s truth, or other means (2:

156). The person then becomes aware of a power greater than himself or herself. God's beauty, by the combination of its perfection and God's presence, can awaken the person to the grandeur of God. The love of God initiates the relationship by his revelation to the person. The person does nothing to deserve the gift of God's love; it is given out of the goodness and love of God for his creation.

The second grace, justifying grace, occurs when a person realizes and takes responsibility for his or her sinful nature in contrast to the goodness of God's love (Wesley, 2: 157). Repentance occurs at this point. God's goodness leads the person to turn to God's mercy and ask God's forgiveness for his or her sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God's grace through Jesus pardons his or her guilt and justifies the person in the eyes of God.

Wesley's justifying grace is similar to Augustine's belief that God's beauty is expressed in his loving relationship. Jesus taught in the Gospel of John, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV). In God's love, he gave Jesus to reconcile the world to himself, through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (2 Cor. 5:14). The Bible exalts the beauty of God primarily in his righteousness and love. The apex of his love is experienced in his giving of his son so that creation might be reconciled to him. God's beauty not only attracts, it also draws a person near through the loving relationship of the Trinity.

Wesley believes that while justifying grace frees people from the guilt of sin, sanctifying grace infuses people with power over sin. In his sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion," Wesley asserts that the pardon of God enables people to leave their sins, and their minds are renewed by the power of God (3: 429). A person's mind

becomes the mind of Christ. By the power of sanctifying grace, people are renewed in the image of God, walking in the ways of the Spirit. Although the people can still be imperfect in their obedience to Jesus, they continually seek and become more like him by the power of the Holy Spirit (2: 159).

In the process of sanctifying grace, the follower allows God to exhibit his holiness through his or her life (2: 160). Holiness creates an inner beauty that is manifest via the person's words and actions. The person's response is a more mature and developed response to God's grace than the responses to prevenient grace and justifying grace and is the embodiment of God's command to "[be] holy, therefore, as your heavenly Father is holy" (Matt. 5:48, NIV).

The idea of sanctifying beauty fits into the category of the beauty of God's righteousness. Biblically, God's righteous beauty is seen in the woman anointing Jesus' feet with oil (Mark 14:3). The virtuous act was described as beautiful by Jesus and was an embodiment of God's holiness. Worship leaders in a worship service are called to embody the incarnational righteousness of God's beauty in a way that manifests God's beauty.

Wesley's last form of God's grace is glorification, the fullness of God's loving presence (2: 160). This grace is the full revelation of God's glory, the type of glory present in the New Jerusalem: "And he carried me away to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. And it shone with the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10-11a, NIV). The eschatological glory may be seen in worship that points to Christ's second coming. In an eschatological focus in worship, God's ontological beauty may be presented. Christian communion liturgy

proclaims, “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” Christian worship brings the worshippers into remembrance of Christ’s saving acts as well as the glory of his return. The beauty of glorification is the full revelation of God’s presence.

Wesley’s *Ordo Solutis* provides a helpful way to explain how the grace of God might be revealed through beauty in a manner that initially attracts the person to God, enables the person to experience God’s forgiving love, empowers the person to embody the beauty of God’s holiness, and encourages the person to look to the time when God’s beauty will be fully revealed in his glory. Thus, beautiful worship holds within it great power for evangelical impact. The objective of God’s revelation of his beauty is to draw his creations close to him so they may be reconciled and bear his glorious image. Beauty in worship has the potential to transform a person through God’s grace in worship.

Don E. Saliers: The Transforming Beauty in Worship

In Worship as Theology, Saliers dedicates a chapter to “The Beauty and the Holy.” He proposes that beauty was revelatory of the glory (*doxa*) of God. Although aesthetic experience is not the goal of worship, it provides a place where the glory of God can touch down on earth (205) and be always at the service of God’s holiness. The worship service is always directed to the holiness of God in ways that evoke a sense of awe at the wonder of God (206). Saliers brings to worship a concept similar to Burke’s belief about the sublime evoking fear and awe. Saliers makes a direct connection between the sublime and God’s holiness in worship. The term “holiness” in this manner may be thought of as the experience of the nature of God. One aspect of holiness is expressed through virtuous or righteous actions.

The connection between the sublime and holiness provides a sensuous presence

and context for holiness. The sensuous presence, which is something that is perceived by the five senses, creates an experience of holiness that might be perceived and described by respondents. Respondents can identify the sublime emotional impressions of fear, awe, or wonder much more easily than they can the abstract presence of holiness.

Arts in worship can be a very useful and effective response to God's love and grace for his created order (Saliers 209). The beauty of the art holds within it a sometimes mystical power to attract and transform people through the various media used in worship. Such an aesthetic phenomenon can create a union between the people of God and God (209). This idea of union parallels Tolstoy's belief that the goal of art is to unite people with one another and with God. Similar to the manner in which the components of worship are analogous to art, beautiful Christian worship has consequences beyond aesthetic appearance to the moral purpose of uniting people with the holiness of God. Both Hegel and Shaftesbury also agree that beauty can attract people to God and provide a means of intimacy with God.

Saliers also points out, "When liturgy is thoughtlessly performed, without affection and life-connection, it will far less awaken us to the realities of biblical truth" (211). Saliers also explains how both presentation and coherence have an effect upon beauty in the worship service because the aesthetic can either attract people to God's beauty through thoughtful performance and life-connection or distract them away from the message and presence of beauty (212). To build on Saliers' thought, I believe presentation in worship is important to worship insofar as it can enhance the message or distract from it. In presentation, the evident passion of the worship leaders shows their interest and dedication. At the same time, their affection embodies the love of God for his

creation. The category of coherence measured to some degree how the leaders carefully applied the truth of God's Word in messages that created life connections with the worshippers.

According to Saliers, worship ultimately leads to the eschatological perspective insofar as it takes worshippers to a vision of the restored kingdom of God (207). Beauty present in worship in such a manner looks forward to God's full revelation of glory in the end time.

Thomas Dubay: The Beauty of Virtue and Holiness. Dubay examines the nature of God's beauty in his work. Especially helpful to this study was his focus on the expression of God's holiness in the lives of people who live sanctified lives. It provides a useful summary of the incarnational righteousness of God.

Dubay proposes that the most beautiful people are those who are virtuous to a "heroic degree" (241). The attributes of the virtuous people are theological, in their close communion with God, and moral, in their expression of God's love to others. The holiness of virtue is achieved by their motivation and determination to be authentically like Christ. Their inner beauty shines forth in radiance of outward appearance. The radiance is not cosmetic; it emanates from inner peace and love, much like the beauty Koyama saw in the Russian Christian women. In Dubay's opinion, qualities of the virtuous beauty include "love, patience, chastity, honesty, magnanimity, justice ... and humility, ... temperance, and prudence" (243). The qualities are incarnations of the qualities of Christ's holiness and are evident if the person is indeed Christ-like.

These qualities of virtuous beauty, according to Dubay, are also a response to God's grace. This response is indicative of a deep intimacy and communion with God.

The worship leaders or members of the congregation who manifest these qualities in connection with God's holiness have been transformed by the presence of God (2 Cor. 3:18). Ordinary people are attracted to the beauty and affected by the example of the virtue. Shaftesbury's beliefs that moral beauty is of a higher order and that beauty attracts interest agrees with Dubay's idea that people are attracted to virtuous people (266).

Dubay offers a helpful paradigm of God's holiness through incarnational beauty. His review of how the inner presence of holiness shines forth in radiance offers a way to explain the outward appearance and expression of God's righteousness. The survey used in this study offered the respondents the opportunity to indicate whether they perceived the presence of righteousness in the worship leaders. In Dubay's assertion, some of the people perceive the incarnate holiness of Christ in the Christ-like qualities of certain worship leaders. For Dubay, the qualities of holiness include love, peace, joy, truth, and patience, and the respondents who saw the qualities in their worship leaders generally had personal experience with the worship leaders. These personal relationships gave them an understanding about the people and the ability to judge if they exhibited righteous and loving qualities of God in their lives. Just as visceral beauty may be perceived in aesthetic appearances, in this study, respondents were asked how strongly they perceived the beauty of God's righteousness and love through the worship leaders.

Beauty in Worship

Beauty may be experienced when qualities of an object are perceived and evoke a favorable response. The qualities of beauty must be present in the object or event and then perceived by the senses and processed in the mind. In the processes of the mind, the observer interprets and evaluates if something is beautiful. The response is similar to

Goldman's views on aesthetic judgment as the observer bases his evaluation on base properties (as defined earlier) present in the object or event. A favorable response, one that went beyond personal preference, was evoked by the qualities in the object or event that sufficiently satisfied the principles of beauty. The object or event was then desired or valued because it contained those properties.

In a worship service, worshippers may experience beauty through the various components of worship. If the properties of beauty in the components of worship are perceived by the worshippers, the worshippers have a favorable response to the worship service. Only when the reasons for worshippers' favorable response to the worship service are examined can it be determined if their judgment was based on the qualities in the worship service or was dependent upon previous experiences and preferences. In the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked for their general responses to the worship service. They were asked questions about the presence or absence of perceived positive qualities in the worship service. When the specific qualities correlated with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, or inspiring they were present in a similar manner to the evaluation of worship.

The qualities listed in the questionnaire helped to direct the respondents to specific aspects of worship in order that they might attend to and perceive those qualities, thereby making informed judgments. If the judgment of the service did not correspond with the respondents' perception of positive (also referred to in this study as beautiful) qualities in worship, then further questions were asked in the debriefing time to discern if the judgments about worship were dependent on other factors such as personal preference, commonly known as taste, or the history of the respondents. The goal of the

debriefing time was to find reasons for the respondents' judgments.

The respondents' verbal reflections on the evaluations in the debriefing were reviewed in light of Kant, Hume, and Shaftesbury to determine if the respondents were able to provide a disinterested judgment of beauty. This was, at least in part, accomplished by discovering if the respondents were open to different styles of music or worship. When they were not open to different styles, then it was proposed that the individuals, and perhaps the group, made their judgments about worship based on personal preference, which prejudiced their ability to perceive beauty.

Categories of Positive (Beautiful) Qualities

The review of literature influenced the construction of categories, as well as the qualities chosen as representative of the different attributes of beauty.

Presentation

The category of presentation is closely related to the concept of perfection. In any kind of presentation, completeness in the performance gave to the effort an integrity of wholeness. If one part was missing, or if part of the presentation was flawed, then the observer experienced a degradation of the whole that usually distracted from the message. In a work of visual art, if the artist skews the perspective, the message of the artwork is usually lessened. If the skill of the artist effectively portrays or communicates the ideas of the artist, then the beauty of the work was enhanced.

A worship service is enhanced by the effective presentation of the worship leaders. According to Hegel and Shaftesbury, an excellent presentation leads the observer closer to God than a less-than-excellent presentation because God is the absolute presence of perfection. An excellent presentation is valued for its own merit, attracting a

person and evoking a sense of satisfaction in the recognition of beauty. As previously referenced in Augustine, even though the observer would be attracted by the beauty, the praise should focus on the Creator and not the creation. A beautiful presentation of worship holds great potential to attract the worshipper to the adoration and praise of God.

Coherence

The category of coherence is similar to Aristotle's assertion that beautiful presentations have a sense of order in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. The orderliness in a worship service provides coherence in entering into the presence of God, focusing worshippers on the presence of God and then allowing them to go in the presence of God into the world. The worship service has an intentional order, and the components of a worship service fit into a whole.

Another important aspect of coherence in a worship service is the purposefulness of theme. A beautiful worship service is not a hodge-podge of disjointed ideas but evidences cohesion. The individual parts of the message work together as a whole. A simple example of the purposefulness is the reading of Scripture matching the scriptural focus of the sermon. Although the components are different, a coherent theme is recognizable.

The third aspect of coherence is the focus on the trinitarian God. A worship service might be about many things other than God, from self-help to ethical teachings. The focus of coherent Christian worship is focused on God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. A misplaced focus disjoins the worship from its primary purpose, to praise and glorify God, and compromises the coherence of worship.

Unity of Form and Content

Meyer Shapiro recognizes that the category of unity of form and content was difficult to qualify or quantify (ed. Beckley 11). He believes that some expressions of content use contrary forms and therefore do not conform to the ideal of unity. Although there may be exceptions to unity of form and content being a contributing attribute of beauty, overall it aids in the expression of an artist's idea, insofar as the form expresses the idea of the content.

Unity of form and content, in one aspect, is closely related to the concept of appropriateness. Appropriateness matches the expressed content with a corresponding form. In a well-thought worship service, the worship leaders do not use dirges to express celebration, nor do they use up-tempo ditties to express the pain of Christ's suffering. Appropriate use of form with content matches the expression of the content with a form that enhances the content.

Another important aspect in the category of unity of form and content is proportion. Proportion is the appropriate balance of the components of worship in relation to one another. No single standard for the proper amount of time for different components in worship exists. Standards vary from congregation to congregation and from culture to culture. Even so, in worship that is evaluated as beautiful, a sense of balance and order is present. One concept of aesthetic judgment proposes that a group of people may confirm or deny the presence of a specific quality. A single respondent might believe a prayer was too long, yet the group of respondents as a whole can believe the prayer was the appropriate length. The judgment of proper proportion is a largely subjective one; however, a group of respondents can provide a broader and more balanced perspective than can an individual.

Tolstoy concludes that the form also needs to be communicated in a manner accessible to the congregation. If the congregation understands the content through appropriate form, then they are able to perceive any beauty. The other benefit is that they also are able to perceive the presence of God because the form is something they understand.

The underlying questions to be answered in the section on unity of form and content are (1) whether the manner in which the content was expressed was helped by the form, and (2) whether the components of the worship service were balanced in proportion to one another. If the responses were positive, the worship was more likely judged as being beautiful than when they were answered in a negative manner.

The Qualities of God's Relational Love

Beauty, especially from the biblical view, goes beyond appearance and presentation. As God is the first cause of beauty, from a biblical perspective, righteousness and love are two of his greatest qualities. One can measure these qualities by using the Bible as a reference point in discerning if the divine qualities were present in the content and in the worship leaders. The presence of divine qualities is incarnational through the worship leaders and other worshippers.

Qualities of God's love include kindness, grace, mercy, peace, and love. These qualities are relational and indicative of God's presence with humans. They are beautiful in the way that the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with oil did a beautiful thing. These qualities are similar to Burke's qualities of beauty that evoke feelings of joy (Burke 43).

The presence of God's grace is also one of the other qualities within this category and is incarnate expression of God's mercy and love through Jesus. The attributes of

grace from Wesley's *Ordo Salutis* are present in differing expressions in worship (2: 154-156). People in worship feel the acceptance that is similar to prevenient grace. Some others experience a sermon that leads them from the secular to the religious, and this movement represents sanctifying grace. Most of all, grace is experienced as the unmerited merciful love of God perceived in worship.

Attributes of God—Holiness

Qualities of God's holiness include truth, holiness, reverence, majesty, and integrity. Some of these qualities Burke would classify as sublime (Burke 57). The sublime is similar to beauty in that it evokes powerful feelings because of God's grandeur and sovereignty. According to Shaftesbury, divine beauty is experienced most fully in moral truth, which for the purposes of this study was understood as righteousness. God's presence in righteousness attracts people to him in a spirit of reverence (Sensus Communis 112). Saliers rightfully states that one of the purposes of worship is for worshippers to enter into the beauty of God's holiness (205). I believed that worshippers would be more likely to experience God's beauty when holiness was present in the worship leaders than when holiness was not present in the worship leaders.

As Tolstoy asserts, beauty in art has a moral purpose of uniting people with one another and with God. In the categories of Love and Righteousness, the presence of God evokes a moral response of the worshippers to each other and to God (147). Beautiful worship goes beyond evoking a response of satisfaction to visceral beauty; it evokes a moral response to God's love and righteousness.

Divine Beauty as Experienced in Worship

The qualities of beauty go beyond the appearance of visceral beauty and can be

indicative of God's presence. The categories of God's love and righteousness indicate an experiential presence of the divine. In light of Hegel's assertion that the three levels of beauty ascend from desirous beauty to knowledge to communion, if worship is self-centered, then one will not experience the presence of God in a significant way. In contrast, the person who perceives and experiences God's presence in communion with God's beauty finds intimacy with God. The presence of God's beauty in worship creates an environment to experience the immanent and transcendent presence of God.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The project is a descriptive study in which I measured the correlation between the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring with the qualities in worship. In this study I identified three terms to evaluate worship and twenty-five qualities I believed contributed to the evaluation of worship as “good.” The terms used to measure the respondents’ overall satisfaction with worship were beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. The categories used to measure specific positive qualities in worship were presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, God’s relational love, and attributes of God—holiness. Specific qualities within these five categories were designed to measure the perceived presence or absence of qualities that I believed contributed to the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.

The first purpose of the proposed research was to measure the perceived positive qualities of worship the respondents experienced in each worship service and the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. The second purpose was to examine any correlation between the evaluation of worship and the qualities in worship. For the purpose of this study the perceived positive qualities (qualities of beauty) in worship were divided into the categories of presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, qualities of God’s relational love, and attributes of God—holiness. Each of the categories had five specific qualities I believed manifest God’s beauty as experienced in worship. Third, the study also tested for inner cohesiveness of the categories, in order to verify the validity of the instrument. Lastly, the study sought to create a paradigm of evaluating worship in a similar manner to which art is evaluated.

Research Questions

The purpose statement divides the research into five components. The hypothesis of the study was that positive (beautiful) qualities in worship [(1) presentation, (2) coherence, (3) unity of form and content, (4) God's relational love, and (5) attributes of God—holiness] as expressed and perceived in worship correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.

The research questions were designed to provide insight into the respondents' level of satisfaction with worship and discover any correlation with the respondents' perception of God's beauty.

Research Question #1

Did the respondents experiencing the worship service evaluate the worship service as beautiful?

