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mer went out to sow his seed. As we was scatterin
some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate
fell on rocky places, where it did not have much s
g up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But whe
ame up, the plants were scorched, and they witi

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For any questions, subscription, and
articles please contact:

Tel. 404-687-4538

E-mail: huhp@ctsnet.edu

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COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Korean American Ministries
701 S. Columbia Dr.
P.O. Box 520
Decatur, Georgia 30031
www.webkam.org

**Congregational Participation in Worship:
A Study of the Korean Praise and Worship Movement in the 1980s
As a Model for Inspiring Active Participation**

Ph.D. Dissertation Summary by Myoungho Yang
Graduate Division of Religion
Drew Theological School, May 2009

In the late 1980s, the Praise and Worship movement swept over and permeated the community of Korean Protestant churches, influencing profoundly worship of the Korean churches. At present, regardless of the denomination, most Korean churches offer worship services characterized by the congregation's diverse, passionate, and active participation on Sundays as well as during the week. The key to this transformation of the worship experience is the close connection between the socio-cultural context of the Korean congregation and the characteristics of the Praise and Worship movement. The primary concern of this dissertation is the interpretation of the social, structural, textual, and musical characteristics of the Praise and Worship in Korea as a significant model of active congregational participation in worship.

This dissertation mainly focuses on the period of the 1980s in its study. For an analysis of socio-cultural context, the primary historical documents are examined. For the study of the shaping of the Korean Praise and Worship service, two primary elements of congregational singing and praying are traced. From a comparative study of American and Korean Praise and Worship, the distinctiveness of the Korean Praise and Worship service is emphasized. For the textual and musical study, twenty-five favorite songs of the Korean Praise and Worship¹⁹ have been carefully analyzed along with Korean and Western popular music. The influence of Korean Praise and Worship on the perception and practice of worship of the Korean churches is also discussed. In this article, structural, textual, and musical analyses of the Korean Praise and Worship service are discussed.

¹⁹ This list was prepared with Stephen Hah, who has led *All Nations Worship and Praise Ministries* since 1987, from the first song book and three recordings produced by *All Nations Worship and Praise Ministries* in 1988 and 1995. *All Nations Worship and Praise Ministries* still frequently print music booklets and recordings.

Structural Analysis of the Korean Praise and Worship Services

The shape of its worship service, however, developed from prayer meetings of the Korean Church that was a staple of spirituality for Korean Christians. Since the early days of Korean Christianity, various prayer meetings such as the Dawn Prayer meetings and the Friday Night Vigil Prayer meetings have been held. The Friday Night Vigil Prayer meetings mainly consisted of three elements: congregational singing, congregational praying, and sermon.

From the earliest days of the history of the Korean people, singing has played an important role in their life. Not only in the setting of religious rituals, but also in most occasions of life Koreans sing. For Koreans, singing worked as a vehicle of common expression in their times of joy and sorrow in the history of the nation and of relieving their *Han*²⁰ and of mollifying their grief. Events or TV programs designed with Koreans' fondness for singing have flourished in Korean culture.²¹ Business also proved that Koreans are singing people.²² For Koreans, singing is power.

In the worship of the Korean Presbyterian Church in the 1980s, however, the congregation was not fully satisfied with singing. According to research done in 1982, Korean congregations wanted a more passionate singing of hymns and wished that the praying of the congregation should be encouraged and incorporated in worship services for renewal of

²⁰ According to Andrew Sung Park, Han is defined as "the collapsed pain of the heart due to psychosomatic, interpersonal, social, political, economic, and cultural oppression and repression." It comes when one's desire or will is frustrated. It is caused because one does not relieve things outwardly but accumulates them inwardly without solving them actively through behavior when one experiences something unfair or unjust. It controls way of thinking, emotion, and behavior of victims of Han. *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 16-17.

