

***B20: The Origins of Contemporary Worship:
The Case of John Wimber's Anaheim Vineyard Congregation
Lester Ruth and Carrie Steenwyk***

Although it has swept across the nation in the last 25 years, "contemporary worship" didn't just pop out of nowhere. Have you ever wondered where it came from? In this workshop, we'll review some of its origins with particular attention to the important Anaheim Vineyard congregation in the 1970s and 1980s.

Session Outline

I. Welcome and Introduction

II. Current situation and General Survey of History

"Once this oversized generation (the baby boomers) decided that music would be the primary carrier of its symbols and values, music quickly became in the words of George Steiner, 'the new literacy of Western culture.' When one chooses a musical style today, one is making a statement about whom one identifies with, what one's values are, and ultimately, who one is....a generation that sought its youthful identity in music searches for its religious identity in music as well....for this (baby boomer) generation music is at the very center of self-understanding. Music for baby boomers is the mediator of emotions, the carrier of dreams, and the marker of social location."

Source: Michael S. Hamilton, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat Out the Organs in the Worship Wars," *Christianity Today* (July 12, 1999): 30.

III. Anaheim Vineyard

- a. History of this congregation
- b. General description of worship
- c. Examples and discussion questions
 - i. People and Artifacts
 - ii. First Hand Accounts of Worship

1. Tom Hunter: "The vast majority of us were sincerely and innocently trying to deal with God; he had initiated a relationship with us and we wanted to know him more. Thus we were open with our worship, praise, adoration, petition, etc. We were gently, but expertly, guided by our pastors into what it meant to be honest and free in worship. Interestingly, in the early days, none of this "freedom" or "honesty" resulted in weird or self-serving behaviors. The whole atmosphere was simple, tender and God-focused.... We literally could not wait to get to church; to be in the congregation, to worship, to see what God would do today, etc. We felt anticipation, and we had legitimate hope that God would visit us in worship because he was consistent in doing so... I don't ever remember anyone walking out of the gym and remarking about the band, the great guitar licks, the cool piano chops or the amazing vocal performances. It was all about feeling and knowing the presence of God and responding to him in worship."
2. Linda Pardee: "It was relational, intimate and as I observed others lifting their hands, kneeling, crying and singing songs like, 'Oh Lord, you're beautiful, your face is all I seek, and when your eyes are on this child, your healing I receive.' I found this to be *way too intimate and vulnerable to enter into at first*. As I started to sing the words to the song, something seemed to break inside of me and I found myself weeping as if I was this child I was singing about. At that point I felt my hardened heart begin to soften. This God that I thought I knew, who was so distant and uncaring, was drawing me into a place where He could show me a love I had never known before."

3. Penny Fulton: "...At first, I was just embarrassed over the intimacy that was expressed out loud directly to God. Such intimacy made me close my eyes and not look at the others. The words were all about adoring God and laying my life down before Him. I had never sung songs to God before, just about Him."
4. Cheryl Pittluck: "The songs were simple and easy to learn... no words on a screen or anything, so they had to be. I remember that it was so different from anything I'd seen or experienced... I remember John [Wimber] leading from the piano and his voice was so smooth and easy to follow... no showmanship, no performance... it just blended in with our voices. I remember that it was the best part of the service... the worship."
5. Bev Martin: "There were two key elements of the Vineyard that opened up people's hearts to experience intimacy with God. John Wimber described worship as 'kissing the face of Jesus.' We did not just sing, but rather, we worshipped the Almighty! We sang love songs to Jesus on our knees, with our hands held high. We were praying praises as we sang. It was as though we were singing with the angels in heaven in the throne room!"
6. Mary Guleserian: "Cheryl and I had a friend, Linda, who'd had a spinal fusion. She'd been a dancer and majored in college in dance. Dance was her life, her passion. Months after her surgery, she tried to dance again, but unfortunately she got a new fracture in her spine. Linda was in terrible pain and was facing surgery again. Cheryl and Lance took her to the Vineyard. They were totally into what was going on there. We were clueless... After Lance and Cheryl took my friend Linda that Sunday for prayer, Linda and Cheryl called me a few days later. They told me that Linda had been healed! They'd had an x-ray that showed Linda's fracture. And now the new x-ray showed no fracture. Cheryl also told me of other things that were happening at the Vineyard. I said to myself, 'Hey! I want some of that!'"