A semantic differential scale was used contrasting "Not Beautiful" and "Beautiful" on a five point rating scale. The participants' response to the evaluation of worship as beautiful was used in relation to the other scores to find any correlation between the perceived positive qualities in worship and the evaluation of the specific worship service as beautiful.

Research Question #2

Did the respondents experiencing the worship service evaluate the worship service as fulfilling?

The evaluation of worship as fulfilling was used as a marker for the overall satisfaction with the service by the respondents. The fulfillment in worship also indicated the level of which worship met the expectations of the respondents.

Research Question #3

Did the respondents experiencing the worship service evaluate the worship as inspiring?

The evaluation of worship as inspiring indicated the respondents' experience of the divine in worship. The evaluation of worship as inspiring also was covaried with the qualities in worship to discover if correlation occurred.

Research Question #4

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of presentation correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

A skillful and talented presentation of worship minimizes distractions and enhances the manifestation of God's beauty. As mentioned above, excellence of beauty in the world is a manifestation of the supreme beauty of God; so too does excellence of presentation manifest God's beauty in worship.

Section 2 of the questionnaire queried the respondents' perception of positive qualities in the category of the presentation in the worship service. During the guided interview, respondents were also asked to assess the presentation of worship.

Research Question #5

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of coherence correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Coherence is the presence of qualities of divine meaning and purpose as they are perceived in the worship service. The meaning can be communicated in the purposeful order of worship that helps draw the member of the congregation into focusing on God. This sense of purposeful movement gives meaningful direction in the flow of worship.

Another aspect of coherence is the centrality of a theme. Excellent thematic worship clearly communicates its message so that the worshipper can understand and center on the meaning expressed by the worship leaders. The various components of the worship service may center around a theme providing clarity for the worshippers.

The last aspect of coherence is the centering on the Triune God. The purpose of Christian worship is to praise and glorify the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Worship with excellence in coherence will be true to the central nature of worshipping the Trinity.

Research Question #6

To what degree did the respondents' perception of presence of qualities of unity of form and content correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, or inspiring?

Unity of form and content is the degree to which the content of worship is assisted by the form used to express the content. The appropriate use of form helps to communicate the content. For instance, if an artist wishes to create an image that communicates serene qualities, he or she may use flowing lines instead of jagged lines. In a similar way, a worship leader might choose a musical piece with a slow tempo to help create a reflective atmosphere.

Correct proportion of the components of worship also contributes to excellence in worship. As pointed out above, no standard for the proper amount of time allocated to the different components can be universally applied. The appropriateness of the balance is discerned through the perception of the respondents. In measuring appropriateness of pace and tempo, the input of the group of respondents to the specific worship service they experienced was helpful.

The final aspect of unity of form and content is the appropriateness of the language being used. In excellent worship comprehensible word usage helps the congregation understand the content.

Research Question #7

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of God's relational love correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Qualities of God's love include kindness, grace, mercy, peace, and love. These qualities are found in God's loving interactions with human beings. Such beauty is the type of love the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with oil showed to him. Jesus said, "She has done a beautiful thing" (Mark 14:3). An act of kindness done for Jesus, and in the spirit of his love, is beautiful. Jesus was the incarnation of God's love and taught his disciples to love one another the way he loved them (John 15). Beautiful worship includes incarnational expressions of God's love by the worship leaders and the congregation. The respondents perceived the relational qualities of beauty through loving interactions with the people in worship and the content of worship.

Research Question #8

To what degree did the respondents' perception of qualities of attributes of God—holiness—correlate with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling or inspiring?

Qualities of God's holiness include truth, reverence, integrity, humility, devotion, and holiness. God's beauty is experienced not only in his loving relationship but also his truth and power. The qualities of God's holiness differ from the category of God's loving relationship. The category of holiness focuses more on God's holy being, rather than his interactions with his creation. God's majesty creates an experience of awe similar to

Burke's idea of the sublime.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was ninety-four persons and consisted of youth and adult worshippers (16 years and older) in six churches from the West Michigan Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Each of the six districts of the annual conference was represented by one church. The district superintendent from each of the districts selected three churches regarded for their excellence in worship. One of the churches from each district was invited to participate in the study. If a church had declined the invitation, one of the other two churches would have been chosen. No church declined the invitation.

Participants were volunteers who responded to the contact person's invitation to be part of the study. Because it was an arbitrary sample, generalizations could not be made beyond the sample. Regularity in worship attendance and how long the respondent had been a Christian, as well as educational level, were measured by demographic questions on the questionnaire. The data regarding the frequency of church attendance was separated into categories of regular attendees (three to four times a month), occasional attendees (one to two times a month), infrequent attendees (a few times a year), and visitors.

Data from the questionnaire was also used to evaluate the respondents' input based on educational level. The categories for highest level of education completed included below twelfth grade education, high school graduate, some college classes, undergraduate degree, and graduate degree.

The third set of demographic data separated the respondents into groups denoting

how long they had been Christians. The criteria used for this category included two years or less, three to five years, six to ten years, eleven to fifteen years, and more than fifteen years. All of the data from the questions separating the participants were used to create subgroups for secondary assessment.

All volunteers attended the designated worship service, responded to the questionnaire, and participated in the guided group interview. Their identities remained confidential and anonymous.

Methodology

The project was a description and assessment of the effect of perceived positive qualities of worship on the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring by the respondents. Five comparison groups were used, comparing the correlation of the levels of the perceived positive qualities of worship (qualities of God's beauty) to the evaluation of the worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspirational. The comparison groups were (1) presentation, (2) coherence, (3) unity of form and content, (4) qualities of God's relational love, and (5) attributes of God—holiness.

The study used a participant-observer model of field research, with the facilitator observing in the same worship service as the focus group. The facilitator recorded the comments from the debriefing sessions.

All participants were given the same questionnaire within fifteen minutes after the worship service. The facilitator completed the same questionnaire at that time. The questionnaires took approximately fifteen minutes to fill out. After completion of the questionnaires, the respondents participated in a guided group interview with the facilitator. The facilitator took detailed notes of the sessions.

The semi-structured, qualitative nature of the interview was used to assess the episode of worship. Through this method I sought to understand the worship style preferences of the focus group.

Instrumentation

The sample group questionnaire used ordinal measures on a semantic differential scale in a matrix question format. The five attributes of the expression of God's beauty (presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, relational, and virtue) were the criteria for the sections of the matrix. The questions within each section assessed a specific quality of beauty.

The semantic differential scale was chosen because of its more descriptive quality. While producing data suitable for both indexing and scaling, it also did not limit the degree of scaling on one value but gave the participant a reference point as to the opposite value. A quality classified as expressing God's beauty was contrasted with one that did not express God's beauty or distracted from God's beauty. This method was based on the assumption of a presence or absence of beauty in worship.

The questionnaire was a forced choice questionnaire on a five-point scale with the neutral choice being "Some of both" qualities of the presence of beauty and the absence of beauty.

The questionnaire was divided into seven sections measuring the respondents' evaluation of the worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, or inspiring, as well as the respondents' perception of positive qualities in the worship service. The final section was comprised of five informational questions.

In the first section the respondents indicated the degree to which they evaluated

worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. The responses indicated the overall satisfaction with worship.

The respondents indicated their perception of positive qualities in sections two through six. Each section was one of the categories of the qualities of worship, including presentation, coherence, unity of form and content, God's relational love, and attributes of God—holiness.

The seventh section included demographics of the respondents' ages, educational level, length of time they had been a Christian, and the frequency of worship attendance. The information acquired in this section provided demographic data for comparison.

In using this model, I sought to find if there was a correlation between the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring and the perception of qualities of God's beauty in worship. I compared sections 2-6 to see if any of them indicated significant correlation.

The questionnaire was reviewed by a selected group of laity and clergy who provided feedback before the sample test. The sample test was performed by me in a congregation in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. The tool was then revised and refined with special attention to the clarity of terms. The Congregational Reflection Group reviewed the comments from the sample test and made various recommendations.

The Measurement of Beauty, Fulfillment, and Inspiration

The evaluation of worship was measured in direct questions in the first section of the questionnaire (see Table 3.1). They were measured on a five-point scale with "a" representing the lowest presence of the variable and "e" representing the highest presence of the variable.

Table 3.1. The Scale for the Evaluation of Worship as Beautiful, Fulfilling, and Inspiring

A. The study is based on the premise that God is the source of beauty, and that his beauty takes many forms including visual beauty, excellent performance, meaningfulness, love, and holiness, among other attributes. “If God is the source of beauty, how much beauty did you experience in today’s worship service?”						
	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
1. Not beautiful	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Beautiful
B. If the purpose of worship is to honor God and to enter into his presence, what best describes your experience in worship today?						
	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
2. Unfulfilled	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Fulfilled
3. Uninspired	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Inspired

The responses from the questionnaire were supplemented in the guided interview with the focus group. In the interview the facilitator explored why the worship experience was satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Measurement of Qualities in Worship

The perception of the positive qualities of worship (God’s beauty) was assessed in separate sections of the questionnaire and then compared with the evaluations of worship to see if any of the qualities were predictors for satisfaction in worship. Each section had five forced-choice semantic differentiation scales. In the forced-choice questions, a positive quality of worship was contrasted with an opposite quality. The respondent was asked to rate the value of each listed quality of worship according to its similarity with

the positive quality or the antonym.

In the Presentation Scale, the questionnaire focused on the performance, coordination, attractiveness, skill, and preparation in worship. The main focus of this section was the excellence in enacting worship (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Presentation Scale

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
Uncoordinated	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Coordinated
Visually unattractive	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Visually attractive
Awkward transitions	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Seamless
Sloppily performed	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Skillfully performed
Ill-prepared	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Well-prepared

I believed that when the positive qualities of presentation listed in questionnaire were present perceived in worship by the respondents, then they would also mention the excellence of the presentation in the debriefing sessions. I asked the facilitators to note any positive comments about aspects of worship mentioned in the debriefing sessions.

The coherence category of the qualities in worship was measured in the third section of the questionnaire and verified the clarity of the worship theme and the presence of Scripture and awareness of Christ. Scales in this section also addressed the degree to which the worship service was insightful and purposeful (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Coherence Scale

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
Unintentional	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Purposeful
Theme unapparent	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Theme clear
Shallow	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Insightful
No awareness of Christ	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Awareness of Christ
Absence of Scripture	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presence of Scripture

The quality of unity of form and content was measured in the fourth section, focusing on the appropriateness of forms used in worship in comparison with the content being communicated (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Unity of Form and Content Scale

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
Inappropriate music tempo	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Appropriate music tempo
Pace of service dragged or raced	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Pace fit this particular service
Worship components (prayers, music, etc.) unrelated to this service's theme	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Worship components related to this service's theme
Apparent random order of worship impeded flow of service	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Order of worship enhanced the flow of service
Presentation was uncreative	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presentation was creative

The section on the expression of the relational beauty of God addressed the

presence or absence of God's love in worship. Qualities of God's relational—love in worship permeated many dimensions of worship including the content of worship, the nature of the worship leaders, and the friendliness of the congregation. The descriptors used to measure the expression of the relational beauty of God were the joyful or peaceful disposition of the worship leaders, the portrayal of God in worship, and the presence of God's grace (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5. Qualities of God's Relational Love Scale

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
Ill at ease	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Peaceful
God portrayed as detached	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	God portrayed as caring
God portrayed as unloving	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	God portrayed as loving
Sullen	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Joyful
Absence of God's Grace	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presence of God's Grace

The final category measured the expression and perception of God's beauty of holiness. Holiness in worship is expressed by an awareness of God's power and majesty. It is also found in the disposition and focus of the worship leaders. A worship leader may place primary emphasis on the worship of the triune God, or the choir may radiate the joy of the Lord. In either instance the focus is on the holy and sacred nature of God.

Another important aspect of holiness is integrity by the leaders of worship. John C. Maxwell believes the most important ingredient of leadership is integrity, which has to

do with the character of a person (36). The worship leaders embody God's righteousness and holiness when they live their faith with integrity; thus, the qualities in this category address the content of the worship, and also the faithful integrity of the worship leaders. Qualities of this category include worshipful, God's holiness, truth, righteousness, and glory (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 God's Holiness Scale

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
Irreverent	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Worshipful
Awareness of God's Holiness missing	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Awareness of God's Holiness evident
Absence of God's Truth	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presence of God's Truth Readily sensed
Awareness of God's righteousness missing	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Awareness of God's righteousness present
Attention to God's Glory missing	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Vivid attention to God's Glory

The effect of the qualities was further explored in the guided interview with the focus group after the questionnaires had been filled out. In the interview the facilitator especially sought to find reasons for the responses in the questionnaire.

Collection of Data

Questionnaire data was collected on site after respondents finished the questions in the focus group. Qualitative data was collected through notes by the facilitator in the semi-structured guided interview of the focus group, as well as notes from informal

conversations with worshippers outside of the focus group. I processed, recorded, and stored all of the reflections and data collected by the research team. Back-up files of computer stored data were kept current.

Data Analysis

Each scale on the questionnaire had a value ranging from 1-5 with 1 representing the description least similar to the positive attribute of worship, and 5 representing the positive quality of worship being “very much present.” The mean for each church and the grand mean were calculated for each scale. The scales were collapsed into sections previously referred to as categories. The categories were further collapsed into a grand mean for the presence of positive qualities in worship. The means of each category were compared to the means for the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.

The Pearson-Product Moment Test was performed to measure statistically significant correlation between the evaluation of worship and the qualities of worship. The Pearson-Product moment calculates the *r score*, which is compared to a *critical r score* and measures significant linear correlation. A linear relationship indicates both variables are present in a similar manner, though it does not signify a cause and effect relationship. In addition, an ANOVA was performed to find the level of *f-distribution*.

The integrity of the categories of the independent variables in worship was measured with test of scale reliability using the coefficient alpha to measure internal consistency. A *Chi-square test* was used to measure goodness of fit among the qualities in each category. If the qualities have goodness of fit then the variance among the qualities indicates a consistency that could not happen by random chance.

A tabulation of the frequency of the responses for all variables was done to examine and compare the distribution of responses. The frequency was recommended as a helpful way to compare the variables in light of the small amount of variance, which potentially hampered any tests on variance.

A secondary analysis was also performed comparing gender, educational level, and age with the evaluation of the worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring, as well as the perceived presence of positive qualities. The outcomes provided an extended analysis of the data, describing how age, educational level, and gender did, or did not, influence the perception of beauty and perception of positive qualities.

In analyzing qualitative data, I looked for commonalities and descriptions while seeking to rule out rival explanations. I looked for common terms used to describe an experience, and classified them under broader categories of beauty. The qualitative answers of the focus groups were compared with the questionnaires with special attention to common or deviant attitudes.

Delimitations and Limitations

The use of an arbitrary sample limited the boundaries of the study to the churches being assessed. The study was also limited by its definitions and the classifications of the qualities of worship. In addition, people interpret beauty differently; therefore, even the term beauty is limited by many subjective definitions. Worship is not solely an empirical exercise. It is a fluid creation inspired by the Holy Spirit's power and guidance. General principles guide the evaluation of art. So too general principles can guide the evaluation of the expression of God's beauty in worship.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Two key objectives in planning worship are to pay homage to God and assist the congregation in experiencing communal worship of God. The first purpose of the study was to measure the respondents' evaluation of worship and the perception of positive qualities of worship. The data revealed a consistent, high level of satisfaction with the worship services, and the presence of positive qualities in the worship service. The respondents' answers in the questionnaire provided insight into the worshippers' experience in the individual worship services as well as the overall experience in all of the churches.

Demographic Profile of Subjects

The demographic of the combined population of the sample groups from all six churches revealed a profile of well-educated persons who collectively were slightly below an undergraduate degree (3.84, with an undergraduate degree being a value of 4.0 in this study, see Appendix E). The mean of the ages was slightly above the mid-range of the 36-50 years of age (3.64, with the age range 51-65 being a value of 4.0). This mean for age was lower than the 56-year average age of all United Methodists in the West Michigan Conference. One reason for the lower average age is that four of the worship services were "contemporary" worship services that tended to include younger worshippers. Although the average age was younger, a strong majority of the respondents had been Christians for fifteen years or longer (4.57, with 5.0 being the assigned value for people who had been Christians for more than fifteen years). In addition to being long-time Christians nearly all of them attended church three to four times a month (1.25, with

the score of “1” representing attending church three to four times a month).

Findings

The findings of the study were determined with a variety of tools, including correlation studies and qualification data.

The Scale of the Questionnaire and Tools Used for Analyzing the Data

The range of responses on the questionnaire were on a 1-5 scale with 5 indicating the strongest presence of perceived positive qualities in worship, as well as the evaluation of the worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, or inspirational. Because of the homogeneity of the responses the values were compressed into a 3-5 scale for statistical review; no significant difference was found when compared to a 1-5 scale.

Microsoft Excel was used for entering the data and for computation of the means. SPSS and the Minitab statistical analysis software were used to calculate the Pearson *r* score, the *Chi-squared* levels, frequencies of scores, standard deviation, and the *Alpha-Coefficient* levels.

Examination of Means

The data received from the responses in the questionnaire and the debriefing verified the respondents overwhelmingly perceived the presence of the positive qualities of worship as well as experiencing the worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspirational (see Appendix E). The presence of high means and overwhelmingly positive comments indicated that the district superintendents had accurately identified congregations and pastors who excelled in worship. The level of inspiration was especially high with the grand mean being 4.47 on a 1-5 scale. The respondents also believed the worship services they attended were fulfilling (4.43) and beautiful as well

(4.34), placing the means between “mostly present” and “very much present” (see Appendix E).

The high mean of the evaluations of worship was matched by the high grand mean of the qualities of worship (4.58), signifying the perception of positive qualities of worship (see Table 4.1). The range of grand means for the specific qualities of beauty was 0.53 with appropriate music tempo averaging 4.33 and God portrayed as caring averaging 4.86. The standard deviation for all of the qualities of worship was only 0.136. As indicated by the high mean and the low range of means, as well as the low standard deviation, little variation occurred between the specific qualities of worship.