²¹ In 1980, KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) started an amateur singing contest program, *National Singing Contest* which became one of the favorite programs and continues still today after twenty-eight years of performance. In 1993, it also began to air a weekly music program, *Open Concert*. The title implies that the audience is welcomed and encouraged to join in singing with singers to an accompaniment of a forty-two piece orchestra. Even today, more than ten thousand people of all ages are admitted to this program every week. Keunjoo Kang, "The Heat of *Open Concert*," *Weekly Magazine Newsmaker* 148 (Nov., 1995): 68-71.

²² The *Singing Room* business is flourishing even in the small villages in the countryside.

worship.²³ In the Korean Praise and Worship service in the 1980s, about one fourth of worship time was given to congregational singing and praying. In singing, the entire congregation sang, which was a characteristic of the Praise and Worship service of Koreans comparing to that of Americans.²⁴ Singing was an important element of the prayer meeting in a spiritual sense, and in the everyday life of Koreans, who were a singing people in a cultural sense. In its structure of worship, the Korean Praise and Worship movement fully incorporated this spiritual and cultural importance of congregational singing for Koreans, bringing a passionate participation in worship.

Since the early days of Korean Christianity, fervent and long prayer in a loud voice has been shaped as a typical tradition of prayer. Prayer by the entire congregation was an important element of worship service. As times passed, fervent praying and passionate singing continued as a staple of prayer meetings and became a hallmark of Korean Christians while those elements were diminished in worship services. The congregation's expression through praying and singing became lessened in worship while the congregation wanted prayer by the entire congregation to be included in the worship services.²⁵ In the Korean Praise and Worship service, praying by the whole congregation was emphasized and practiced. The worshippers of the Korean Praise and Worship could respond with an active participation in their worship when they were provided with singing and praying to their heart's content, which were two major supports for the spirituality of Korean Christians.

Since worship was understood as a flow from gathering to sending, songs were selected in accordance with this flow of worship. While a bulletin was not prepared and the worship order was not displayed, the shape of the Praise and Worship service can be defined clearly as follows: *Gathering, Praise, Word, Response, and Sending*, which is similar to the shape of the

²³ Institute of Contemporary Society, *Research on Growth and Aspect of Faith in Korean Culture* (Sungnam, Korea: Institute of Contemporary Society, 1982), 108.

²⁴ For this analysis, three video tapes were examined. The first one, *Lift Him Up*, was recorded live by *Hosanna Integrity* in 1992. Ron Kenoly was a worship leader. The second one, *God With Us*, was also filmed live by *Hosanna Integrity* in 1993. Don Moen led this worship service with a one thousand member choir and a seventy-piece orchestra. The third video tape was a live recording of *Duranno Worship and Praise* in Seoul in 1993.

²⁵ Institute of Contemporary Society, *Research on Growth and Aspect of Faith in Korean Culture*, 67.

Presbyterian Church worship of the era. Dohwa Huh defines the shape of worship of the Korean Presbyterian Church, in general, as follows: *Gathering, Word, Response, and Sending*.²⁶ In Praise and Worship service, *Praise* and *Response* were emphasized while *Word* was emphasized more in the traditional worship service.

Korean Praise and Worship movement began in 1972 when ten college students began a prayer meeting at missionary David E. Ross' house in Seoul.²⁷ The structural style of this meeting was the same as a typical Korean Friday night prayer meeting. Later, this meeting was transformed to a form of worship. They named it *Tuesday Praise Gathering*, which still continues today. Its influence, however, was not significant in those days because the time was not ripe for either the church leadership or the ordinary Christians to accept this movement. Fewer than ten years later, the Korean Praise and Worship experienced explosive responses when *Duranno Worship and Praise* emerged in 1987.

Textual Analysis of Songs of the Praise and Worship in Korea

Texts of songs sung in the Korean Praise and Worship service inspired the remarkable growth of the Praise and Worship movement in Korea, giving rise to passionate participation of the congregation. Simple lyrics made it easy for people to learn and memorize these songs. That a single theme was emphasized in one song helped the congregation to deeply contemplate its message and apply it to their lives.²⁸ For example, *Worthy, You are Worthy* by Don Moen sings of the worthiness of a sovereign God. *Hiding Place* by Jo Ann Cate focuses on God who is a hiding place. However, this method of repetition has been often criticized that singing over and over again on one attribute of God misses other attributes.²⁹ If we analyze one single song, we may miss God's wrath while singing God's love repeatedly. In the Praise and Worship service, however, various themes are dealt as a whole as the worship service progresses.

