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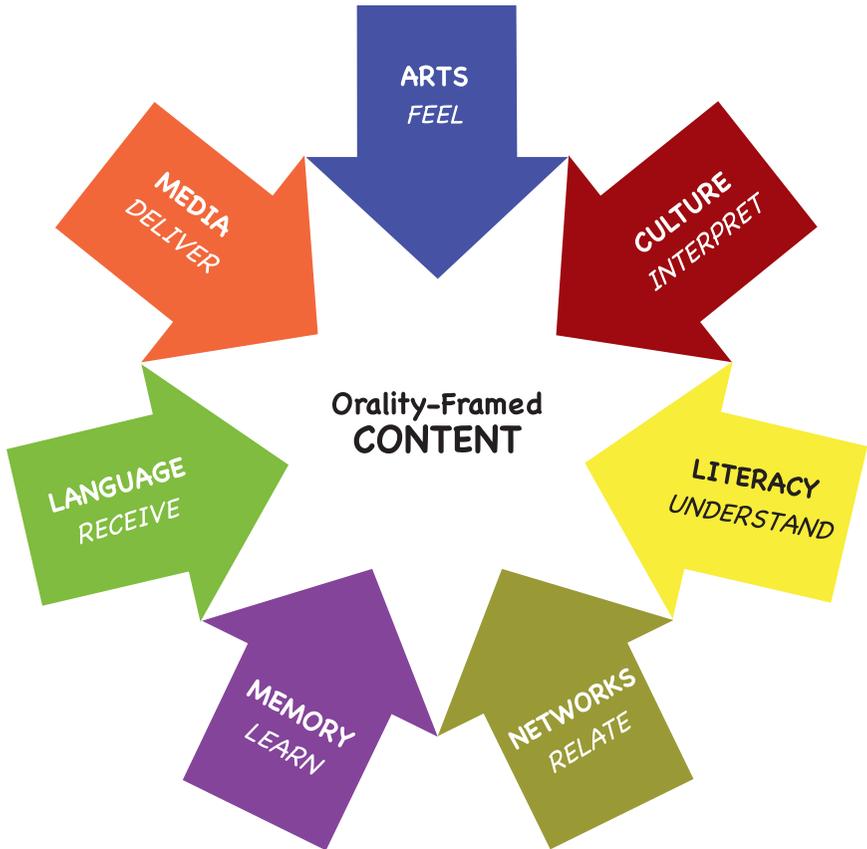
Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Arts & Orality Part 1: Foundations and Applications

**Piper • Kreider • Hawn • Lim • Oswald • Pierce
Rowe • Carson • Rayl • Ferguson • Unseth
Hoogerheide • Krabill • Bowman • Lowther • Atkins**

The Seven Disciplines of Orality



Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.



ION

INTERNATIONAL ORALITY NETWORK

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

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Cover Photo

A group of women who are part of a choir react with delight as they hear a story told by pastor Elasi, in their mother tongue—Nyanga.

Additional Photos

All photos not otherwise credited have been contributed by members of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE).

Word Art

The word art at the beginning of each article was created using Wordle.net with the font *Loved by the King*.

Articles

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“The LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.’”

Exodus 31:1-5 (ESV)

“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!”

Psalms 30:11-12 (ESV)

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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Co-Editors' Note

Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge

"In the beginning God created..." Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word..." John 1:1

The International Orality Network and the International Council of Ethnodoxologists are excited to collaborate in both 2016 editions of the Orality Journal. The two networks, through this publication, are exploring the relationship between orality and the arts.

The beginnings of both Genesis and the Gospel of John offer a natural starting point for a consideration of this unique relationship. God Himself is a creative God, creating not from impulse nor for mere utilitarian purposes, but *creatio ex nihilo*: he creates out of the overflow of his creative being. This Creator God is the Triune God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus far from being an individualized activity, divine creation maintains an inherent communal component as each member of the Trinity participates (Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 42:5; Proverbs 8:22-31; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-4, 11:6) in bringing creation into existence.

This Triune God creates by communicating though: *"All things came into being through the Word."*¹ Creation and communication are inextricably bound together in the nature of the Triune God. Naturally, every human person, made in the image of a Triune Creator, is inherently creative and communicative. The articles offered in this edition of the Orality Journal provide an array of opportunities to consider such creativity and artistic communication from various cultures around the world.

What needs to not be missed, though, is the Trinitarian component that threads its way through these case studies. Whether discussing henna art or music, these stories describe individual artists and their artistic expressions, yet every one of them creates and communicates within a communal network of relationships. Herein lies a subtle witness to Trinitarian nature of the creative God who made all human persons like himself.