Table 4.1. Grand Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity of Form and Content	Relational Qualities of God	Holy Qualities of God	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.56	4.72	4.50	4.69	4.55	4.58
Standard Deviation	0.59	0.53	0.67	0.54	0.65	0.60
Standard Deviation of Category Means						0.14

n=94

All of the means were 4.5 or above, signifying that the respondents, on average, perceived the presence of positive qualities somewhere in between being “mostly present” and being “very much present.” The grand mean for the qualities of worship was 4.52. When translated into percentages, overall the respondents perceived the positive qualities as being present at a rate of slightly above 90 percent. The respondents perceived the qualities in the category of coherence most strongly, followed by the

category of God's relational love. The higher means and the lower means of specific qualities are reviewed subsequently.

Limits of Data Due to Low Variation and the Appropriateness of Statistical Tests

Because the grand mean was in the top 8 percentile, little room was offered for variation. Dr. Susan Lenker, and Dr. Mary Senter, of Central Michigan University, reviewed some of the data. Each asserted that because of the small amount of variance within the evaluations of worship and the qualities of worship the *r squared* scores would probably not yield a statistically significant variation between the variables. In addition, because the means were skewed to the upper end of the spectrum, the *t-test* could not be used because a *t-test* requires a more equal distribution. The homogeneity between the groups and the similarity of the responses limited the amount of disparity in the responses. Dr. Lenker also asserted that a *Chi-squared* test would not be possible in the statistical analysis of the individual churches because of the small sample of participants. Nevertheless, the overall population provided a population large enough to validate the test. Both Dr. Senter and Dr. Lenker suggested tests for frequency and categorical indexes would yield a more accurate picture of population tendencies.

Another factor involved in discerning the appropriateness of statistical tools for this study was the type of study being conducted. The study was a descriptive study that did not use a random sample of worship participants. With the exception of one sample group, the groups were organized by the pastor, a church staff member, or the pastor's spouse. Thus, the participants in the sample groups showed a tendency to attend worship frequently and be long-time Christians. The method of selection may have been one of the factors that contributed to the homogeneity of the sample groups. Because of the type

of study, the positive skew of the means, and the lack of a random sample, general inferences cannot be implied from the data. The study only described what the statistics revealed about the tendencies of the specific population in the sample groups; therefore, the statistical tools used were mostly descriptive in nature, rather than inferential.

Correlation between the Qualities of Worship and the Types of Evaluation

The second purpose of the study was to measure correlation among the evaluation of worship and the qualities of worship to discover any statistically significant correlation. The Pearson-product moment (also known as r) measures the correlation of two variables. It is a descriptive statistic measuring the variance of variables to determine a linear relationship among them. When the Pearson-product moment exceeds a critical value, it signifies a linear relationship among the variables. A linear relationship is not a cause-and-effect relationship. Instead, it shows that both variables are present in a similar manner.

The Pearson-Product Test indicated a statistically significant correlation among the three types of evaluation in worship and a number of the qualities in worship (see Appendix G). The evaluation of worship as beautiful had a significant correlation with a number of qualities, especially qualities within the categories of presentation, coherence, and qualities of God's holiness. Of particular interest is the high statistical significance of the worship service's being evaluated as beautiful and as being visually attractive, skillfully performed, seamless, and well-prepared. These qualities concern appearance and presentation in worship more than content. In addition, the presence of creativity is also correlated with the presence of beauty. The correlation between beauty and the perceived qualities of God's holiness and righteousness was also statistically significant.

The evaluation of worship as fulfilling had the highest statistically significant correlation with the most number of qualities of worship (twenty-two); sixteen of the variables proved to be significant on a 0.001 level. The only variables not correlated with fulfilling were coordinated, seamless, and insightful. Coordinated was not statistically significant with any of the evaluations of worship; seamless was the only quality not statistically significantly correlated to the category fulfilling, yet correlated to beauty and inspiration. The large amount of correlation between the positive qualities in worship and fulfillment illustrates nearly all qualities were present in a manner similar to the respondents' experience of the worship services as fulfilling.

The evaluation of worship as inspiring was statistically significantly correlated with twelve positive qualities of worship at a 0.001 level and with three others at a 0.05 level. The five qualities in the coherence category correlated with inspiration, purposeful, clear theme, insightful, and presence of Scripture, all at the 0.001 level, and awareness of Christ correlated at the 0.05 level. The category presence of God's holiness also showed a strong correlation with inspirational as well. Four of the five qualities registered correlation at a 0.001 level, with presence of God's truth being the only quality that did not have a statistically significant correlation with inspiring. The categories coherence and presence of God's holiness accounted for 60 percent of all correlation, 20 percent higher than the 40 percent of qualities they represented. Thus, inspiring appeared to correlate strongly with the content and perceived presence of Godly attributes of holiness, righteousness, and glory. Only one of the qualities of worship (purposeful) correlated with all three types of the evaluation of worship at a 0.001 level. Purposefulness showed the intent of a directed effort in worship.

Other qualities that showed correlation at a 0.05 level with all of the variables included well-prepared, theme clear, presentation was creative, presence of God's grace, worshipful, awareness of God's holiness and righteousness, and vivid attention to God's glory. The categories of coherence and attributes of God—holiness were especially present in the correlation. Thus, worshippers experienced fulfillment and inspiration in similar correlation with many of the qualities of coherence and God's attributes.

The worshippers' experiences of the worship as fulfilling and inspiring also showed either a 0.001 or 0.05 statistically significant correlation with the qualities of worship components related to theme, awareness of Christ, and order of worship enhanced the flow of the service. Two out of three of these qualities were in the category coherence, again illustrating the correlation between the perceived presence of positive qualities of content and the experience of the worship as fulfilling and inspiring.

An ANOVA test signifying the f-distribution was also run with very similar results to the Pearson-Product Test (see Appendix G). The differences between the results of the Pearson-Product Test and the ANOVA test included a significant correlation between worship evaluated as beautiful and components were related to theme as well as the presence of God's grace. Correlation between the evaluation of worship as fulfilling and the quality of insightful were also present in the ANOVA test and not present in the Pearson-Product Test. Insightful and pace fit this particular service also correlated to the worship service evaluated as inspiring in the ANOVA test. The addition of the quality insightful as correlated with fulfilling brought the qualities of worship correlated with fulfilling to twenty-three out of twenty-five positive qualities of worship.

When an r-squared test for correlation, which would show the strength of a cause

and effect relationship, was run, no statistically significant relationships among any of the evaluation of worship and the qualities of worship was indicated (see Appendix G). One reason for the lack of a significant r-squared level could have been the small amount of variation in the responses in each category of the questionnaire.

The frequencies of scores, the level of means, and the debriefing sessions also provided information that helped compare the perceived presence of positive qualities of worship with the evaluation of worship as being beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. While the quantifiable data did not provide a statistically significant cause and effect, during the debriefing sessions the respondents expressed the importance of certain qualities of worship as contributing factors in their evaluation of the worship service as beautiful, fulfilling, or excellent.

Frequencies

The computation of frequencies showed the strength of the respondents' positive evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring, as well the perception of positive qualities in worship (see Appendix F). Nearly 94 percent (93.7) of the respondents evaluated the worship services as being mostly or very much fulfilling and inspiring. In addition, 88 percent of the respondents evaluated the worship services as being beautiful.

In the specific qualities of worship, more than 90 percent of the respondents perceived the qualities as being "mostly" or "very much present" in every quality with the exception of appropriate music tempo. The respondents especially perceived the qualities of well-prepared, skillfully performed, insightful, a flow that enhanced the worship service, with an awareness of Christ, and God portrayed as caring. Out of all the

categories of the qualities of worship, coherence and presence of God's relational love were perceived in the strongest manner.

In reviewing each category, the slight irregularities in the categories reveal some differences within the categories. For instance, in the category of presentation, the percentage of the responses of being mostly present and very much present were very high for well-prepared (100) and skillfully performed (99), while attractive (91.5) and seamless (92.6) were scored somewhat lower. The scores indicate that the attractiveness of the worship spaces was viewed as not being as present as the preparation and performance of the worship service. In the area of unity of form and content there was an even greater disparity of scores between appropriate music tempo (83), flow of the service (97.8), and presentation was creative (96.8). In the conversations during the debriefing sessions comments were made in at least half of the churches about the delight or dissatisfaction regarding the tempo of the music. The similarity of comments in the debriefing sessions with the divergent scores for this quality showed a strong variety of opinions.

Another variation between the frequencies of scores is observed in presence of God's relational love where 91.4 percent of the respondents perceived peacefulness in the worship, while 98.8 percent of the respondents perceived the presence of God's grace. The perception of the presence of grace did not appear to depend on the perception of the presence of peacefulness in the worship service.

Although the respondents were similar in their perception of nearly all qualities being mostly or very much present in worship, the distribution between the qualities was very distinctive and somewhat dissimilar. The most common similarity for the frequency

of the highest score was approximately 60 percent and the second highest score was approximately 30 percent. This distribution only occurred in three instances (joyful, awareness of God's holiness, and awareness of God's righteousness). An overwhelming number of responses are in "mostly present" and "very much present," showing little overall measurable variance yet also revealing a very distinct frequency of distribution within the responses.

Testing the Validity of the Model: Inner-Category Cohesiveness

The third purpose of the study was to measure the inner cohesiveness of the categories by testing for internal consistency in order to verify the validity of the instrument. The cohesiveness within the categories was shown in tests of scale reliability using the coefficient α to measure internal consistency. The scale for the coefficient α was measured on a scale of -1 to $+1$. A negative number signified a negative correlation. The closer the number was to zero, the less consistency was present, while the closer it was to $+1$, the higher consistency. The internal consistency reliability was acceptable at $\alpha \geq 0.7$ for all the groups. The reliability scores for each category were evaluations of worship (0.84), presentation (0.741), coherence (0.69), unity of form and content (0.701), qualities of God's relational—love (0.769), and attributes of God—holiness (0.896), with the overall α coefficient being 0.91 (see Table 4.2, p. 112).

The coefficient for the evaluation of worship (0.84) indicated beauty, fulfillment, and inspiration had strong internal consistency. The internal consistency verified similarity among the variables.

The scores showed a strong presence of reliability within the categories and in the overall questionnaire as well. The lowest category, coherence, was the only category not

to be at the reliability of $\alpha \geq 0.7$; however, it did calculate within 0.01 of the scale. The item-by-item analysis showed that the score for coherence would improve if the quality presence of Scripture were removed. A review of the frequency scores clarified that the percentage of “very much present” for presence of Scripture was higher than the other qualities in the category. For the category of coherence, not one quality especially stood out in an item-by-item review.

Table 4.2. Scores of Tests for Inner Correlation of Categories

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity of Form and Content	Qualities of God’s Relational Love	Attributes of God— holiness	Dependent Variables
Coefficient Alpha	0.741	0.69	0.701	0.769	0.896	0.84
Chi- Squared n=94	36.95	6.85	17.038	4.55	16.88	3.695

The reliability within the categories showed a strong inner-relation of the qualities in each category. In addition to the strong presence of reliability, a *Chi-squared test* also showed a goodness of fit, which means that the variables were correlated within a range that could not happen by random chance (see Table 4.2). The tests for reliability and goodness of fit reinforced the information from the frequencies indicating a strong association within each category of the qualities of worship.

The Importance of Specific Qualities as Expressed in Debriefing Sessions

In the debriefing sessions, the respondents were asked, “What is important for you in worship?” Their responses mostly fell into broad categories of incarnational presence of God’s love, glory of God, content and meaning, and music. Throughout the churches,

the sample groups expressed the meaningfulness of the incarnational presence of God's love as experienced in their acceptance by others in the congregation and the personality and style of the pastor. The mention of acceptance seemed more common in sample groups with lower means in the demographic of age.

The appreciation for the presence of Christ in fellow members of the congregation was also expressed, with comments such as, "The people are Christ-like, which is inspiring to me, because I am going through a hard time." Respondents also expressed gratitude for concern shown by others in praying for them as well as in the caring manner in which the people of the church prayed.

In the debriefing sessions, the respondents also noted God's loving presence through the pastor and other worship leaders. Respondents made comments such as, "We are grateful for the pastor and his loving spirit," and "The pastor is a Christ like person who embodies God's grace." The presence of God's love through the pastor was also complimented by the respondents' perceiving their pastor as centered in God. They said, "Our minister follows the leading of the Holy Spirit," and, "I felt God's presence through the desire of our leaders to bring glory to God." This affirmation indicated the respondents strongly and consistently emphasized the importance of, and their awareness of, God's relational loving presence and God's holiness through the worship leaders and the congregation.

The importance of the awareness of the presence of God in worship was further emphasized in the general comments about worship. The significance was particularly mentioned in one of the sample groups, in which many respondents commented that they felt Christ's presence in worship and that it touched their souls. Some respondents

asserted that meeting God was the most important thing to them, while others added that the worship service, in general, needed to be focused on God and Scripture. One pastor was complimented for a sermon that “was good to lead people from being secular to being religious.” Overall, every sample group mentioned that worship needed to focus on God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and that they came to worship to encounter God. Nearly all of the groups added that Scripture needed to be central in the worship services.

Presentation also influenced the respondents’ worship experience, with many noting the level of excellence in the enacting of worship. The respondents’ comments expressed a deep gratitude, almost an awe, for the dedication of the musicians and the pastors’ commitment to skillful performance of their parts of the service. The respondents also did not offer any comments about flaws in the enacting of worship that detracted from the experience or distracted their attention.

Content and meaning were also repeatedly mentioned in the debriefing sessions, with respondents noting, “The message is the most important part for me,” and, “Worship has to mean something to me and apply to my life.” Often they mentioned the sermon as the focus of the worship service’s content and meaning. Some mention was made of the content of the music being important, but not as often as the sermon was mentioned.

Nonetheless, music was also mentioned in nearly all of the sample groups with comments such as, “My feelings about the music affect how I encounter Christ in worship,” and, “In the last song and music, I was touched by God’s presence.” Judgments about the pace and the style of the service seemed to focus on musical preferences, especially in one church where the style of worship had changed over the last few years, much to the dissatisfaction of some of the older members.

Overall, the reflection on worship by the respondents in the debriefing sessions strongly emphasized the importance of the Trinitarian God as the center of worship and the desire to experience his presence. The respondents stressed they strongly experienced God's presence in the Christ likeness of their pastor and the people of the congregation. Their sense of having been accepted by the pastor and the people of the church was one way they experienced the presence of God. The respondents also shared their experience of the truth of God in the messages and the music. The style and presentation of music seemed either to enhance or to detract from the worshippers' ability to experience Christ in the worship services.

Demographic Comparisons

The demographic comparison of means for males and females was based on the cumulative score of the qualities of worship. The twenty-five variables had a potential of five points each, with the highest score possible being 125. The mean for the female respondents was 115.38 and the mean for the male respondents was 114.64. The range between the means was only 0.74. The means for both genders was nearly identical in their perception of positive qualities in worship.

The comparison of age and the qualities of worship was done on a church-by-church basis divided into six categorical indexes (below 100; 100-105; 106-110; 111-115; 116-120; 121-125) to show distribution of scores. I reviewed this set of data on a church-by-church basis because I believed the level of perceived qualities might vary by age according to the style of worship. Because each church had a different style of worship, the data could not be evaluated on a cumulative basis.

The respondents from Lake Ann showed 75 percent of the respondents over 65 to

be in the 100-110 range. Two of the respondents (one each in the 51-65 and the 35-50 ranges) scored the presence of positive qualities below 100. Aside from those two respondents, the respondents under 65 years old scored the worship service as having a greater presence of positive qualities than the over 65 age group. The input from the debriefing sessions showed that some of the older members were discontent with the worship space as well as the contemporary songs, while most of the younger members expressed satisfaction (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Distribution of Scores at Lake Ann UMC for Qualities by Age Groups

Scores out of 125 for	Under 100	100-105	106-110	111-115	116-120	121-125
Over 65 Years Old		2	1		1	
Between 51-65	1		3	1	2	2
Between 36-50	1			2		
Between 21-35					1	
20 years old or younger						
n=18						

The scores of the Marshall respondents were dispersed in an interesting pattern, with members of ages from 35-65 perceiving the presence of the qualities of worship in a stronger manner than the respondents in the 21-35 age group. The small sample size does not give this comparison strong reliability; however, it did indicate the younger respondents did not perceive the qualities of worship as positively as the older respondents did. Marshall was gearing this particular service to younger people, and the results indicated they were being more successful connecting with the middle-aged respondents (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Distribution of Scores at Marshall UMC for Qualities by Age Groups

Scores out of 125 for	Under 100	100-105	106-110	111-115	116-120	121-125
Over 65 Years Old						
Between 51-65			1		1	1
Between 36-50		1		1	1	1
Between 21-35		1	1			
20 years old or younger					1	
n=10						

The respondents at Cornerstone were all 36-64 years old, and their scores were evenly spread. At Carson City the scores were also evenly spread out with slightly lower scores being registered by the respondents age 21-35. Carson City and Cornerstone offered worship services aimed at a younger demographic. Carson City was slightly more effective with people in the 36-51 age range (see Tables 4.5 and 4.6). The respondents from Cornerstone mostly were drawn from a Sunday school class, which may explain the lack of diversity of ages.