²⁶ Dohwa Huh, *History of Worship of the Korean Church* (Seoul: Korea Expository Preaching Institute Press, 2003), 241.

²⁷ http://www.ywamkorea.org/?url=ywam_history (accessed November 12, 2008)

²⁸ John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997), 39.

²⁹ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 89-90.

In the Praise and Worship services in Korea, the traditional method of antiphonal singing was incorporated. For example, some parts of the song *The Lord has Displayed His Glory* by Dave Fellingham were sung antiphonally by groups of men and women:

The Lord has displayed His glory
The Kingdom is coming in power
The Spirit has come, bringing life from the dead
How excellent is our God.
(Men) Hallelujah let Your Kingdom come,
(Women) Let the blind see, let the deaf hear,
(Men) Hallelujah let Your Kingdom come,
(Women) Let the lame men leap like a deer,
(Together) Jesus, we acclaim You, Lord of all creation
Bringing Your Kingdom to us now³⁰

Men begin first, proclaiming “Let Your Kingdom come!” While affirming what men proclaimed, women shout the result of the men’s proclamation in their responsive singing “Let the blind see! Let the deaf hear!” with the hope and assurance of physical or spiritual healing and revival. As both separated parts come together in unison, the congregation reaches its zenith, with the entire congregation shout singing, “Jesus, we acclaim You, Lord of all creation!” Through this antiphonal singing, two parts of the congregation join together and develop a sense of unity, increasing an active congregational participation in worship.

In terms of language, Praise and Worship songs allowed the congregation to express their heart-felt intimate relationship with God. The songs did so by using first person singular pronouns and by incorporating a literary style of direct speaking to God. Singing a song in this style could easily create an atmosphere of intimacy and of nearness to God where a sense of transcendence, fear, or remoteness might be more predominant. The sense of intimacy with God could easily stir up active congregational participation in worship. This tendency, however, was often criticized as an indication of a preoccupation with the individual and a lack of attention to

³⁰ Copyright ©1986 *Thankyou Music*.

God and the community.³¹ It is true that songs featuring “I,” “my,” or “me” represent a large portion of the repertoire of the Praise and Worship service. This tendency, however, also can be found in the Korean Hymnal and in the Psalms. Out of the total of 558 hymns in the Hymnal, 235 hymns use the first person singular pronouns, constituting 42% of the Hymnal. Eighty-one hymns adopt the first person plural pronouns, which constitutes 15% of the total hymns. Seven hymns use both pronouns interchangeably.

The Psalms, which have always been considered as a valuable resource of Christian worship, is also full of “I” language. Among the total 150 individual psalms in the Psalms, ninety-four (63%) adopt words such as “I,” “my,” or “me.” In Psalm 142, “I” language is used thirty times in a total of seven verses. Psalm 23, which might be the most favorite psalm, uses “I” language seventeen times in a total of six verses.

On the other hand, forty-one fall into the category of “we” Psalms (27%). Eighteen use both singular and plural forms of the first person pronoun. Those Psalms also use “I” words and “we” words interchangeably. The Psalm 118 begins with “I” words, stating “In *my* anguish, *I* cried to the Lord... The Lord is *my* strength and *my* song... *I* will give you thanks...” Then, it continues, “This is the day the Lord has made; let *us* rejoice and be glad in it... O Lord, save *us*; O Lord, grant *us* success...” It ends, saying, “You are *my* God, and *I* will give you thanks; you are *my* God, and *I* will exalt you.”³² In this psalm, my distress is considered as our distress and my prayer becomes our prayer.³³ From this feature of the Psalms, we can infer that whether we use the first person singular or plural pronouns is not an issue in congregational praising, petitioning, or confessing to God. My identity (of “I”) can be found among the people (of “we.”) A sense of community cannot be established without being conscious of myself. Furthermore, for Koreans who use “my” and “our” interchangeably, it cannot be an issue. When Koreans say “our mother,” it customarily means “my mother” not mother of you and me unless it is used

³¹ Marva J. Dawn, in her book, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (107), argues that contemporary worship practices are influenced by “the self-centered bent of the modern world,” calling it “narcissism in Contemporary Society and Worship.”