iii. Order of Service and Texts

iv. Sermons

v. Theology of Worship

1. John Wimber: "Becoming true worshipers is the chief assignment God has given us in this lifetime. I believe that God is bringing the church to her knees to teach her how to express her love to Him in intimate, loving and adoring language... Worship is not about personality, temperament, personal limitations, church background, or comfort. It is about God. We are called to do it for his benefit, not ours. Yet the irony is that we do indeed benefit greatly when we give ourselves to worshipping God. We've been designed to worship." (Wimber, "The Life-Changing Power of Worship," *All About Worship: Insights & Perspectives on Worship*. Edited by Julie Bogart. Anaheim: Vineyard Music Group, 1998, 6.)
2. Carol Wimber: "Every act of obedience is worship. Every time we choose another over ourselves, it is an act of worship. Every time we decide to lay our own way down in favor of Jesus' way, is an act of worship... Every time you make the decision to walk in truth and humility, every time you put someone else ahead of you, every time you decide to pray for someone who has hurt or offended you instead of hating them, it is an act of worship. Do you get it? It's all worship!... Worship is how you live. It's where and how you spend your time and your money. Worship manifests in obedience." Let's put the source of the quote here. (Wimber, John. *The Way In is the Way On*, Atlanta: Ampelion Publishing, 2006, 113-6.)
3. Phases of Worship

Song Lyrics for Medley

EXODUS XV

The Lord Is My Strength and My Song
And He is Become My Salvation
He Is My God

And I Shall Prepare Him My Heart
And I shall Prepare Him My Heart
And I Shall Prepare Him My Heart

The Lord He Shall Reign, Forever and Ever Amen
The Lord He Shall Reign, Forever and Ever Amen

And I shall Prepare Him My Heart
And I shall Prepare Him My Heart
And I shall Prepare Him My Heart

The Lord He Shall Reign, Forever and Ever Amen
The Lord He Shall Reign, Forever and Ever Amen
The Lord He Shall Reign, Forever and Ever Amen
The Lord He Shall Reign, Forever and Ever Amen

Words & Music by Frank Gallian

ALL THE EARTH SHALL WORSHIP

Carl Tuttle (Solo)

Father, I Adore You
You've Drawn Me To This Place
I Bow Down Before You
Humbly On My Face

All The Earth Shall Worship
At The Throne Of The King
Of His Great and Awesome Power
We Shall Sing

All The Earth Shall Worship
At The Throne Of The King
Of His Great and Awesome Power
We Shall Sing

Jesus, We Love You
Because You First Loved Us
You Reached Out and Healed Us
With Your Mighty Touch

All the Earth Shall Worship
At The Throne Of The King
Of His Great and Awesome Power
We Shall Sing

All The Earth Shall Worship
At The Throne Of The King
Of His Great and Awesome Power
We Shall Sing

Spirit, We Need You
To Lift Us From This Mire
Consume and Empower Us
With Your Holy fire

All The Earth Shall Worship
At The Throne Of The King
Of His Great and Awesome Power
We Shall Sing

All The Earth Shall Worship
At The Throne Of The King
Of His Great and Awesome Power
We Shall Sing

Holy Is He
Blessed Is He
Worthy Is He
Gracious is He
Faithful Is He
Awesome Is He
Savior Is He
Master Is He
Mighty Is He
Holy Is He

Words Music by Carl Tuttle

SWEET PERFUME *Marilyn Marvin (Solo)*

Consider How He Loves You
His Arms Of Love Enfold You
Like A Sweet, Sweet Perfume
He Left His Word To Guide Us
His Presence Lives Inside Us
Like A Sweet, Sweet Perfume

Don't Ever Think That You're Worthless
You have His Life Within
You Are A Sweet Wholesome Fragrance
So Valuable To Him

He'll Light Up All Your Darkness
And Fill You With His Spirit
Like A Sweet, Sweet Perfume

Don't Ever Think That You're Worthless
You have His Life Within
You Are A Sweet Wholesome Fragrance
So Valuable To Him

Your Prayers Are Very Precious
They Reach The Heart of Jesus
Like A Sweet, Sweet Perfume
Consider How He Loves You

Words & Music by John Wimber

I ONLY WANT TO LOVE YOU

I Only Want To Love You, I Only Want To Love
You

I Only Want To Love You, I Only Want To Love
You

Jesus, You Are My Everything
You Are My Life, You Are My God

I Only Want To Praise You, I Only Want To Praise
You

I Only Want To Praise You, I Only Want To Praise
You

Jesus, You Are My Everything
You Are My Life You Are My God

I Only Want To Serve You, I Only Want To Serve
You

I Only Want To Serve You, I Only Want To Serve
You

Jesus, You Are My Everything
You Are My Life You Are My God

Words & Music by Eddie Espinosa

Why Study Anaheim Vineyard's Worship? Discussion Questions for Small Groups

Below you will find discussion questions for various sections of the book this session is based on from the series *A Church at Worship* (Eerdmans, expected publication date 2011).