Table 4.5. Distribution of Scores at Cornerstone UMC for Qualities by Age Groups

Scores out of 125 for	Under 100	100-105	106-110	111-115	116-120	121-125
Over 65 Years Old						
Between 51-65		1	1		1	1
Between 36-50		2	2	2	3	1
Between 21-35						
20 yrs old or young						
n=14						

Table 4.6. Distribution of Scores at Carson City UMC for Qualities by Age Groups

Scores out of 125 for	Under 100	100-105	106-110	111-115	116-120	121-125
Over 65 Years Old						
Between 51-65				1		
Between 36-50				1	3	1
Between 21-35		1	2	2	1	1
20 years old or younger					1	
n=14						

The sample group at Trinity in Lansing was an older adult Sunday school class. They attended a traditional worship service and perceived a strong presence of positive qualities in worship. Their high scores corresponded with their very favorable comments in the debriefing session (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Distribution of Scores at Trinity UMC, Lansing for Qualities by Age Groups

Scores out of 125 for	Under 100	100-105	106-110	111-115	116-120	121-125
Over 65 Years Old			2	2	2	10
Between 51-65		1		1	1	5
Between 36-50						1
Between 21-35						
20 years old or younger						
n=29						

The respondents at St. Joseph were mostly above 36 years of age, and they nearly all responded with scores 111 or above. The scores indicated that nearly all the respondents strongly experienced the presence of positive qualities in worship (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Distribution of Scores at St. Joseph UMC for Qualities by Age Groups

Scores out of 125 for	Under 100	100-105	106-110	111-115	116-120	121-125
Over 65 Years Old				1	1	1
Between 51-65				1	2	
Between 36-50		1			1	1
Between 21-35						
20 years old or younger					1	
n=11						

These comparisons indicated that age had a slight impact on the perception of positive qualities in worship and that some of the worship services geared toward a younger demographic were being more effective in satisfying the middle-aged demographic.

Table 4.9. Evaluation of Beauty in Worship Sorted by the Highest Grade Completed

Perceived Presence of Beauty	Very Much Not	Mostly Not	Some of Both	Mostly Beautiful	Very Much Beautiful
Graduate degree			5	13	12
Undergraduate degree			4	10	10
Some college courses			1	12	9
High School graduate	1			2	5
Below 12 th grade				1	1

A review of the relationship between level of education and evaluating the worship service as beautiful revealed very little difference in means. Excluding the age group under 20 years of age (because it included only two respondents), the range of means was 0.11 with the lowest means for beauty in worship being in those with a high school education (4.25) followed closely by those with a graduate degree (4.27). The highest means were shared by those who took some college courses and those with an

undergraduate degree (4.36). The comparison of means indicates very little difference between educational levels of the respondents and their evaluation of the worship service as beautiful (see Table 4.9).

Data from the Facilitators

The means of the six facilitators were fairly similar to the respondents, especially in the mean of the evaluations of worship, all of which were 4.33. Considering the small sample size of the facilitators, the means are very close to the means for the respondents. The means of the facilitators' responses to the positive qualities of worship were also similar to the means of the respondents; however, when the facilitators' means differed, their means were always lower than the respondents'. A noticeable difference was in the quality of peaceful, which was lower than the respondents' mean by over one point. Another group of means were lower than the respondents' means by approximately 0.5. These qualities included appropriate music tempo, pace fits service, awareness of Christ, creative, theme was clear, and worshipful. In many cases at least one of the respondents responded with a low score, which dropped the average significantly. Differences occurred mostly when one of the facilitators perceived the positive and negative attributes of a quality as being "both present." Overall, the responses of the facilitators were similar to the respondents'.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Major Findings

The major findings answered the purpose of the study to describe the dependent variables and independent variables as revealed in the data. The findings also addressed the correlation between the qualities of worship and the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.

1. All six worship services were evaluated by respondents and facilitators as being mostly to very much beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.
2. Respondents in all six worship services strongly perceived the presence of positive qualities of worship.
3. Overall, the worship services were evaluated by the facilitators and respondents as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.
4. With the exception of appropriate tempo of music, 90 percent or more of the respondents perceived the positive qualities of worship as being mostly or very much present.
5. All of the positive qualities of worship, with the exception of coordination, showed statistically significant correlation with at least one of the types of the evaluation of worship.
6. Seven positive qualities of worship had statistically significant correlation with all three qualities of worship: well-prepared, theme was clear, presentation was creative, worshipful, awareness of God's holiness, awareness of God's righteousness, and vivid attention to God's glory.

7. Four other positive qualities of worship had statistically significant correlation with both evaluations of worship as fulfilling and inspiring. They were components related to theme, awareness of Christ, order of worship enhanced the flow of worship, and presence of God's grace.

8. Out of the three types of the evaluation of worship, fulfilling correlated with the highest number of positive qualities of worship. Twenty-two of the qualities of worship showed correlation with the worship service being evaluated as fulfilling.

9. The evaluation of worship as beautiful was strongly correlated to the positive worship qualities in the categories of presentation and presence of divine attributes, with four of the five qualities from each of the categories being correlated with beauty.

10. The evaluation of worship as fulfilling was strongly correlated to the positive worship qualities in the categories of unity of form and content, presence of divine relational loving qualities, and presence of divine attributes. All five qualities from each category were statistically significantly correlated with fulfilling.

11. The evaluation of worship as inspiring was strongly correlated to the positive worship qualities in the category of coherence and presence of divine attributes. The correlation of all five qualities in the category of coherence with inspiration was statistically significant.

12. Testing, using a *Chi-squared test* and an *alpha coefficient test*, indicated that each category of the qualities of worship showed statistically significant goodness-of-fit and internal consistency. Thus, the individual qualities showed strong association that could not have happened by chance.

13. The scores from the *Chi-squared test* and the *alpha coefficient test* indicated

strong association among the evaluations of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.

14. In the debriefing sessions, the respondents particularly expressed the importance of specific areas of worship. They were incarnational presence of God's love, glory of God, content and meaning, and music.

15. The respondents especially expressed the importance of experiencing the loving presence of Christ through the people and leaders of the church, as well as the importance of God being the focus of worship.

16. Respondents answered the question, "What do you think is beautiful?" by ranking the five examples in the following order: a Christ-like person, a profound truth, an artistic masterpiece, a scenic painting, and a glamorous or handsome person.

17. In comparing the means of responses from males and females, little difference in the means for the total score for positive qualities of worship was found.

18. A demographic comparison of the levels of education with the means for the presence of beauty showed a mean range of 0.13 between the different groups.

19. A demographic review of the total score for the evaluation of worship and age revealed consistency in homogenous sample groups. The result in groups that were more heterogeneous in age was slightly more diverse than scores according to age.

20. Church starts, churches who offered multiple styles of worship, and churches that incorporated blended worship had a higher level of satisfaction than the one church that transitioned from a traditional style to a contemporary style.

21. The sample groups were fairly homogeneous in the demographics of age, educational level, length of time as a Christian, and frequency of attendance.

22. Demographic evaluation of gender and educational level indicated minimal

difference between mean scores of categorical indexes for the qualities of worship.

23. A church-by-church comparison showed slight differences in the level of perceived positive qualities in worship by different age groups.

Interpretation and Evaluation of Data

The quantitative and qualitative data provided degrees of correlation and also reasons for the correlation. The two types of data illustrated the respondents' evaluating worship as being fulfilling, and an awareness of God's presence and love in worship.

Limitations of Interpretation

The interpretation of data was limited solely to the six churches surveyed. Neither the respondents nor the participating churches constituted a random sample. The demographics of the sample groups were very homogeneous. The conclusions reached in this section only pertain to the evaluation and interpretation of the data from these churches and, therefore, are descriptive rather than inferential. Even so, in light of the data, interesting observations about satisfaction in worship and the nature of worship can be made.

The Broad View of the Study

The high mean scores of the evaluation of worship and the qualities of worship, as well as the positive comments in the debriefing sessions, were indicators of each church's level of excellence in worship. All but one of the positive qualities in worship was perceived to be mostly or very much present at least 90 percent of the time. In addition, the respondents evaluated the worship services as being mostly fulfilling or very much fulfilling approximately 95 percent of the time. The high grand means of the positive qualities of worship was 4.58, again illustrating the strong affirmation of the worship

services.

When the respondents were asked, “How would you describe the worship service to a friend this afternoon?” they described the worship services using such terms as fantastic, inspirational, potentially life-changing, meaningful, enjoyable, impressive, renewing, wonderful, sincere, awesome, well thought-out, sense of community, and unified. While six churches differed in the intensity of the comments as well as the variety of responses, all the sample groups highly affirmed the worship services.

The lack of variation in the perception of positive qualities also illustrated the unified affirmation of the worship services. The scores were so skewed to the positive side of the spectrum that a t-test was not feasible because a t-test needs a balanced distribution of scores.

The confounding influences that could artificially inflate the scores were several. First, in most cases the respondents were invited to participate by the pastors. The pastors, at the very least, knew them well enough to ask them to participate, and in a number of cases the pastors told me they were contacting parishioners they knew well. Second, nearly all the respondents attended worship three to four times a month. More variation might have occurred if some of the respondents only attended worship once a month. Third, most of the respondents were long-time Christians who were accustomed to worship rather than visitors who might not be completely comfortable in worship.

Another reason for the by-product of homogeneity is the ability of people to make choices about where and how they worship. Multiple styles and distinct ministries of churches provide the parishioner with a variety of choices. In a session of the Congregational Reflection Group, Dr. David Sprague of Central Michigan University

referred to this phenomenon as “mass customization.” A good example of mass customization is the marketing technique employed by Dell Computer. Dell receives the customer’s specifications, assembles the computer, and then delivers it within seventy-two hours. In the contemporary American culture, the customer wants and expects customized items, instead of off-the-rack items. Thus, worship is no longer “one size fits all,” leading churches to create niche ministries. The niche ministries seek to determine the wants and needs of the local demographic and then attempt to create worship services that meet those perceived preferences.

Three out of the six churches in this study offered two different styles of worship on a Sunday morning. One of the other churches was a church plant that offered contemporary worship since its inception, while another blended traditional elements with more contemporary songs. The other church transitioned from a traditional worship to contemporary worship. The last church was the only church with respondents registering any scores below “some of both.” The respondents also expressed differing viewpoints in the debriefing session. Overall, the more homogenous groups evaluated the worship service in a more positive manner, as well as perceiving positive qualities of worship at a higher rate as well.

The homogeneity of the sample groups does not diminish the extremely high means and the predominant majority who expressed satisfaction with the worship services. Even the few who expressed some dissatisfaction with a particular aspect of a worship service nonetheless agreed that the worship service was inspiring and fulfilling.

The Meaning and the Understanding of Beauty

For the purposes of this study, beauty was defined as an object or event with

pleasing qualities that evokes a response of delight or satisfaction, and incarnate beauty as beauty that manifests the presence of God, in a particularly visceral manner. The definitions of beauty are categorically universal in application. The goodness of beauty is not limited to the visual realm, but can even include incarnate expressions of God's love and holiness. I found a strong correlation with worship evaluated as beautiful and the quality of attractiveness. In addition, one of the two categories where four out of five qualities correlated with beauty was presentation, which primarily concerned the appearance and "performance" of the worship service. In the debriefing sessions when people spoke about beauty, they referred to the appearance of stained glass, or clutter on the altar. The observations of the correlation and the comments in the debriefing sessions gave evidence of a difference between my understanding of beauty as goodness that evokes a response of satisfaction and the respondents' understanding of beauty in terms of the visual appearance of worship.

The task of ranking examples of beauty was also of particular interest. The facilitators recorded frustration of the respondents when asked to rank the examples from most to least beautiful. Many of the respondents did not complete this part of the questionnaire. The respondents who did complete the section ranked a Christ like person as the most beautiful. Dr. Reid Skeel, of Central Michigan University commented in one of the Congregational Reflection Group meetings, "People will probably rank a Christ-like person as the top choice because they are in church, and that is the answer they think they should give, even if they don't usually think of it that way." The contrast between the data from rating the services and the ranking of examples of beauty perhaps shows a disparity between how the respondents think they should reply and what they actually

focused on regarding beauty. Interestingly, the other category with four of five qualities correlating with beauty was the category of attributes of God—holiness, suggesting at least some connection between evaluating the worship service as beautiful and perceiving God’s holiness in worship.

In Chapter 2 the cultural understanding of beauty based on external appearance was reviewed. I believe the cultural understanding of beauty may have confounded the question of beauty as excellence in worship in this survey. The respondents evaluated the worship services as excellent in all of the debriefing sessions yet evaluated the services as beautiful at a much lower mean than the worship services being fulfilling and inspirational. The respondents perceived a strong presence of positive qualities in worship; however, the evaluation of worship as beautiful had the least amount of correlation with the properties. The evaluation of worship as fulfilling had correlation to more qualities in worship than the variables of beauty and inspiration. Perhaps the presence of the qualities of worship listed in the survey better measure the respondents’ evaluation of worship as fulfilling rather than beautiful.

The evaluation of worship as fulfilling may signify the respondents’ satisfaction of what they expressed what was most important to them. Overall, the respondents placed particular importance upon the presence of God’s loving presence, especially incarnate through the worship leaders and the congregation. In addition, they wanted meaningful content and to encounter God’s holy presence in worship. If these aspects were present, the respondents would evaluate the worship service as fulfilling rather than beautiful, even though God’s goodness and beauty were present in worship. From this point forth, the term beauty will not be used to describe the level of satisfaction of the respondents in

the survey but will continue to be used as a working term for the concept of excellence and goodness in worship.

The Reasons Worship Was Fulfilling

The categories of the qualities of worship that especially correlated with fulfilling included such qualities as the perception of God portrayed as loving and God portrayed as caring, presence of God's grace, purposeful, theme was clear, awareness of Christ, presence of Scripture, awareness of God's holiness, awareness of God's righteousness, and worshipful, among others. These qualities were congruent with the qualities expressed in the debriefing sessions as being important. Overall, as well as in the individual churches, the qualities with the highest means were also regarded as the most important. Each debriefing group volunteered information praising the presence of the triune God in the leaders, commenting that the leaders followed the leading of the Holy Spirit and were Christ-like. The respondents also expressed they experienced the glory of God through the joyfulness of the choir, the love of the pastor, and devotion of a music leader. The awareness of Christ was detected in the content of worship, the congregation, and the worship leaders.

The grand total of the means of each category also indicated a connection between what the respondents expressed was important and their satisfaction in worship. The two highest means of the categories of the qualities of worship were coherence and qualities of God's relational loving presence. Attributes of both of these categories were mentioned in the debriefing sessions as being important to the respondents. First, in the category of qualities of God's relational loving presence, the respondents expressed a strong awareness of God's grace and God being portrayed as caring and loving. The

respondents' comments in the debriefing sessions and the high means of this category indicated the desire for the worshippers to experience God's love in worship, to know God as a loving deity, and to see the embodiment of God's loving presence in the worship leaders.

The qualities within the category coherence also received high marks. The respondents especially perceived the presence of a clear theme and an awareness of Christ. The churches excelled in Christ-centered content, insight, and purposefulness, a purposefulness not random, but expressing the loving relationship and holiness of God. The respondents overwhelmingly affirmed the focus of the leaders on glorifying God in worship and keeping Jesus at the center of the message. The worship leaders planned and enacted worship that exemplified this study's definition of worship as, "a communal service with the purpose of paying homage to the triune God and seeking communion with him." The worship leaders achieved the purpose of worship, as defined in this study, by paying homage to God and helping the people to come into communion with him.

A pronounced presence of purposefulness was discovered as well. Purposefulness was the one quality correlated with the evaluation of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. It was also perceived by 97 percent of the respondents as being mostly or very much present. This high frequency indicated that the sample group perceived the planning of worship to be intentional. It also indicated that the worshippers perceived a sense of purpose in the worship service. Another indicator of the intentionality of the worship leaders was also seen in the quality of well-prepared, in which 100 percent of the respondents expressed that the quality was mostly or very much present. The final indication of the intentionality of the worship leaders was that the respondents perceived

a clear theme being mostly or very much present 97 percent of the time. From the beginning of this study I considered these three qualities as indicators of intentionality by worship leaders in preparing worship. The purposefulness coincides with Dewey's assertion that good art is intentional and purposeful, distinguishing it from happenstance (37, 44). In the review of the data, intentionality was one area where the assessment of beauty in art paralleled the beauty of worship; both have the quality of purposefulness.

Another quality related to worship preparation was creativity. Respondents of four of the churches scored this quality especially high, and in five of the debriefing sessions the creativity of the worship service was noted. Examples of creativity in the worship services included a pastor who gave out ribbons to remind everyone how love binds the community together. In another church the pastor used a Dr. Seuss book to illustrate the message from the book of Daniel. The worship leaders were intentional in how they could creatively express the content of worship.

While the importance of the categories coherence and the qualities of God's love and holiness were particularly expressed in the debriefing sessions, the two other categories, presentation and unity of form and content, also received the attention of the groups. In all cases they commented on how well the worship services flowed or were conducted. The high mean for worship being skillfully performed indicated that the worship leaders were not only intentional in what they expressed in worship but also how they expressed it. Both pastors and music leaders were praised for how well they presented worship. All the churches placed a strong emphasis on excellence in worship, and it showed in the respondents' comments and questionnaires.

In a Congregation Reflection Group, General Charles Briggs commented that

distractions in worship diverted one's attention from God. The rare occurrence of distractions in the worship services was reflected in the high marks for presentation and possibly influenced the respondents' awareness of God's presence in worship. Recently, a mother of a young child said she received a lot of truth from a message I preached; however, she expressed regret that she did not have a chance to focus more on the message because her child was distracting her. George Barna also found in his research that one of the reasons people in worship did not experience God's presence is because of distractions or an interruption in the flow of worship (Barna). The respondents in this study did not report many distractions. They also commended the flow of the worship service and the skillful performance. All of these factors helped the respondents to be drawn toward experiencing the immanent presence of God in worship.

Theological Reflection on the Incarnational Presence of God in Worship

The feedback from the respondents affirmed the importance all of the categories in the experience of worship. The following section reflects on the theological implications of each category and their part in helping the respondents experience the immanent and transcendent presence of God.

Presentation and Issues of Taste

In a number of churches, especially the churches with blended or traditional worship styles, the respondents expressed appreciation for the skillful performance and how it enhanced their experience in worship. The opinions expressed by the respondents illustrate Plato's assertion that skillful performance can help the person transcend the visceral to experience the godly (Phaedrus 95). If the presentation in worship is admirable and considered beautiful, then as Aquinas believes, the person's feelings may be aroused

by the beauty of God (Summa Theologica 1: 210).