The authors and participants within these case studies are seeking to probe the depths of the creative arts and oral communication as both a means to discovering echoes of the Triune Creator but also as a means to understand specific human cultures. Far from extracting human persons from their cultural context, they believe the Incarnation is a testimony to God's commitment to enter into human culture. Like Jesus, they are not mere observers of culture only. These writers and artists desire people from all cultures to be in communion with their Triune Creator which ultimately makes possible the restoration of human creativity (the arts) and human communication. For when one enters into communion with the Triune God, transformation becomes possible, not only for an individual person but for one's cultural community. As editors, we gladly commend these articles to you in the hope that they may stimulate godly artistic creativity in your current cultural context as well as deeper communion with the Triune Creator.

On the journey together,



¹John 1.3.

Note from Guest Editors

Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill

Katie Hoogerheide serves as Associate Director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. Her work and graduate-level studies include experience in the areas of organ performance, ethnoarts, linguistics, and education. She also works as Associate Editor for the Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith (artsandchristianfaith.org).

*James R. Krabill served from 1978–1996 as a Mennonite mission worker teaching Bible and church history in oral culture settings among African-initiated churches in West Africa. Currently serving as Senior Executive for Global Ministries with the Mennonite Mission Network, Krabill has authored or edited various works, including *Music in the Life of the African Church* (with Roberta King and others, 2008) and *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (2013).*

Resonate. All of us who have a message we want to share with other people want that communication to resonate in their hearts. When the message is the greatest news ever to come to earth, the story of a Savior, the stakes seem particularly high. And so we seek knowledge, pursuing the wisdom of others who have reported some measure of success in their quest for sharing the message across boundaries.

In that quest for shared knowledge, the International Council of Ethnodoxologists has been asked to guest edit this volume of the Orality Journal. We have been tasked with sharing with you just how much impact the arts can have in cross-cultural communication. Their absence impoverishes communication; their distortion disrupts communication; their genuine presence enriches communication. As you read the articles in this edition, you will see over and over again how the arts help messages with brand-new content to be perceived as more familiar, less foreign. The arts form one critical component for making our messages resonate.

The three articles in the FOUNDATIONS section provide a grounding in biblical, historical, and cultural perspectives on engaging the arts. As Piper explains, the inclusion of indigenous artistic expressions in

worship emerges naturally from biblical principles. Looking at the Early Church, Kreider gives us a view of the timelessness of incorporating artistic expressions into worship. In order to introduce us to the range of physical senses that can be involved in worship through the arts, Hawn & Lim draw from various symbols used across cultural boundaries.

The arts have been identified by the International Orality Network as one of at least seven aspects influencing orality-framed content (see “The Seven Disciplines of Orality” graphic on the inside front cover). Although these seven aspects appear as discrete arrows, in reality each of the seven is inextricably woven through the others. None can carry a message independently. All join together to create effective oral communication.

The arts are no exception. This volume highlights the arts, but even a cursory glance through the articles in the APPLICATIONS section shows the great extent to which the arts play an indispensable role in strengthening the other six disciplines in the act of communication. As just a few examples:

- **MEDIA:** Oswald shares how “vivid indigenous arts” in Tibet have brought the story of Jesus to life through film. Authentic arts content makes even the best delivered media resonate more deeply with the local people.
- **LANGUAGE:** Hoogerheide and Unseth address the importance of using language with the nuances of form familiar to an audience. Relevant artistic structures, discourse markers, and storytelling conventions make even the most accurate pronunciation, vocabulary, and word order seem more familiar and less foreign.
- **MEMORY:** Both Unseth and Bowman tap into the arts as ways of internalizing biblical stories and their messages. Familiar artistic expressions provide vehicles for more rapid and satisfying retention of new content.
- **LITERACY:** Unseth mentions the value of written collections of proverbs for understanding how to communicate more naturally within a culture. Only locally-recognized forms and expressions will serve to inform connecting effectively with the oral traditions.
- **NETWORKS:** Pierce, Rowe, Carson, and Rayl (“Sharing Faith”) each illustrate natural relationship building around the arts. Well-loved art

forms draw people to connect with others through their hearts rather than only through their minds or their physical presence.

- **CULTURE:** Krabill and Krabill depict the power of interpreting biblical concepts through the lens of local cultural rituals. Everyday artistic elements speak into local people's lives organically from the rhythms in the place they call home.

In each scenario, we see how arts are part and parcel of communities, inseparable from so many contexts of communication. Our attempts at sharing about Christ in a way that resonates with any group of people will not ring true without the natural colors, gestures, sounds, and communication frameworks familiar to those people. Without them, any incarnation of the gospel remains incomplete, a robotic, lifeless framework, rather than a living creation.