³² Emphasis is mine.

³³ Psalms 103 and 118 fall in this category.

between brothers or sisters. Koreans prefer to use the first person plural pronouns even in structures where Americans use the first person singular pronouns.

That the lyrics of songs use “we” words does not necessarily improve a sense of community, which is needed in our worship. In the same way, adopting “I” words does not ignore a sense of community.³⁴ Psalm 119 holds 295 “I” words without any “we” words. However, the meaning of this psalm cannot be limited to personal or individual psalm, rather its message is applied to all people. When an individual “I” is gathered and is valued, a community of “we” could be established firmly.³⁵ This could be one of the reasons why the Psalms prefer to use “I” words rather than “we” words and allow the interchangeable use of “I” and “we” words.

In terms of theme, Praise and Worship drew Korean congregation’s attention. Unlike the Korean Hymnal, Praise and Worship songs incorporating theme of praising God’s attributes and works represent a considerable portion of repertoire as Kwanjik Lee insists that the Praise and Worship songs complement the limitedness of songs of worship and praise in the current Korean Hymnal.³⁶ The message, which the congregation could draw from the lyrics of the songs, was what the congregation really needed to live through times of difficulties. Proclaiming who God is and what God has done for him/her was enough to bring the congregation comfort, healing, strength, power, and hope. When they praise God as the Almighty God, they not only are singing the God is almighty, but also are thinking their circumstances to be committed to God who is almighty. The Psalms and Christians often cry out wondering whether or not God is with them in their distress. Is God interested in their society? Is God still reigning over this world? To the people who ask those questions, songs such as *Ascribe Greatness* clearly state that what God has done is perfect without mistake. God is among us even in our difficult situations. God is faithful

³⁴ Wren argues, “Many congregational songs use the first-person singular, but this does not necessarily prevent them from being communal. A statement of deep devotion or commitment to God may require us all to say ‘I’ as we sing it together, because ‘we’ is less intense and commits the individual singer less strongly.” *Praying Twice*, 185.

³⁵ Leonard Sweet holds that postmodernity values “the experience of individual-in-community,” placing it “at the heart of postmodernity.” “A New Reformation: Re-creating Worship for a Postmodern World,” in *Worship At the Next Level*, eds. Tim A. Dearborn and Scott Coil (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 100.

³⁶ Kwanjik Lee, “Worship Culture of Modern Church,” in *The Path of the Korean Church and Culture of Church*, ed. Institute for Korean Church (Seoul: Yeosurun, 1996), 182.

and perfect. The work of God is good as God is good. These songs appealed to the congregation so as to permit them to participate passionately in singing them.

Acknowledging and expressing God's attributes and works in worship lead the congregation to realize "who we are," confessing sinfulness, spiritual weakness, and the distress of lives. Human pathos was offered to God through singing and praying in the Praise and Worship services. From the beginning of the movement, the Korean Praise and Worship compensated for a relative lack of songs related of the theme of pathos in its repertoire by singing a considerable number of traditional hymns. As times went by, new songs of this category also began to emerge by and for Korean Christians.

One of the distinctive features of the Korean Praise and Worship movement of the 1980s was that its services incorporated a time for congregational sharing, praying, and blessing in the middle of service, focusing on the horizontal aspect of worship. It worked as an instrument of building a worshipping community as one body of Christ. In such worship services where vertical and horizontal relationship existed together, worshippers were encouraged to live a life of faith and strengthened to cope with their difficult times. From the beginning, many songs in this category have been written.