Visual beauty also helped facilitate some of the respondents' experience of the holy. One example was the woman in the study who expressed her need for visual beauty in worship. Worship at her church was held in a multipurpose room, and she was distracted by all of the things in the room related to activities other than worship. A man at another church expressed that he was distracted from focusing on God by the clutter of technological equipment left on the altar. Such visual distractions begin in the perception. Burke points out that sensory qualities are the beginning of the process for judging if something is beautiful or not beautiful (13). In these instances, the individuals saw things that they deemed inappropriate, which affected how they evaluated the worship service.

Issues with the appearance of the worship space varied. At one church a woman praised the worship space as being comfortable because worship was held in the fellowship hall. Here is an example of what Hume referred to as prejudices. According to Hume, one reason that people vary in judgment is because of their histories or the manners of a specific age (19). This woman expressed appreciation for the casual setting because she had active young children. The woman, cited above, who expressed dissatisfaction with the multipurpose worship space revealed that she grew up Catholic and that stained glass sanctuaries were important to her. Another woman from her same sample group shared that she was a new Christian and the visual aesthetics of the space did not matter as much to her. All of these individuals had different histories and life situations that created prejudices in their judgments about the worship spaces.

Another point of disagreement in some of the sample groups was the category of appropriate music tempo. The disparity of opinions about the tempo of music was

indicated in the diversity of frequencies of scores as well as the low mean. In the debriefing sessions, some respondents expressed a preference for a style of music other than the one used in worship, yet others liked the particular style of music but did not like the tempo. The disparity of opinions is an example of what Goldman calls “the noneliminable element of taste” (“Re: Aesthetic Values”). Taste as defined by Burch-Brown is the subjective appreciation of something based on the individual’s history and preference (Religious Aesthetics 140). The respondents’ history and preference for a style of music affected their judgments regarding the tempo of the music, yet their judgment went beyond a stylistic preference, to a preference of tempo.

Hegel’s three-tiered system of how a person judges something as beautiful is helpful here. A judgment of something as beautiful based on one’s own benefit was the lowest form of judgment. The second tier of judgment occurs if the person learns something from the event or object. The third tier of judgment happens when the person participates in the divine truth through the visceral beauty (Hegel: On the Arts 39).

Interestingly, one debriefing session turned into a group discussion about different styles and different preferences in worship. After some of the respondents shared why specific styles were important to them, one person who did not like the contemporary style of music commented, “I realize we have to change perspectives. Everything in worship doesn’t have to suit me. It’s touching somebody. ... We all see God in different ways.” The judgment about music began from the level of whether it benefited the individual, based on his preference of style. After discussing it with others who were blessed by the music, the respondent recognized God’s presence through empathy with them. Hegel’s three-tiered system of judging beauty applied to the situation, illustrating how a person

could achieve a higher understand of beauty by focusing on God's presence through empathy with others. The discussion is also an example of Stevenson's assertion that judgment may be fluid as one considers other viewpoints (Eaton 112).

Coherence and Revelation in Worship

Earlier in this chapter, the importance of purposefulness in worship was examined. One of the benchmarks of all the worship services in this study was the intentionality of the worship leaders in planning and conducting worship. The purposefulness as a primary characteristic of worship is expressed in the Psalms when David says, "You said to seek your face, your face I did seek" (Ps. 27:8, NIV).

Worship directed to God seeks his truth in Scripture as well as revelation through Jesus Christ. Thomas F. Torrence comments, "In Jesus Christ God has given us a Revelation which is identical with himself. Jesus Christ is the revelation of God" (23). One of the main purposes of worship is achieved when the congregation pays homage to God by seeking his truth and revelation. Through revelation the worshippers find insight and a deeper understanding of the divine.

Plato believes beauty conveys truth because it reveals the metaphysical reality that leads a person to true images (Phaedrus 95). While Plato's dualism does not hold true for the incarnate nature of Christian truth, his idea of visceral forms revealing greater truths can help to understand the importance of purposefulness in worship.

Hegel asserts that truth was personified in Jesus Christ (Hegel: On the Arts 39). Jesus himself proclaimed, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Truth found in the person of Jesus reveals the absolute truth of God. In worship, the leaders represent Jesus, thus representing God's truth to the congregation. The presence of Scripture and

strong awareness of Christ illustrate the intentionality of the leaders to base their worship on God's truth, as expressed in the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ.

The qualities of Scripture and an awareness of Christ inspired the congregation to be filled with the Spirit and evoked a feeling of fulfillment. The comments in the debriefing sessions and the high means of the qualities in coherence indicated that the respondents placed importance upon the presence of Scripture and the awareness of Christ and found these qualities to be present in the worship services. In all of the debriefing sessions, respondents consistently praised the worship leaders for their use of Scripture, communicating God's truth, and being Christ like.

The respondents were inspired and believed that the truth of God was revealed in worship. The worship services were meaningful to them, in part, because of the presence of Scripture and an awareness of Christ. The presence of these qualities provided substance for the respondents and, according to the debriefing sessions, contributed to their evaluation of the worship service being fulfilling. Through the visceral words of the worship leaders the respondents perceived an imminent awareness of Jesus, and also provided the potential for worshippers to be transformed by his presence. One respondent commented that the sermon encouraged worshippers to transform, "from being secular to being religious."

Tolstoy's belief that beauty is communication of a religious message uniting a person with his or her neighbor and with God (147) was achieved in the worship services. The respondents expressed that a religious message was effectively communicated in worship. They also shared the desire for worship to be focused on God's truth as found Scripture and in Jesus Christ. In addition, many expressed they experienced the presence

of God's love through the message. The focus on God's word and truth united them, even though they disagreed about some qualities such as the pace of the music.

Unity of Form and Content: Finding an Appropriate Balance

Aristotle and Aquinas believe beauty is found in balance and proportion, conveying an appropriateness of form (Aristotle Metaphysics 193; Aquinas Summa Theologica 1: 23). In the field of visual art, such balance is found in the composition of a painting. In a worship context, some worship services are criticized for a sermon "that went too long" or a prayer that "was long and drawn out." In keeping with the thought of Aristotle's philosophy, beautiful worship has a proper balance of time allotted to each segment of the worship service.

All of the worship services were perceived to be appropriate in a pace of the service and that the components enhanced the flow of the worship service. The pace for a particular service is not measured in empirical quantities. The proper pace of a worship service is a subjective sense of appropriateness within each respondent. In the judgment of art that is especially subjective, the merit of the artwork is sometimes discerned communally by a group of people who are in agreement about the value of the artwork. In the responses to the questionnaire and the comments in the debriefing sessions, the respondents were in close agreement that the pace of all the worship services was appropriate. The communal agreement about the appropriate pace of the worship service illustrated how the validity of a subjective judgment can be confirmed by similar responses from other people.

The one area of disparity in the area of appropriateness was the quality appropriate music tempo. The disparity was reviewed in an earlier section of this chapter,

and the dissatisfaction with the music tempo distracted some of the respondents' focus on God in the worship service.

The worship services were praised for their orderliness and integrity. The respondents believed the components related to the theme, and the flow of the worship service enhanced the content of the worship service. The relation of the components to the theme and the orderly flow of the worship service fulfill two of the requisites of beauty, clarity, and correct proportion, as proposed by Aquinas (Summa Theologica 1: 26). The worship services were not chaotic and random, but were woven together with the theme and purpose of the worship service. Aquinas points out that God's light is revealed in Jesus, who illuminated the world with his truth (211). In a similar way, the worship services reflected God's orderliness and illuminated the believers.

In most of the debriefing sessions, the respondents highly praised the creativity of the worship leaders. The creativity assisted the respondents to understand the message in new and revelatory ways. The creativity of the worship leaders embodied Hegel's beliefs about humans creating the highest form of beauty when they use their creative abilities to reveal divine truth (Hegel: On the Arts 108). In most of the worship services, the respondents said they experienced God's truth in a new way through the worship leaders' creativity.

The worship leaders not only focused on the message but also upon the manner in which it was communicated. The intentional pacing and structure of the service assisted the respondents to enter further into God's truth and presence. The balance and integrity of the worship services created the kind of wholeness that Aristotle and others believe is necessary for beauty (Poetics 233). The respondents' affirmation of the presence of the

qualities of coherence and acknowledgement of them in the debriefing sessions illustrated the importance of unity of form and content in worship.

Presence of Qualities of God's Relational Love

St. Paul states, "...without love I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). A worship service might be skillfully performed, centering on a theme, with an appropriate flow, but without the presence of God's love, it would not be substantiative. St. John succinctly says, "God is love" (1 John 4:6), and to be in communion with God in worship is to experience his loving Spirit.

The category of God's relational love had the second highest mean of all the categories, signifying the respondents' strong perception of the presence of God's love in the worship services. The loving presence of God was perceived in the content of worship, as indicated by the astoundingly high means regarding God portrayed as caring and God portrayed as loving.

Another quality especially noted by the respondents in the debriefing sessions was the embodiment of God's love by the worship leaders. The respondents' comments about the leaders included, "Our pastor is Christ like," and "Our pastor is accepting of people." The theme of acceptance occurred in multiple debriefing sessions and was one way in which the respondents wanted and experienced God's love in worship. The respondents experienced the incarnational presence of Christ as it was embodied in the worship leaders and congregations.

At this point beauty goes beyond the beauty of appearance to the beauty of virtue and love. By hearing and seeing love in the congregation and worship leaders, the people experienced fellowship and God's love. Augustine asserts this type of love is rooted in

the love of Jesus and is the greatest expression of God's beauty (Confessions 211). The respondents experienced the kind of interior beauty that Koyama says "was the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world" (38).

The beauty of love is praised by Jesus when he commends the woman who washes his feet, saying she is doing something beautiful (Mark 14:3). The woman's beauty was virtuous and rooted in love for Jesus. Jesus contrasted her beauty with the visceral beauty but spiritual ugliness of the Pharisees, who were like the whitewashed tombs. Many of the worship spaces of the churches in this study were visually attractive, yet the respondents experienced goodness in worship going beyond physical beauty to the spiritual beauty of the love of Christ.

The presence of God's love unified the respondents in worship and infected the worshippers with empathy for one another, as was witnessed at the church where people worshipped together and empathized with one another despite differences of opinion. The presence of love not only helped people to experience the beauty of God's love, but it also created a source of unity with one another.

Another strongly perceived presence was God's grace. It indicates a presence of forgiveness and love that is not earned, but is given as a gift through Jesus. As Wesley believes, grace has the power to bring people from unbelief to belief and eventually to sanctification (2: 154-156). Respondents expressed that they experienced grace-filled love in the message, prayers, and presence of others who accepted them and invited them into a deeper loving relationship with God. Through the presence of God's grace in worship, the respondents experienced God's love and felt close to him.

Two qualities were chosen as manifestations of God's presence in people. The

categories of peaceful and joyful were taken from the list of fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. The qualities were not mentioned in the debriefing sessions, and peacefulness did not register as high as the other qualities in the category. Many of the worship services were energetic and would not be considered especially peaceful. Perhaps, a better description of this quality would have been leaders projected a presence of inner peace.

Respondents abundantly experienced God portrayed as caring and loving, as well as the presence of God's grace in every church. The churches' tendency to place strong emphasis on God's grace and love affected the respondents' lives and faith.

The Presence of Divine Attributes—Holiness

God's glory was witnessed in the temple by the Israelites in the Old Testament (Exod. 40:34-35). The glory of God was the most brilliant, beautiful presence on earth. In the philosophical considerations of beauty, such brilliance would be best defined by Burke's understanding of sublime. According to Burke the sublime is majestic, and evokes feelings of awe and reverence (57). While God's loving presence is comforting, uplifting, and healing, God's holy presence is grand. To worship God as a loving God is to focus on one aspect of God's nature. God is also righteous and holy (Ps. 98:1). Although the mean for the category was lower than the overall mean for qualities of God's relational loving presence, the mean for this category was still very high. The high mean indicated a perceived awareness of God's holiness in the worship services by the respondents. Interestingly, the qualities in the category of attributes of God—holiness—correlated more often than the other categories of the qualities of worship with the evaluations of worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring.

The strong correlation indicated the respondents' perception of the presence of

qualities of God's holiness in a similar manner to their evaluation of the worship services as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring. The presence of positive qualities in the category of holiness was the best indicator as to whether or not the respondents would judge the services as being satisfactory. For the participating churches the respondents expressed the importance of God's holiness as a vital part of worship.

The perceived presence of God's truth indicated the respondents believed the worship services were centered on the wisdom of God. A good cross-reference for the presence of God's truth was the high mean for the presence of Scripture. Many respondents in the debriefing sessions indicated that they believed Scripture was God's truth. In addition to these high means, the presence of God's righteousness also was perceived in a strong manner as well.

The strong perception of God's truth indicated the respondents experienced divine truth, which is somewhat similar to Plato's ideal of a metaphysical truth (Symposium 66). Yet the truth the respondents perceived was specifically that of the triune God, as indicated by the respondents' close association of God's truth with Scripture and the person of Jesus.

Some of the worship leaders were especially commended for their dedication to God's glory in worship. One respondent commented that worship leaders strove to lead the people into God's glory. These leaders successfully deflected the attention away from themselves and focused on God. Augustine believes the highest form of beauty is beauty that directs a person to God (Confessions 629). The leaders in worship exhibited Augustine's ideal of beauty.

God's glory was also strongly perceived by the respondents, but in ways not

physically overwhelming. The glory of God is not only like “a devouring fire” (Exod. 24:17), but it is also experienced in the splendor of God’s presence. One respondent commented that she saw the glory of God in the faces of the choir as they sang happily in a Spirit-filled manner. In this way God’s glory was perceived by the respondent who experienced God in the people’s complete dedication to the worship of God.

The holiness of God literally means to be separate and sacred. In perceiving holiness the respondents perceived an extraordinariness that went beyond the visceral to the eternal. The respondents in all the churches indicated the services were worshipful as well as having an awareness of God’s holiness. Nevertheless, of all the qualities in the category of attributes of God—holiness, the quality worshipful had the lowest mean. One explanation for the lower mean could be that the term worshipful sometimes connotes a solemn quality not particularly present in some of the energetic worship services. God’s holiness and glory were definitely perceived by the respondents, although the qualities may not have been perceived in a way some people think of as “worshipful.” The holiness the respondents perceived was similar to the holiness about which Dubay writes when he states it shines through a person and is observable (248). People are attracted to the beauty of virtuous people and affected by their example. The strong presence of God’s holiness in the worship services and in the people may be one reason why all of these churches are strong and growing.

Implications for Revising the Field

The acknowledgement of the power of God’s beauty in worship is not new. Saliers and Dubay, as well as others, highlighted the power of God’s beauty in conveying his presence. This study applies the theology of divine beauty to attributes of worship by

proposing specific qualities that may contribute to the perception of God's beauty by worshippers. While specific components of the study are not necessarily new, the integration of the different ideas offers a unique perspective on worship.

If God is the first cause of beauty, and if beauty has its highest realization through the divine presence, then beautiful worship embodies divine beauty, and reflects the beauty back to God. The primary focus of the worship leaders in planning, preparation, and carrying out worship is on the Trinity, while being mindful of the congregation. The worship leaders' goal is to focus and be attentive to God's presence, as well as to communicate the divine in a manner the congregation will understand and experience in worship. The worship leaders provide a bridge from the divine to the congregation.

The qualities of God's beauty identified in this study provide means and tools to help convey God's beauty to the congregation. Excellent presentation minimizes distractions and manifests the perfect nature of God. Coherence provides a purposefulness and intentionality of order and meaning drawing the congregation's attention to the divine. The qualities of unity of form and content give proper visceral expression to the content and presence of the divine in worship. Both qualities of God's relational love and the attributes of God—holiness—acknowledge the incarnational presence of the Trinity in worship. The qualities of worship can potentially assist pastors and congregations in assessing how worship conveys and reflects divine beauty.

The dynamic of perception, interpretation, and evaluation, borrowed from the field of aesthetics, may also be helpful in examining the communication of the content of worship. Each person perceives objects and events in the processes of his or her mind. The person's perception becomes his or her interpretation of reality. Each person will

perceive and experience worship in a unique manner, yet they will perceive the same worship service.

The subjective difference occurs in the person's interpretation and evaluation of the worship service. Depending upon the person's frame of mind, he or she may interpret the meaning of the worship service differently than another person. If the worshipper is experiencing a difficult time, he or she may focus on the message of God's comfort, while a worshipper who is doing well may focus on a subtext of God's blessing. Their evaluation of worship may differ when they evaluate the worship service based on their previous experiences. Despite the possibility of different interpretations and evaluations of worship in the minds of the worshippers, the worship service itself is the constant. If the overall content, performance, and focus of worship creatively and skillfully convey God's presence, then the worshippers are more likely to experience the divine.

Thus, beautiful worship has the ability to evoke the presence of the divine and may evoke the worshippers to experience the presence of God. The worshippers' experience of the divine has the potential to be transformational. The study can possibly assist worship leaders in considering how God's beauty is present in worship, as well as exploring how the congregation is perceiving, interpreting, and evaluating worship. In addition, the qualities mentioned in this study could provide a guide for worship leaders and the congregation in how their worship is manifesting God's beauty.

Limitations

As mentioned previously, this study was descriptive. Because the study did not draw from random samples of churches or worshippers, the findings are limited to the specific churches and the respondents who volunteered to participate. Therefore, what is

found in this study may not necessarily be true in other congregations, other regions, or other denominations. Any conclusions are based on the specific data from the specific worship services.

Unexpected Findings

The homogeneity of the participants, especially in the area of how long they had been Christian, frequency of church attendance, and educational level was unexpected. In retrospect, I realized the respondents' frequency of church attendance could be expected because most of the respondents were recruited by the pastor, who was likely to choose people who were active in the church. The homogeneity of length of being a Christian was unexpected because a number of the churches in the survey were known for evangelism to non-Christians. In the total sample population, only a few of people were Christian for less than ten years.