General Introduction and Timeline

- Is there a relationship between the 1960s and 1970s being a time of social turmoil and the rise of worship renewal movements at the same time? Or is it just a coincidence?
- Some historians of societies have suggested that identifying with a particular kind of music was an important feature of how Baby Boomers identified themselves with a particular social group. Do you think the same thing was going on in the new ways of worship arising in the 1970s? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some of the growing megachurches with new ways of worship develop publishing houses to record and distribute their music (i.e., Calvary Chapel with Maranatha! Music and Vineyard with Mercy Records), but others don't?

At Worship

- Many of the early Vineyard participants had been a part of another church before. Do you think the last quarter of the 20th century generally was a time of restlessness as people moved around to find a church home?
- Music plays an important role in Vineyard's worship, especially as when worshipers experience the presence of God. From your experience, does that seem true for all kinds of Christian worship today?
- One of the key desires in Vineyard worship is not only sing *about* God but sing *to* God. Why might older pieces of music create the impression that they only talk about God? Is the impression a true one in your opinion?
- Did you find interesting the combination in worship of images about God: we can have intimate fellowship with a loving God and yet experience demonstrations of "signs and wonders" in healings, etc., from a powerful God?

People and Artifacts

- Does the freedom to be expressive with one's body come from not having to handle books or texts when worshipping?
- If you worship in an outwardly expressive church, is it your experience that a few people start with outward expression and then others follow? Do you think that is true from the pictures of the Vineyard fellowship? Is it surprising that it seems men are the first ones to express themselves outwardly?
- The cover of one of the early Vineyard publications above shows Old Testament characters worshipping. Is it important for Christians to feel like they are fulfilling worship in both the Old and New Testaments?

Worship Setting and Space

- As you look through these images, do you think these spaces give a greater sense of God being present among the people or of God being a distant ruler? What features contribute to either sense?
- In worship, does it bring a different quality to the experience if the musicians are in the midst of the congregation or if they are somewhat distant in their own space? What are the upsides and the downsides to both arrangements?

- This congregation first worshiped in homes and public buildings without a lot of church “fussiness,” e.g., special furniture, decorations, and symbols. What is gained by that kind of environment and what is lost?

Firsthand Accounts

- Does it surprise you that early Vineyard worshipers most closely linked a sense of being in God’s presence during the songs of intimate address to him? What kind of expectations do you think that creates for worship?
- Compared to the Anaheim Vineyard, would your church place more or less emphasis in worship upon the Holy Spirit?
- Many of the Anaheim Vineyard worshipers speak about coming to worship with a sense of vivid expectancy to encounter God. Do you think worshipers coming with a sense of expectancy is an important aspect of being prepared to worship well?
- Did some of the participants’ (including John Wimber) difficulty in being able to worship with this new kind of music surprise you? What do you think might have given them trouble in initially participating well?

Order of Service and Texts

- How many of the songs mentioned in this part of the book did you know? What gives a song a short or long “shelf life”?
- Does the song repertoire of “contemporary worship” change too frequently in your opinion?
- Many of these songs have simple lyrics with a lot of repetition. Can you think of non-church examples of songs with the same features? What do these sorts of songs do well? For example, is it easier to move while singing and is it easier to learn a song if you are not given the text? What are other strengths of such songs? What are possible downsides?

Sample Sermons

- John Wimber exhibited a winsome, attractive personality while preaching. In your opinion, did that make his bold content easier for listeners to hear and accept?
- Note that Wimber used to remind worshipers that worship was not about them but that it was about God. Why might worshipers continually fall into that trap? Is it sinful nature? A consumerist attitude brought to worship? Perhaps even something built into a Vineyard worship service?
- Based on the sermons in this book, what do you think the central point of Wimber’s preach was if you had to summarize it?

Theology of Worship documents

- Wimber’s teaching on worship repeatedly emphasized that worship should engage the whole human person in every aspect of her or his life. Why is such all-encompassing worship so hard to do?
- Do you think “contemporary worship” places special demands on musicians and poses special risks to them?

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Several online recordings of sermons or presentations by John Wimber or other Vineyard leaders are available as follows:

- To see John Wimber speak, go to <http://www.yorbalindavineyard.com/john-wimber-media/>.
- To hear current national Vineyard leaders speak on the movement's legacy, go to http://www.vineyardaudio.com/VNW/2008_leaders.html.
- A variety of recordings and publications related to John Wimber and the Vineyard can be found for purchase at <http://www.vineyardresources.com/equip/>.
- <http://www.regent.edu/general/library/services/collections/johnwimbercollection.cfm>; accessed September 8, 2008.

The resources provided in this handout will be published by Eerdmans in 2010 or 2011. This book is in a series of case studies of particular worshipping communities from around the world and throughout Christian history which aim to allow a worshiper today to think concretely and contextually about some of the continually important issues for Christian worship.