Musical Analysis of Songs of the Korean Praise and Worship Service

Music of the Korean Praise and Worship played an influential role in passionate congregational singing in its gatherings of the Korean Church in the 1980s. In style, the Korean Praise and Worship music of the 1980s drew on the secular popular musical style with which the Koreans were familiar. Because Korean popular music was heavily influenced by American popular music, Praise and Worship music was easily accepted, appealing Korean congregations.

In terms of its musical form, AB predominated, and ABA was found occasionally, although it is hard to decide songs' form because many songs were short. In terms of melody, generally speaking, it was tender as the same inclination was found in the Korean's favorite American popular music and Korean popular music of the 1970s and the 1980s. Tones did not frequently leap unless the song was building toward its climax. This pattern made it easy and comfortable for the congregation to listen to, learn, and sing new songs. In terms of melody and structure of the form, songs sung in the Korean Praise and Worship services in the 1980s showed

“singability” and “memorability.”³⁷ In the present, however, songs that are not easy for the congregation to sing appear frequently.

In terms of harmony, among twenty-four keys, six major keys such as C, D, E, F, G and A predominate in the music of the Praise and Worship in Korea. The use of chords followed a similar pattern of American popular music of the 1970s and the 1980s with which Korean were familiar. Chords besides the primary triads were used very often: II, III, VI, VII, major or minor 7, and suspensions. Tones outside a chord appear as normal. For example, in *As the Deer*, chords besides the primary triads of D(I), G(IV), and A(V) were used: Bm, Bm7, Em, Em7, F#, F#sus4. Seventeen tones out of sixty-five tones were outside the harmony. These features could function as a way of solving a possible monotony due to the simple melody.

The most distinctive feature distinguishing hymn singing in the traditional worship services and singing in the Praise and Worship services could be found in the accompaniment and use of various instruments. In Praise and Worship services, instruments were played in various combinations. With an appropriate use of various instruments, music created a soft, lyrical, grand, or dynamic atmosphere, which was rare in the traditional worship settings in Korean Presbyterian Churches. An accompaniment in the Praise and Worship services was effective to draw people’s various emotions in accordance with lyrics of songs. Thus, the congregation was led to actively participate in worship as he/she freely expressed the emotions of the heart. The style of accompaniment was connected with the congregation, especially the younger generation who was accustomed to popular music. Timbre, rhythm, and the style of playing music of the Praise and Worship services were distinctively different from those of the traditional worship services which was accompanied by an organ and/or a piano. The Praise and Worship services in Korea adapted the style and instrumentation of contemporary popular music of the 1980s.

From the earliest days of the movement, a fair number of hymns were sung in the Korean Praise and Worship services. As hymn singing was accompanied with the same style of an

³⁷ Bert Polman, “Praise the Name of Jesus,” in *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. Edited by Robert Woods and Brian Walrath (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007): 127-137. Polman summarizes that Erik Routley repeatedly emphasized these as “crucial qualities” for songs of congregation.

accompaniment of the Praise and Worship, even members of the congregation who were not active in hymn singing in their traditional worship services participated passionately in singing hymns. Instrumentation is a determining factor of congregational participation. The congregation in the Praise and Worship services would have not participated so actively in singing hymns, if those hymns were accompanied with the instruments and in the style of the traditional worship services.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the Korean Praise and Worship originated from Friday prayer meetings, of which singing and praying by the whole congregation are the two principal components. Analyses of structure, lyrics, and music of the Korean Praise and Worship services demonstrate that active participation of the congregation was fostered when the congregation sensed that worship is *of the people*. Three principal characteristics of Korean Praise and Worship allowed worship to become the worship of the people: Popularity, Contemporaneity, and Congregational Ethos.

In terms of *popularity*, Korean Praise and Worship music adapted the musical idioms of the people's everyday life so that the congregation could understand and identify its music as their own, thereby becoming able to sing it wholeheartedly. In terms of *contemporaneity*, textual expressions and contents were congruent with the context of the congregation so that the congregation spoke of their present faith and confession. In terms of *congregational ethos*, the Korean Praise and Worship service employed the singing and praying of the entire congregation that enabled the people to express themselves to the utmost in their worship.