A strong majority of the respondents' educational level was at an undergraduate degree or above. The average showed that respondents of all the churches were well educated with one group registering about half of the respondents holding graduate degrees. All of these factors exhibited the characteristic of the mass customization where people find a specific niche that fits their particular wants or preferences.

The extremely positive response to worship by every sample group was surprising as well. In examining the data, the means were so close to the maximum score of five, very little variance that could occur. One might be able to explain a lack of variation in one church, but the lack of variation among all the churches indicated the excellence of worship in each church. This consistency was especially noteworthy because of the variation in styles of the different worship services.

Another unexpected finding was how often, in the debriefing sessions, the respondents cited the qualities listed in the questionnaire as aspects that were important to them. I was pleased that the respondents shared my opinion regarding the positive qualities of worship. The concurrence of opinions created a cross validation for the qualities.

The strength of inter-category correlation and goodness of fit for the categories of quality was also a surprise. The fact that the qualities held together so well also affirmed my belief that the specific qualities had a common theme.

Lastly, I was not expecting the pattern of correlation among the qualities of worship and the evaluation of worship. Beauty correlated strongly with the categories of presentation and attributes of God—holiness. The category of presentation dealt mainly with appearances, and perhaps the respondents thought of beauty on the basis of appearance. The great number of qualities correlating with fulfilling was unexpected as well. The strength of correlation indicated the qualities of worship were strongly present in a similar manner to satisfaction, or fulfillment, in worship.

Practical Application

I plan to offer consultations to churches, as well as writing journal articles, presenting the ideas of the study regarding God's beauty in worship. In addition, I would like to distribute the questionnaire to a wider group of churches, especially noting if the evaluation of worship correlates with the perceived presence of the qualities of worship.

Conclusions

Churches chosen by the district superintendents excelled in worship. The district superintendents were correct in their assessment of the churches. The worship was

presented well, had meaningful content, and expressed God's love and holiness. The respondents spoke well of the pastors and the other worship leaders, revealing an incarnate presence that went beyond the time of worship. The pastors were the sort of people Dubai would say drew people to themselves with their virtuous beauty (166). The respondents' evaluation of the worship as beautiful, fulfilling, and inspiring combined with the perceived presence of beautiful qualities showed a strong interpretation of the worship service as satisfying. The correlation between the qualities of worship and the evaluations of worship, as well as the qualities the respondents expressed were important to them, showed that a majority of the qualities did factor into the respondents' evaluation of worship. In light of these findings, most of the qualities identified in this study contributed to worship being fulfilling for the respondents.

The categories of positive qualities mostly showed inner consistency. The grouping of the categories seemed to be good gauges for measuring a general area of worship. The distinguishing of the specific categories enabled the respondents to focus on a specific aspect of worship and provided reasons for their evaluation.

The homogeneity of the groups created difficulty in discerning the influence of taste in the interpretation and evaluation of worship. Nevertheless, in the cases where respondents preferred a different style of worship or music, they rated qualities related to style lower than the other members of the sample group. Even so, those respondents rated all other qualities in a similar manner with the rest of their sample group. For example, the response to the quality appropriate music tempo was more prone to prejudices and had the greatest diversity of responses. Nevertheless, the respondents who did not perceive this quality as strongly did perceive God's grace, and other qualities, at nearly

the same level as their fellow respondents. These results would suggest that some of the qualities were a matter of taste, but most of the qualities, especially in the categories of presentation and qualities of God's relational love were more universally experienced. Therefore, the qualities that exhibited greater agreement could be good indicators for qualities necessary for fulfilling and satisfying worship in broad applications.

Further Study

In further study the instrument could be used in a larger number of churches in different regions to find if the results of this study would be replicated on a larger scale. I would also be interested in using the questionnaire in churches that did not excel in worship to see if the homogeneity of scores, as found in this study, would occur. Applying the study to a wider population of various worship styles could provide insight into which qualities are most important to the demographic that prefers a particular style of worship, as well as seeing if the qualities are universal to all styles of worship.

APPENDIX A

Congregational Questionnaire

All information responses given below will be kept strictly confidential.

Please circle the response which best describes your feelings and thoughts about the worship service.

There are no right or wrong answers.

A. The study is based on the premise that God is the source of beauty, and that his beauty takes many forms including visual beauty, excellent performance, meaningfulness, love, and holiness, among other attributes. If God is the source of beauty, how much beauty did you experience in today's worship service?

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
1. Not beautiful	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Beautiful

B. If the purpose of worship is to honor God and to enter into his presence, what best describes your experience in worship today?

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
2. Unfulfilled	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Fulfilled
3. Uninspired	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Inspired

C. Which of the following terms best describe what you experienced in today's worship?

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
4. Uncoordinated	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Coordinated
5. Visually unattractive	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Visually attractive
6. Awkward transitions	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Seamless
7. Sloppily performed	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Skillfully performed

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
8. Ill-prepared	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Well-prepared
9. Unintentional	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Purposeful
10. Theme unapparent	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Theme clear
11. Shallow	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Insightful
12. No awareness of Christ	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Awareness of Christ
13. Absence of Scripture	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presence of Scripture
14. Inappropriate music tempo	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Appropriate music tempo
15. Pace of service dragged or raced	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Pace fit this particular service
16. Worship components (prayers, music, etc.) unrelated to this service's theme	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Worship components related to this service's theme
17. Apparent random order of worship impeded flow of service	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Order of worship enhanced the flow of service
18. Presentation was uncreative	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presentation was creative

D. Which of these terms best describe how you experienced the worship leaders, congregation, and the content of the service?

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
19. Ill at ease	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Peaceful

20. God portrayed as detached	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	God portrayed as caring
21. God portrayed as unloving	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	God portrayed as loving
22. Sullen	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Joyful
23. Absence of God's Grace	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presence of God's Grace

E. Which of these terms describes how you experienced the interaction between worship leaders and the content of worship?

	Very much	Mostly	Some of Both	Mostly	Very much	
24. Irreverent	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Worshipful
25. Awareness of God's Holiness missing	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Awareness of God's Holiness evident
26. Absence of God's Truth	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Presence of God's Truth Readily sensed
27. Awareness of God's Righteousness missing	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Awareness of God's Righteousness present
28. Attention to God's Glory missing	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	Vivid attention to God's Glory

F. On a five-point scale from most true to least true, please rank the following in response to the question, "What do you think is beautiful?"

There are five examples of beauty and five degrees of opinion (from most true to least true). There are no right answers, only your own beliefs.

	Most beaut- iful	2 nd most	3 rd most	4 th most	Least beaut- iful
29. A scenic painting with pleasant colors	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
30. An art masterpiece, such as a sculpture by Michelangelo	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
31. A profound truth, such as "The truth will set you free"	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
32. A glamorous or handsome man or woman, such as someone stylishly-dressed and physically attractive	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
33. A Christ-like person who is known for grace and kindness	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.

The following questions provide general information about yourself.

34. What is your gender?	a. Female	b. Male			
35. In which of the following age ranges do you fit?	a. Below 20	b. 21-35	c. 36-50	d. 51-65	e. Over 65
36. What is the highest grade you've completed?	a. Below 12 th grade	b. High School Grad.	c. Some college courses	d. Under- grad. degree	e. Graduate degree

37. How long have you been a Christian?

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| a. | b. | c. | d. | e. |
| 1-2 yrs. | 3-5 yrs. | 6-10 yrs. | 11-15 yrs. | More than 15 yrs. |

38. How often do you attend church?

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. | b. | c. | d. | e. |
| 3-4 times/
month | 1-2 times/
month | About 6-8 times/
year | About 2-3 times/
year | I am
visiting
today |
-

APPENDIX B

Letter and Instructions to the Facilitators

Pastor Wayne Price

*175 North Drive
Shepherd, MI 48883
(989) 828-5866
Waynejoy@charter.net*

Dear Dave and Holly Anderson,

I hope all is well with you and your family. Thank you for considering being part of my doctoral study on beauty in worship services. Six United Methodist churches from the West Michigan UMC Conference are taking part in the study. I appreciate each of your participation in facilitating the assessment of one of the churches.

As I began my research on this topic, I was struck by the potential of God's beauty to invigorate worship. The premise of the study is that God is the first cause of beauty. If God is the first cause of beauty then beautiful worship will honor God and convey God's transcendence and imminence through the beauty. Beauty is the judgment we make that an event or object is good or even close to perfection. So worship that is beautiful is also worship that excels.

Beauty is a quality that is difficult to measure. Yet, there are discernable attributes or qualities that are the basis of our judgment regarding the beauty of an object or event. Certain thinkers in the field of aesthetics have categorized the attributes of beautiful performances into the three areas. Let's take them one by one. *Presentation* is the degree of skill of a performance. *Coherence* is the meaning and focus in the worship service. Lastly, the *unity of form and content* is the degree to which the content successfully enhanced the content.

Divine love and holiness are two more categories I added because I found in Scripture that God's beauty is manifest in God's holiness as well as His love for His creation. Therefore, I have added the two categories of loving relationship and holiness to the aesthetic categories of beauty.

In summary, this study's purpose is to discover if there is a correlation between the attributes of beauty and the worshippers' satisfaction with the worship service. The following process will be used to discover if there is a correlation.

The pastor, or someone else in the local church, will ask ahead of time for volunteers to be part of the study. After worship the facilitator will distribute the questionnaires. When

the respondents have completed the questionnaires, the facilitator will spend time asking them to use their own words to describe worship. The respondents will also be asked to give reasons for their responses they made in the questionnaire. This time will last 30 to 45 minutes. **All of the participant's [sic] responses will be confidential.**

Results of the questionnaire will be analyzed statistically. The questionnaire scores and the oral comments will be shared with the pastor and appropriate staff. All the findings will be compared to see if the attributes in worship do correspond with the participants' satisfaction with worship.

I hope you will agree to be part of this exciting study, and assist in a way I am unable to do because of my need to lead worship at Shepherd United Methodist Church. If you are willing facilitating will include:

- Contact the pastor when you arrive at the church to let him know you are there, and to find out where you will be meeting after worship.
- Attending the Sunday morning worship service.
- Filling out a questionnaire regarding the worship service.
- Convening a group of worshippers together after worship.
- Distributing the questionnaire to the worshippers.
- Collect the questionnaire and then spend approximately 30 to 40 minutes interviewing the worshippers regarding the reasons for their responses.
- Record the interview session.
- Take rough notes of the responses, focusing especially on descriptions of the service, and the reasons for their responses.
- Sending me the questionnaires in a stamped envelope that will be provided.

I will coordinate the schedule with you, so that we can find a day in September or October when you are available, and the church is willing to host it. Before the testing date I will send you some questions for the interview time, as well as some suggestions that could help you to learn from the participants.

Please prayerfully consider being a part of this study. Thank you for your consideration.

In Christ,

Wayne Price

Guidelines for Facilitators for Beauty and Worship

Protocol to Follow at the Site

- Contact the pastor, or the person who will be assisting you, when you arrive at the church to let him know you are there, and to find out where you will be meeting after worship.
- Attend the Sunday morning worship service.
- Convene a group of worshippers together after worship. (The pastor or an assigned assistant will direct you.)
- After the session tidy up the room. Leaving it as you found it.

During the Time with Volunteers

- Identify yourself and thank them for their willingness to be part of the survey.
- Explain that the survey is about their experience of the worship service, and that it will consist of filling out a questionnaire and a discussion time afterwards.
- Explain that all responses will be kept confidential.
- Distribute the Scan-tron sheets, and have them fill-in the name of the church.
- Distribute the questionnaire.
- After they have had a chance to look at the questionnaire explain that each line has two opposite qualities. They are to choose the response that best describes their experience of the worship service. (Using the first response of #4: Which word best describes his or her response to worship? Was it uncoordinated or coordinated? To what degree—Very much, mostly, or some of both? The letter under each word corresponds with the heading above the letter.
- Ask them to turn to the second page and direct their attention to Section F, where they are to rank the five descriptions of beauty from 1-5 with 1 being the highest. The corresponding letters on the scantron [sic] sheet will a-f with “a” corresponding with the number 1.
- Encourage them to carefully consider the distinctiveness of every question.
- Ask them if they have any questions.
- Tell them to begin the questionnaire.
- Fill out your Scan-tron, and mark it with an “F” for facilitator.
- Carefully observe to see if most people are done. When just a few remain tell them you will give them a couple of more minutes to finish up.
- As[sic] the respondents not to change the answers on their questionnaire, and then inform them that you will spend approximately 30 to 40 minutes interviewing the worshippers regarding the reasons for their responses.
- Take rough notes of the responses (using the interview log method, write the descriptive term in the left column, and any elaboration in the right column.), especially paying attention to the reasons and specific instances in the worship that illustration[sic] the reason for their response. A list of the questions is

found below.

- When the respondents have been able to adequately express themselves, or after 45 minutes have elapsed, begin to close discussion.
- Collect the questionnaires, and thank the respondents for participating.

Questions to Ask during the Interview Session

- This afternoon, if you talked to a friend on the phone, how would you describe the worship service this morning?
- Why did that (their description) especially stand out for you?
- Looking at your answers on the questionnaire, which positive response did you feel most strongly about? Why?
- Looking again at your answers on the questionnaire, which negative response did you feel most strongly about? Why?
- What is most important for you in worship?
- Do you believe you encountered God's presence this morning?
- When did you experience it and why?
- What would you have missed this morning, if it was not part of the worship service today?

Helpful Methods During the Interview

- Your main goal is to be a [sic] learning, listening and encouraging their opinions.
- Anticipate what the situation calls for.
- Try to establish some rapport.
- Practice active listening, empathizing with and clarifying what the person said.
- Patiently probe to gain more explanation, clarification, description, and evaluation.
- Be calm and reassuring.
- Try to get a variety of opinions rather than having one person dominate discussion.

APPENDIX C

Letter to the District Superintendents

Pastor Wayne Price
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May 31, 2004

Dear Susan,

Greetings in the name of our Lord. Nearly all Christians agree upon worship's central role in the life of the church. Disagreements arise when discerning what is considered "good" worship. In my dissertation project, through Asbury Seminary, I am seeking to find if there are qualities of worship that correlate with excellent worship.

I am requesting your assistance in the testing phase of my project. The dissertation topic is discerning the presence of God's beauty in relation to perceived excellence in worship. I am inviting your assistance in choosing 3 churches from your district; churches that have a worship attendance over 100 and are known for their excellence in worship. One church from each district will be asked to participate in the study. I will contact the pastor to explain the purpose and plan of the study, as well as asking for volunteers to participate in the study. The three-part testing procedure will include the following:

- Participants—all from the local church--and a research facilitator will attend the worship service.
- Following the worship service the facilitator and participants from the congregation will answer a 25-question questionnaire focusing on five attributes of worship (presentation, focus, integration of form with content, expression of God's love, and expression of God's holiness). All responses will be confidential.
- After worship the facilitator will meet with the participants for a time of debriefing to listen to the participants' thoughts about the worship service.

The results and an analysis will be shared with the pastor. One important benefit for the participating churches will be the opportunity to discover the qualities of excellence worshippers perceived in worship.

I will call you in the next two weeks. Please consider what churches you would recommend for the study. I will gladly answer any questions you have. Thank you very much for your assistance with the study. May our Lord continue to bless you.

In Christ,
Pastor Wayne Price

APPENDIX D

Means of Evaluations and Qualities of Worship

Variables	Marshall	Carson City	Corner-Stone	Lake Ann	St. Joseph	Trinity	Grand Mean	Equal Weighted Means
Presence of Beauty	4.3	4.43	4.29	4.11	4.3	4.50	4.34	4.32
Fulfilling	4.3	4.57	4.57	4.17	4.5	4.46	4.43	4.43
Inspiring	4.6	4.71	4.64	4.17	4.2	4.56	4.47	4.48
	.	.	.	.	.	.	4.41	4.41
Presentation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Coordinated	4.5	4.21	4.43	4.39	4.5	4.82	4.53	4.48
Attractive	4.5	4.57	4.00	4.22	4.4	4.64	4.41	4.39
Seamless	4.1	4.36	4.07	4.28	4.7	4.75	4.43	4.38
Skillfully Performed	4.4	4.71	4.36	4.61	4.7	4.93	4.67	4.62
Well-prepared	4.6	4.86	4.57	4.67	4.9	4.89	4.77	4.75

Coherence	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Purposeful	4.6	4.57	4.64	4.44	4.8	4.82	4.66	4.65
Theme clear	4.8	4.57	4.79	4.72	4.7	4.89	4.77	4.75
Insightful	4.8	4.57	4.64	4.50	4.4	4.82	4.64	4.62
Awareness of Christ	4.7	4.79	4.79	4.50	4.7	4.96	4.77	4.74
Presence of Scripture	4.4	4.71	4.79	4.61	4.8	4.89	4.74	4.70

Unity of Form and Content	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Appropriate Music tempo	4.4	4.36	4.14	4.22	4.3	4.46	4.33	4.31
Pace fit this particular service	4.7	4.43	4.57	4.22	4.5	4.54	4.47	4.49
Worship comp related to theme	4.8	4.64	4.29	4.22	4.7	4.64	4.54	4.55
Flow of the service	4.5	4.50	4.50	4.44	4.7	4.75	4.59	4.57
Presentation was creative	4.8	4.86	4.43	4.67	4.3	4.71	4.64	4.63

Presence of Divine Love	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Peaceful	4.4	4.36	4.36	4.28	4.6	4.78	4.50	4.46
God portrayed as caring	4.7	4.71	4.86	4.78	5.0	5.00	4.86	4.84
God portrayed as loving	4.8	4.64	4.57	4.61	5.0	4.96	4.78	4.76
Joyful	4.3	4.43	4.50	4.44	4.7	4.89	4.60	4.54
Presence of God's grace	4.7	4.64	4.71	4.61	4.6	4.89	4.73	4.69

Attributes of God-holiness	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Worshipful	4.5	4.14	4.50	4.44	4.5	4.46	4.43	4.42
Awareness of God's holiness	4.4	4.57	4.57	4.39	4.5	4.68	4.55	4.52
Presence of God's truth	4.5	4.57	4.71	4.67	4.7	4.71	4.66	4.64
Awareness of God's righteousness	4.4	4.64	4.50	4.50	4.5	4.82	4.60	4.56
Vivid attention to God's glory	4.3	4.79	4.36	4.44	4.5	4.61	4.52	4.50
	.	.	.	.	Grand	Mean.	4.581	4.582

Ratings and Demographics	Marshall	Carson City	Corner-Stone	Lake Ann	St. Joseph	Trinity	Grand Mean	Eqaul Weighted Means
Rating Beauty	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
A scenic painting	3.00	4.08	3.21	3.27	3.70	3.00	3.39	3.38
An art masterpiece	2.75	3.46	3.29	3.40	3.40	3.54	3.34	3.31
A profound truth	2.88	2.00	2.36	2.07	2.10	2.08	2.20	2.25
A glamorous or handsome person	5.00	3.62	4.43	4.60	4.30	4.46	4.36	4.40
A Christ-like person	1.38	1.69	1.79	1.67	1.50	1.85	1.68	1.65
Demographic Information	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Gender (1-female, 2-male)	1.30	1.43	1.43	1.33	1.50	1.37	1.38	1.39
Age	2.90	2.43	3.29	3.94	4.10	4.60	3.64	3.54
Highest completed grade	3.80	3.29	4.29	3.71	4.50	3.76	3.84	3.89
Christian	4.5	3.57	4.71	4.59	5.00	4.88	4.57	4.54
How often do you attend church?	1.00	1.86	1.00	1.06	1.40	1.04	1.20	1.23

APPENDIX E

Frequency of Responses

Frequencies	1	2	3	4	5	Sum of 4 and 5
Presence of Beauty	1.1		10.6	41.5	46.8	88.3
Fulfilling	1.1		5.3	42.6	51.1	93.7
Inspiring	1.1		4.3	39.4	54.3	93.7
Presentation						
Coordinated			4.3	38.3	57.4	95.7
Attractive	1.1		7.4	40.4	51.1	91.5
Seamless			7.4	41.5	51.1	92.6
Skillfully Performed			1.1	30.9	68.1	99.0
Well-prepared				23.4	76.6	100.0
Coherence						
Purposeful			3.2	27.7	69.1	96.8
Theme clear			3.2	17.0	79.8	96.8
Insightful			2.1	31.9	66.0	97.9
Awareness of Christ			1.1	21.3	77.7	99.0
Presence of Scripture		1.1	6.4	10.6	81.9	92.5
Form and Content						
Appropriate Music tempo			17.0	33.0	50.0	83.0
Pace fit this particular service		1.1	7.4	34.0	57.4	91.4
Worship comp related to theme	1.1	1.1	6.4	25.5	66.0	91.5
Flow of the service			2.1	37.2	60.6	97.8
Presentation was creative		3.2		29.8	67.0	96.8
God's Relational						
Peaceful			7.4	34.0	57.4	91.4
God portrayed as caring			2.1	9.6	88.0	97.6
God portrayed as loving			4.3	13.8	81.9	95.7
Joyful			4.3	31.9	63.8	95.7
Presence of God's grace			1.1	25.5	73.4	98.9
God's Holiness						
Worshipful		2.1	2.1	45.7	50.0	95.7
God's holiness		1.1	5.3	31.9	61.7	93.6
Presence of God's truth	1.1		2.1	25.5	71.3	96.8
God's righteousness			5.3	29.8	64.9	94.7
God's Glory	1.1	1.1	3.2	35.1	59.6	94.7

APPENDIX F

Significant Levels of the Alpha Coefficient

Beauty**.001.**

Visually Attractive
 Skillfully Performed
 Purposeful
 Clear Theme
 Insightful
 Order of Worship
 Enhanced the Flow of
 Service

.05

Seamless
 Well-prepared
 Presentation was
 creative
 Worshipful
 Awareness of God's
 Holiness
 Awareness of God's
 Righteousness

Fulfilling**.001**

Visually Attractive
 Well-prepared
 Purposeful
 Clear Theme
 Awareness of Christ
 Pace Fit This
 Worship Service
 Order of Worship
 Enhanced the Flow
 Presentation Was
 Creative
 God Portrayed as
 Loving
 Joyful
 Presence of God's Grace
 Worshipful
 Awareness of God's
 Holiness
 Presence of God's Truth
 Awareness of God's
 Righteousness
 Attention to God's
 Glory

.05

Skillfully Performed
 Presence of Scripture
 Appropriate Music
 Tempo
 Worship Components
 Were Related to Theme
 Peaceful
 God Portrayed as Caring

Inspiring**.001**

Well-prepared
 Purposeful
 Clear Theme Insightful
 Presence of Scripture
 Worship Components
 Related to Theme
 Presentation Was
 Creative
 Presence of God's Grace
 Worshipful
 Awareness of God's
 Holiness
 Awareness of God's
 Righteousness
 Attention to God's
 Glory

.05

Seamless
 Awareness of Christ
 Order of Worship
 Enhanced the Flow of
 Service

APPENDIX G

Values For Correlation and Variance Between Qualities of Worship

Qualities of Worship	Beauty			Fulfilling			Inspiring		
	R	Adjusted r-sq.	F score	r	Adjusted r-sq.	F score	r	Adjusted r-sq.	F score
Presentation									
Coordinated	0.935	0.068	1.717	0.099	-0.001	0.912	0.022	-0.01	0.045
Attractive	0.325	0.09	10.868	0.296	0.078	8.814	0.164	0.016	2.52
Seamless	0.214	0.035	4.422	0.111	0.002	1.157	0.115	0.002	1.225
Skillfully Performed	2.95	0.077	8.76	0.225	0.04	4.891	0.213	0.035	4.329
Well-prepared	0.243	0.049	5.788	0.34	0.106	12.029	0.349	0.112	12.651
Coherence									
Purposeful	0.385	0.139	15.987	0.39	0.143	16.501	0.403	0.153	17.618
Theme clear	0.439	0.184	21.999	0.292	0.075	86.5	0.332	0.1	11.254
Insightful	0.359	0.119	13.589	0.19	0.026	3.454	0.321	0.093	10.464
Awareness of Christ	0.135	0.008	1.706	0.322	0.094	10.606	0.225	0.04	4.85
Presence of Scripture	0.051	-0.008	0.242	0.214	0.035	4.4	0.274	0.065	7.361
Unity of Form and Cont.									
Appropriate Music Tempo	0.109	0.001	1.116	0.242	0.049	5.741	0.101	-0.001	0.94
Pace fit this service	0.17	0.018	2.75	0.291	0.075	8.49	0.189	0.025	3.389
Components related to theme	0.192	0.026	3.518	0.251	0.053	6.191	0.299	0.08	8.967
Flow of the service	0.342	0.107	12.175	0.276	0.066	7.603	0.266	0.06	6.904
Presentation was creative	0.241	0.048	5.67	0.382	0.136	15.675	0.408	0.158	18.199
Presence of Divine Love									
Peaceful	0.178	0.021	2.963	0.252	0.053	6.189	0.113	0.002	1.163
God portrayed as caring	0.115	0.002	1.209	0.251	0.052	6.038	0.045	-0.009	0.18
God portrayed as loving	0.054	-0.008	0.267	0.3	0.08	9.132	0.091	-0.003	0.755
Joyful	0.162	0.016	2.493	0.355	0.116	13.247	0.137	0.008	1.747
Presence of God's grace	0.198	0.029	3.769	0.492	0.234	29.444	0.311	0.087	9.734
God-holiness									
Worshipful	0.253	0.054	6.272	0.418	0.166	19.532	0.393	0.145	16.597
God's holiness	0.223	0.04	4.835	0.483	0.225	27.932	0.325	0.096	10.723
Presence of God's truth	0.1	-0.11	0.009	0.309	0.086	9.7	0.179	0.021	3
God's Righteousness	0.206	0.032	4.059	0.37	0.127	14.578	0.293	0.076	
God's Glory	0.103	0	0.992	0.38	0.135	15.552	0.327	0.097	10.884

APPENDIX H

Summaries of Each Local Church

Marshall United Methodist Church, Albion District

The worship service surveyed at Marshall UMC was a “Praise and Worship” service begun in the last two years. The service was conducted in an informal setting in a fellowship hall, with the congregation gathered around tables. The informal setting and atmosphere was described by one respondent as “comfortable: It’s OK if children scream. Children can worship with me; toys are provided. Casual wear is acceptable.” The pastor also dressed casually, as were the other worship leaders.

The pastor contacted the respondents and asked them to participate. The group was comprised of ten people, seven of whom were females. Four of the respondents were in the age range of 36-50, three were in the age range of 51-65, two were in the age range of 36-50, and one was below age 20. The one person below 20 had not yet graduated from high school, while three of the respondents had graduate degrees. Four had graduate degrees, and two had taken some college courses. Excluding the person below 20, the group average was just above an undergraduate degree.

Seven of the respondents had been Christians more than fifteen years. Two of the respondents had been Christians for eleven to fifteen years, and the person under twenty years old had been a Christian for six or more years. All of the respondents attended the church three to four times a month.

The overall satisfaction with the worship service was high with the mean scores of the evaluations being 4.3 for the presence of beauty, and fulfilling, and 4.6 for inspiring. The overall mean for the evaluations was 4.4. The overall satisfaction was also

reflected in the debriefing session with the respondents describing the worship service as “organized, came together with theme, good interaction between the congregation and leaders.”

The respondents also scored the qualities of worship, highly as well. The overall mean of the qualities was 4.54. The cumulative scores of the five categories were similar ranging from 4.42 through 4.66 (see Table H.1). The three highest means in were in the categories of coherence, unity of form and content, and relational qualities of God. These three categories were within a range of .08 of one another. The specific qualities especially rated high were: clear theme (4.8), insightful (4.8), awareness of Christ (4.7), pace fits the service (4.7), worship components related to the theme (4.8), God portrayed as loving (4.8), presence of God’s grace (4.7), and God portrayed as caring (4.7). The respondents also affirmed the following the presence of these qualities in the debriefing session with the following comments:

- “The service was tied together....There was a common thread throughout”;
- “The service was organized and came together with a theme”;
- “The interaction between the worship leaders and congregation was positive”;
- “The pastor speaks right to me”;
- “Len (the pastor) is a Christ like person with grace”;
- “God’s presence is felt when we learn of concerns that progress to

fulfillment”; and,

- “Bill (the music leader) was inspired by the Holy Spirit.”

The sample group responded very positively to the worship service both in the questionnaire and in the debriefing session. The only negative comment recorded by the

facilitator was the use of the “I-Worship” accompaniment tracks, which were perceived as “canned and shallow, because there were not people leading it.”

Table H.1. Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship at Marshall UMC

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity	God's Love	God's Holiness	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.42	4.66	4.64	4.58	4.42	4.54

n=10

The sample group also expressed the importance of a sense of belonging to the worshipping community, hearing a message that applied to life being spiritually uplifted, and experiencing the presence of God. These qualities are found in the categories of relational qualities of God, holy qualities of God, as well as coherence. The expressed satisfaction with the worship service and the acknowledgement that worship service was especially insightful, with a awareness of Christ, has a presence of God's grace and portrayed God a loving and caring shows that the worship leaders are excelling at a number of qualities the worshippers value. The satisfaction is particularly seen in the high score for the worship service being inspiring.

Relatively lower mean scores included seamless (4.1), joyful, (4.3), vivid attention to God's glory (4.3), skillfully performed (4.4), presence of Scripture, (4.4), vivid attention to God's glory (4.3), appropriate music tempo (4.4), peaceful (4.4), as well as awareness of God's holiness (4.4). The mean scores of these qualities were still high and not tremendously different from the total mean score of all the qualities of worship (4.54). During the debriefing session the respondents placed more importance on relational qualities of God rather instead of qualities of presentation, unity of form and

worship, and qualities of God's holiness. Although they affirmed a strong perception of the awareness of Christ, they seemed to place more emphasis on the relational loving presence of Christ rather than his holy presence. Thus, the higher rated relational qualities of the worship leaders and congregation were more important than the lower rated presentation qualities being seamless and skillfully performed.

Trinity United Methodist Church, Lansing

The worship service at Trinity United Methodist Church was a "traditional" worship service with hymns and a Welcome/Prayers/Message/Benediction structure. The twenty-eight respondents were members of a Sunday school class who were asked by the Pastor of Discipleship to participate in the study. Seventeen women and eleven men participated in the study. Nearly all the respondents were above 50 years of age. Sixteen of the respondents were over 65 years old, eight being between 51 and 65 years old, one between 36 and 50 years of age. Three persons did not specify their age.

Overall the group of respondents were well educated. The mean for level of education was 3.76, showing that the group averaged a little under an undergraduate degree. The respondents had been Christians for many years, with twenty-two respondents answering they had been so for more than fifteen years. Three of the respondents were Christians for between eleven and fifteen years. Three individuals did not respond to the question.

Twenty-four of the twenty-five people who responded to the question reported attending church three or four times a month. The remaining person recorded attending once or twice a month.

The respondents' average scores for the dependent variable of beauty (4.56) was

above the average for all the respondents of the study (4.33). This was also the case for worship evaluated as fulfilling (4.46, 4.43). The Trinity UMC respondents' mean for the quality inspiring (4.4) was slightly lower than the mean for all respondents (4.47).

The mean for the qualities of worship (4.77) was higher than the mean for the respondents from all the churches (4.61). Of the qualities of beauty, the lowest mean was 4.46 for appropriate music tempo and worshipful. The highest mean for the qualities of worship was 5.0 for God portrayed as caring. The 5.0 mean occurred in three instances, out of 150 possible occurrences from all churches. Typically the responses of the Trinity UMC sample group were higher than the other churches, as reflected by the higher cumulative mean for the qualities of worship.

The respondents especially responded favorably to the categories of presentation (4.8), coherence (4.88), and the relational (4.9) (see Table 4.2). The categories of coherence and relational qualities of God are particularly noteworthy because they were very close to being perfect scores. Perceived positive qualities within those specific categories included clarity of theme (4.89), awareness of Christ (4.96), presence of Scripture (4.89), coherence and peaceful (4.78), God portrayed as caring (5.0), God portrayed as loving (4.89), joyful (4.89), attention to God's grace (4.9).

The means for all other categories, with the exception of appropriate tempo of music and worshipful, were above 4.5. Thus, the positive qualities of nearly all categories were rated as being mostly or very much present. The categories most strongly perceived by the respondents included coordinated (4.8), seamless (4.75), skillfully performed (4.93), well-prepared (4.89), worship components were related to the theme (4.75), presence of God's truth (4.71), and awareness of God's righteousness (4.82).

Table H.2. Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship at Trinity UMC, Lansing

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity	God's Love	God's Holiness	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.8	4.88	4.59	4.9	4.7	4.77

n=29

In addition to the perception of these qualities as expressed in the questionnaire, the respondents expressed the same qualities in the debriefing session. Their comments included

- “Worship was wonderful, excellent, well thought out, sincere, and awesome”;
- “God is the focus of the service”;
- “There were no negatives in regards to the worship service”;
- “The music was thematically coordinated with the sermon”;
- “The minister follows the leading of the Holy Spirit”;
- “It was a good sermon to lead people from being secular to religious”; and,
- “The whole service builds from Scripture.”

The high mean scores the questionnaire and the positive responses in the debriefing session show a strong perception of the positive qualities in the worship service. The highest scores also indicate the respondents definitely perceived a focus on God, especially on the relational loving presence of God through the message, the pastor, and other worship leaders. The message and theme of the service were particularly well communicated, coordinated, and embodied by the worship leaders. In turn the respondents experienced worship as well thought out, well prepared, and purposeful. The

intentionality of the worship leaders was experience in their planning of the service and the enacting of worship.

The positive qualities of worship were perceived as being present, and the worship was perceived as being excellent, wonderful, and inspiring. The respondents were affected in a positive way by the worship service and the worship leaders.

The positive independent qualities were perceived as being present, and the worship was perceived as being “excellent,” “wonderful,” and inspiring. The respondents were affected in a positive way by the worship service and the worship leaders.

Carson City United Methodist Church

Carson City UMC is located in the Central District of the Western Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church. The worship service that the respondents attended was contemporary. The group of respondents consisted of fourteen people, most of whom were in a small group together. The mean age of the respondents at Carson City was the lowest of all the sample groups (2.42), signifying an average age in the low 30s. One respondent was below 20 years of age, seven respondents were between 21 and 35 years of age, five respondents were between 36-50 years of age, and one respondent was between 51-65 years of age.

The sample group was fairly well educated with a mean of 3.29. The respondent under 20 had not completed high school, while two respondents had high school diplomas. Five respondents had taken some college courses, and four had an undergraduate degree. Two of the sample group had graduate degrees.

Among the churches the group had the lowest mean for length of time being a Christian (3.57). Five respondents reported they had been Christians for more than fifteen

years. Three respondents chose the range of eleven to fifteen years to describe how long they had been Christians while five for selected the range of six to ten years. Three respondents claimed to have been a Christian in the range of three to five years; the one person under 20 years of age, between one and two years. Out of the fourteen respondents, eleven attended church three to four times a month; the remaining three were visitors.

The respondents judged worship to be especially fulfilling (4.57) and inspiring (4.71), with the mean of beauty being slightly lower (4.43). The means for the categories of the qualities fell within the range of the means of the evaluations of worship (4.43-4.71). The respondents' feedback was consistent between the categories with only a .1 difference between the highest and lowest means of the categories (see Table H.3).

Table H.3. Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship at Carson City UMC

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity	God's Love	God's Holiness	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.53	4.62	4.57	4.54	4.52	4.56
n=14						

The qualities with the highest mean scores included creative presentation (4.86), vivid attention to God's glory (4.79), awareness of Christ (4.79), God portrayed as caring (4.71), presence of Scripture (4.71), skillfully performed (4.71), God portrayed as loving (4.64), awareness of God's righteousness (4.64), attractive (4.57), intentional (4.57), clarity of theme (4.57), insightful (4.57), awareness of God's holiness (4.57), and presence of God's truth (4.57). The lower means for the qualities in worship included:

worshipful (4.14), coordinated (4.21), appropriate music tempo (4.36), and peaceful (4.36).

During the debriefing session, the respondents also affirmed the inspiration in the worship service, the quality of music, and renewing quality of worship:

- “It was a great service[; it was] about growing in God”;
- “The people are Christ-like, which is inspiring to me because I am going through a hard time;
- “That person is sharing God’s light to the world”;
- “The worship helped me focus on God”;
- “I am impressed with the way Pastor Ken makes the sermon flow”;
- “The worship service was very creative”;
- “I experienced God’s presence through the songs”; and,
- “The music could have fit better with the theme.”

Overall, the respondents indicated the presence of positive qualities in worship, particularly those within the categories of relational loving qualities of God, holy qualities of God, and coherence. They evaluated the worship service to be creatively put together around a clear theme, with insight to encourage them and to help them understand discipleship. The respondents further perceived (a) God to be portrayed as loving and caring and (b) God’s grace being present, (c) an awareness of God’s holiness, truth, righteousness, and glory, and (d) a strong awareness of Christ and Scripture in the service.

Cornerstone United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids

Cornerstone UMC was started sixteen years ago as a new church start and has

grown in worship attendance to one thousand. Worship is contemporary, with singers and a band in front, utilizing a praise-and-worship style format. Worship themes are organized around series, and the pastor often uses themes from popular culture as a bridge to connect with the unchurched.

The sample group at Cornerstone UMC was taken mostly from a small group, whom the pastor contacted. Eight of the fourteen respondents were female, and six were male. According to what the respondents reported, they were all between 36-65 years old, with ten between 36-50 years old, and four between 51-65. The group was well educated with the average education being just above an undergraduate degree. Three of the participants had completed some college courses, six had an undergraduate degree, and five had a graduate degree.

Twelve of the respondents had been Christians for more than fifteen years, while two of the respondents had been Christians for six to ten years. All of the respondents reported attending worship three-four times a month.

In evaluating worship, the sample group strongly perceived the worship service as fulfilling (4.57) and inspiring (4.64). The perception of the worship service as beautiful was slightly lower (4.3). Overall, the mean for the evaluation of worship was 4.5.

The means for the categories of the qualities of worship ranged from 4.29 for presentation to 4.73 for coherence (see Table H.4). The means for other variables were 4.39 for unity of form and content, 4.35, for holy qualities of God, and 4.6 for the relational love qualities of God. The mean for all of the qualities of worship was 4.53. The respondents perceived a strong awareness of a theme and Scripture and did not as strongly perceive positive qualities in the presentation of the worship service.

Nonetheless, all means for the categories of qualities of worship were high.

Table H.4. Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship at Cornerstone UMC, Grand Rapids

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity	God's Love	God's Holiness	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.29	4.73	4.39	4.6	4.36	4.53

n=14

The respondents strongly perceived many of the positive qualities in the worship service. These qualities included God's perceived as caring (4.86), clarity of theme, awareness of Christ, presence of Scripture (all 4.79), presence of God's grace (4.71), purposeful, insightful (both 4.64), God's perceived as loving, God's holy presence (both 4.57), joyful and worshipful (both 4.5). The higher means of qualities of beauty, clarity of theme, awareness of Christ, and the presence of Scripture are also reflected in the mean for their category coherence. Another instance of the means of the categories and qualities both being high is the category of the relational loving qualities of God. where the mean of the category is boosted by the means of the qualities God perceived as caring, God perceived as loving, and presence of God's grace.

Some of the lower means for the qualities of worship at Cornerstone included attractiveness (4.0), seamless (4.07), appropriate tempo of music (4.14), and worship components related to the theme (4.29). Some of the reasons for the lower means were communicated in the debriefing session where one respondent commented, "Beauty was not achieved in the service because the altar was crowded with technical, 'unbeautiful things,' such as A/V equipment." The same person also commented that she would like

to see more banners and a more traditional church look.

Overall the comments in the debriefing session were positive with an emphasis on the community of the congregation, the creativity, and the pastor's accepting manner.

The comments included

- “Enjoyable, I liked the words about community, and how we work together”;
 - “Impressive, the minister spoke from his heart”;
 - “The variety of activities kept me interested”;
 - “The teaching was good. I felt that I learned and will remember it through the week”;
 - “I appreciate the non-judgmental words of the minister that tells he is accepting of all”;
 - “The service strove to reach all senses for all types of learners”;
 - “All respondents have great admiration for the pastor”;
 - “It is important to have a fulfilling and inspiring experience”;
 - “Attitudes of the worshippers are the most important thing for worship”;
 - “Feelings about the music affect how they encounter Christ in worship”;
 - “Feeling accepted at the church is important, and the minister's choice of dress and the variety of teaching modes help them feel accepted”;
 - “Many people expressed that they felt Christ's presence and that the worship touched their souls”;
- and,
- “The sermon was heartfelt.”

The respondents expressed appreciation for the substance, inspiration, God-centered focus of the worship service and the Christ-like character of the worship leaders.

The high means of such qualities as inspiration, the clarity of theme, and the purposefulness of the worship service indicated the respondents' perceived substance in the worship service. This perceived substance is further affirmed by comments during the debriefing session, including the comment that worship would stay with them through the week.

The qualities of God's love and care were also strongly experienced by the respondents. The mention of the character of the pastor and the message in worship focusing on God's grace indicate the emphasis on God's love. In addition, the loving spirit and community of the congregation, indicated that the respondents found qualities important to them in the worship service and the church. Overall the respondents strongly experienced God's inspiring presence in the worship service.

First UMC of Saint Joseph, Kalamazoo

FUMC of Saint Joseph's worship is a blended service. It mixes contemporary music with an Opening/Prayers/Offering/Sermon/Benediction format. The group of respondents was asked to participate by the pastor.

The sample group was comprised of eleven people, six females and five males. The respondents ranged from 36 years old to over 65 years old. The respondents were evenly spread out over the two age ranges of 36-50 years and 51-65 years. Four of the respondents were over 65. One respondent refused to submit any other information besides her gender.

The group was also well educated with a mean of 4.5, signifying that the average education level was between an undergraduate degree and graduate degree. All respondents in the group had been Christians for more than fifteen years, and all, except

for the one visitor, attended church three to four times a month.

The means for the evaluation of worship reflect the respondents judging worship as being especially fulfilling (4.55), as well as beautiful (4.27), and inspiring (4.18). The total mean for all of the evaluations was 4.33.

Among the categories of the qualities of worship, the highest mean was in the category of the relational loving qualities of God (4.80), while the lowest score was in the area of unity of form and content (4.49) (see Table H.5). The God's relational-love was the highest of all the churches participating in the study, and it indicated the strong emphasis on God's love in the church.

Table H.5. Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship at First UMC Saint Joseph, Kalamazoo District

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity	God's Love	God's Holiness	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.66	4.69	4.49	4.80	4.55	4.64

n=11

The highest means for the specific qualities in worship included God portrayed as caring, God portrayed as loving (both 5.0), well-prepared (4.9), purposeful and presence of Scripture (both 4.82), seamless, skillfully performed, clarity of theme, awareness of Christ, worship components related to theme, order of worship enhanced the flow, joyful, presence of God's truth (all 4.73), peaceful and presence of God's grace (4.64), coordinated, worshipful, and awareness of God's holiness (all 4.55). The means of all qualities within the category of the relational loving qualities of God were above 4.5. In addition, the high means for such qualities as purposeful, the presence of Scripture,

clarity of theme, awareness of Christ all contributed to the high mean for the overall category of Coherence.

Only a few of the means were below 4.3. These included appropriate music tempo and creativity (4.27) as well as attractiveness (4.36). An overview of the means for the qualities in worship indicate that the participants perceived the qualities to be mostly present in the worship service.

In the debriefing session, the respondents expressed their appreciation for the worship service. Their comments included

- “The handbell and organ music was especially inspirational”;
- “The sermon was meaningful”;
- “The service was potentially life changing about giving all”;
- “The Scripture, sermon, and last hymn held the theme, which kept the theme unified”;
- “Many commented that it was skillfully performed”;
- “The presentation was especially good”;
- “The sermon was stimulating”;
- “Felt God’s presence through the desire of the leaders to bring glory to God”;
- and,
- “There is a high level of excellence in the sermon and the music.”

In addition to indicating satisfaction with worship in the means of the questionnaires, the respondents also verbally expressed satisfaction with the worship service. Their praise in the debriefing session centered on the character of the worship leaders, the excellence of presentation, and the substance of the worship. The perfect

scores for God portrayed as loving and caring highlighted the respondents' perception of the message of God's love. A longtime member of the congregation praised the pastor's kindness, concern, and love for the congregation, as well as his devotion to God. The leaders' devotion to God was also commented on in the debriefing session where the respondents experienced the leaders as people who wanted to bring glory to God.

The category of presentation was also especially noted in the debriefing session and was further affirmed by the high means for the qualities, indicating that the worship service was well prepared, skillfully performed, and coordinated. All areas of worship leadership seemed to be commended for their excellence.

The intention of the worship leaders focus on God was also perceived by the respondents who discerned purposeful qualities that were listed in various categories. The respondents mentioned a strong presence of the portrayal of God as loving and caring, an awareness of God's truth, and holiness as well as an awareness of Christ, and the presence of Scripture. The respondent's input indicated that the worship leaders successfully focused on the centrality of God and Christ, as well as embodying the message of his love.

Lake Ann United Methodist Church, Grand Traverse

Lake Ann United Methodist Church has grown substantially in the fourteen years of the current pastor's tenure. They moved from their former building to a new multipurpose facility approximately three years ago. Their worship style changed from traditional to blended to contemporary in the last number of years. The sample group was contacted by the pastor's wife and consisted of a small group and other members of the church.

The group consisted of eighteen participants, twelve of them being female and six of them being male. The ages of the respondents ranged from those in the 21-35 years old range to those over 65 years old. They were dispersed in the following manner: one person in the 21-35 age range, three persons in the 36-50 age range, nine persons in the 51-65 age range, and four persons in the over 65 years old age range. One respondent did not fill out any of the information besides gender.

The mean for the educational level of the respondents was fairly high (3.70), with two persons having a high school education, four persons having taken some college courses, eight persons with undergraduate degrees, and three persons with graduate degrees. The length of time the respondents had been Christian ranged from one person who had been a Christian one to two years to fourteen persons who had been Christians for more than fifteen years. One other respondent recorded having been a Christian between six and ten years, while the remaining respondent recorded having been Christian between eleven and fifteen years. All the respondents attended worship three to four times a month, with the exception of one respondent who attended one to two times a month.

The mean for the respondents' responses to the presence of the evaluation of worship was the lowest of all the groups: beauty (4.11), fulfilling (4.17), and inspiring (4.17) with the total mean of the independent variables being 4.15. The debriefing session shed some light on the reasons for the lower means.

The means for the qualities of worship were also lower than the average means for all of the churches in the study. Some of the respondents in this sample group were the only ones out of the whole study to give "one" or "two" ratings to whether they

perceived the positive qualities in worship. The means for the categories were coherence (4.56), relational loving qualities of God (4.54), qualities of God's holiness (4.47), presentation (4.43), and unity of form and content (4.36), with the overall mean being 4.47.

Table H.6. Means For the Categories of the Qualities of Worship at Lake Ann UMC, Grand Traverse District

Category	Presentation	Coherence	Unity	God's Love	God's Holiness	Total Mean Score
Mean	4.43	4.56	4.36	4.54	4.47	4.77

n=18

Specific qualities perceived to be especially present by the respondents included God portrayed as caring (4.78), clarity of theme (4.72), creative, awareness of God's truth (both 4.67), presence of Scripture, God portrayed as loving, presence of God's grace (each 4.61), and insightful, awareness of Christ, awareness of God's righteousness (each 4.5). The higher means were especially found in the categories of relational loving qualities of God and coherence, indicating a clarity of theme as well as (a) a scriptural and Christ-centered worship service and (b) the perception of God as a caring and loving deity.

The lowest means of the positive qualities in worship included attractiveness and appropriate music tempo, worship components were related to the theme, order of worship enhanced the flow of the service (4.22), and seamless and peaceful (4.28). Reasons for the lower mean scores might be found in some of the respondents' comments, such as, "We're old-fashioned types"; "We love the old hymns"; "Some of

the praise songs seem to drag, repeating the same chorus a number of times”; and, “It puts it into perspective that what’s not necessarily meaningful to us can very important to others.” The range of the responses for the categories of music tempo, worship components, and order of worship ranged from 2 to 5, reflecting a diversity of interpretation and appreciation of these qualities.

The debriefing session yielded much feedback about the perceptions of the worship service, in addition to being a forum for sharing different viewpoints about worship. Comments of the respondents included

- “It was fantastic”;
- “It pricked my conscience”;
- “The flow was good and it was well conducted”;
- “It was coordinated”;
- “I realize we have to change our perspectives. Everything in worship does not have to suit me.... It’s important to recognize we all see God in different ways”;
- “The worship service was well prepared and purposeful”;
- “I don’t think an uncoordinated service would impede anyone from worshipping God”;
- “I’m a perfectionist, and I thought there was a [distinct] presence of God’s truth, an awareness of God’s presence, and that God was portrayed as caring”;
- “Tying Yertle the Turtle to Daniel was very creative.... It’s like Dr. Seuss read the book of Daniel”;
- “The space was visually not pretty. I’m visual, and lack of visual beauty is my stumbling block. I grew up Catholic”;

- “We did not speak about how God was unique. We should have taken it back to Jesus and humility”;
- “In the last song and music, I was touched by God’s presence”;
- “It is important for me to connect with other people”;
- “The message is important to me. I’m always looking for where God is speaking to me”; and,
- “I was glad for the spirit, enthusiasm, and participation this morning.”

Incongruity in the responses to the questionnaire and the varied comments in the debriefing session indicate the diversity in the views of the respondents. Some of the sample group noted that they did not like the particular worship setting or the style of music, but that others found it meaningful. The facilitator noted the variety of backgrounds of the respondents, ranging from former Roman Catholic to former Baptist. The former Roman Catholic respondent lamented the absence of stained glass, noting she had to close her eyes to feel worshipful. The Baptist respondent believed otherwise and expressed an indifference to the setting. She also expressed concern that a worship service too structured or “well-orchestrated” might border on being overly programmed so that it would be more human driven instead of God driven. The diversity of perception and evaluation was tempered by an open, loving spirit that recognized other people were being blessed by the type of worship. In addition to the loving spirit among the respondents, various members of the church expressed their appreciation for the pastor with gratitude for his dedication to God and his loving spirit. Even though the respondents differed, they still strongly perceived the presence of God’s grace in worship (4.61).

Although disagreeing about the pace of the worship service or the style of songs, they agreed that the worship service had a strong presence of Scripture, an awareness of Christ, God's truth, and God's righteousness. In addition, they believed it was creative and insightful. The respondents placed importance on hearing God's word and being open to how God speaks through the church. Though the mean of the dependent variables were lower than other churches, the respondents experienced the worship service as fantastic and well conducted, as well as experiencing God's presence.

APPENDIX I

Letter to the Pastors

Pastor Wayne Price

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September 16, 2004

Dear Bill,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior. It was good to talk with you the other day. I hope all went well for you as you kicked off the fall programming at Trinity.

I am currently in the testing phase of my doctoral dissertation through Asbury Seminary in Kentucky, in the area of Beauty and Worship. Your church has been recommended for the study by Benton as a church that excels in worship.

This study's purpose is to discover if there is a correlation between the attributes of beauty and the worshippers' satisfaction with the worship service. As I began my research on this topic, I was struck by the potential of God's beauty to invigorate worship. The premise of the study is that God is the first cause of beauty. If God is the first cause of beauty then beautiful worship will honor God and convey God's transcendence and imminence through the beauty.

I would like your church to be one of the six churches in the Western Michigan Annual Conference to participate in the study. The evaluation of beauty in worship is based responses in a questionnaire, and their oral remarks following the questionnaire. The questionnaire measures worship as a whole entity, rather than the particular parts such as the choir, sermon, or prayers. All of the individual responses will be kept confidential.

Participation in the study will involve (1) a lay facilitator, from another UM church from outside of your community, who will attend a Sunday morning worship service, and evaluate it; (2) after the service the facilitator will then meet with a volunteers from your church, and administer the questionnaire. This will be done after the worship service and will take about 45 minutes to an hour. Food will be provided if the time after the worship is during the lunch hour.

An analysis will be shared with you and whomever you think would benefit from the findings. I will also be willing to meet with you and others to review the results. It will be an excellent opportunity to discover how your worship of our Lord is blessing your congregation, as well as finding some areas regarding beauty your church may consider

as part of your ongoing efforts to improve worship.

If you agree to participate I will need the following from you or someone in your church:

- Ask for a group of volunteers to attend worship on the chosen Sunday and then spend approximately an hour filling out a questionnaire and discussing the worship service.
- In terms of the number of volunteers: statistically more volunteers will result in better reliability in the study. I would hope for at least 15 volunteers, but 10 would be acceptable.
- One way to help recruit the volunteers is to ask one person to oversee the contacting of the volunteers ahead of time, as well as helping to organize them on Sunday morning. The organizer would receive a Christian gift from me.
- Set up a questionnaire room with sufficient chairs for the volunteers.
- Before worship, have someone show the facilitator where the room is.
- Not to bring attention to the facilitator during worship.

I am very excited about the potential of this study to benefit your church. It is evaluating worship in a different manner than most evaluations, examining the whole of the service, instead of individual components. This study uses a new approach of looking for attributes of Godly beauty in the worship service. I believe it will help you as you look at the overall design of the worship you offer to our Lord. Please give prayerful consideration to being part of this study.

In Christ,

Wayne Price

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