Just as the arts saturate their communication contexts, so the different elements within the realm we call "the arts" also blend together. We often speak of artistic domains such as music, dance, or drama. In reality, any artistic element is nearly always accompanied by several more, blurring our attempts at drawing boundaries between types of artistic expression. Consider the Balinese paintings inspired by another form of visual art, carved masks, and also by traditional dance postures and shadow puppet figures (Rayl, "A Balinese Painter"). Consider the tendency towards multi-arts descriptions such as "dance drama" (Rowe), or the account in which people hearing music spontaneously break into dance (Lowther). We can neither extract the arts from their communicative contexts nor specify one kind of artistic expression as consistently distinct from another.

Terminology changes. Arts research around the world continues to uncover new ways of talking about arts within different societies. The ancient Greeks used to indicate music, dance, lyrics, and poetry all with the one word *mousikē*.¹ English speakers might refer to both lyrics and melody by the term "song" but may or may not think of lyrics when they speak about "music." The point is not to separate and label artistic expressions, but rather to become aware of those elements of artistic expression that make communication contexts authentic for the people in a given culture.

That's why we chose a few artistic keywords from each APPLICATION article for listing in the Table of Contents—as you scan the list, you'll get just a taste of the rich array of artistic combinations within the cultures of the world. For example, through her description of trauma healing, Atkins introduces us to carving, wood burning, hat weaving, wall decorations, songs, laments, and dances. Likewise, Ferguson's journey with storytelling taps into drama, dance, song, painting, henna, and music videos. As you read the articles, you'll discover just how much these different artistic elements interact with each other. The Wordles at the top of each article also provide a sense of how all artistic expressions are connected through the commonality of their communicative effect, although some rise to the surface more in certain contexts compared to others.

It is our hope and prayer that the articles found in these pages will encourage you to new levels of finding and appreciating the power of artistic expression in your own communication contexts. We think you'll start noticing artistic elements in places you might not have thought to look before—in the materials, sounds, sights, and body movements around you. And, as with all the other disciplines of orality, our best results will come from encouraging the people of the culture to share the good news with others around them. They embody communication in a way no outsider ever can.

ICE and ION Collaborate

It has been a special privilege as guest editors of this journal and as representatives of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) to partner with ION in this important collaborative effort. ICE began in 2003 as a small group of people working in cross-cultural arts ministries with a shared vision “to see Christ-followers from every culture express their faith through the own heart music and other arts.”² In its first decade the ICE network grew to over three hundred associates, some of whom launched their own national and regional initiatives in Latin America, the Philippines, and the Korean diaspora.

Several charter members of ICE (Tom Ferguson, Frank Fortunato, Robin Harris, Roberta King, Paul Neeley, Brian Schrag, and others) were involved in the orality movement in its early years, giving papers at ION gatherings on the ways in which music and arts connected to storying and orality. In 2007, Avery Willis approached ICE leaders to launch a Music and Arts Task Force in ION, and the foundational meetings that took place were energized by the vision of promoting a global movement for the use of all culturally-appropriate arts in making disciples of oral learners.

In addition, the Task Force was committed to the idea that storytelling, singing, dancing, dramatizing, drawing, sculpting, and other local arts are fundamentally interrelated means of telling God’s story. They affirmed that music and arts support other strategies to evangelize, disciple, and empower oral people, but that they can also stand on their own in communicating God’s story. Robin Harris served as the first Task Force coordinator, eventually passing the baton to Frank Fortunato, who served for several years and was succeeded by Erica Logan.

The arts presence grew steadily at ION with Task Force participants teaching and learning about ethnodoxology approaches, and bringing multicultural worship to ION gatherings. Collaboration between the ethnodoxology movement and its orality counterpart also grew, resulting in regular participation in one another’s events, publications,³ and other initiatives. Arts was recognized within ION as one of the “Seven Disciplines within Orality”⁴ and storytelling, once the primary

concern of the orality movement, came to be considered as only one of many effective forms of communicative art forms to be employed in the complex task of discipling oral learners.

The ION and ICE networks thus have much in common in our desire to see God's kingdom grow and mature through every form and means of communication God has graciously put at our disposal. May the collaboration illustrated in this issue of the *Orality Journal* be a sign pointing to even more such efforts between us in the days and years to come!

With special thanks to Samuel Chiang, who first invited us to consider this project, and to Robin Harris, President of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, who offered invaluable counsel and logistical support as the project took shape and moved toward completion.

¹See, for example, Mike Cartwright's article on "Greek Music" in the *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, online at www.ancient.eu/Greek_Music/ (accessed November 6, 2015).

²From the ICE website at www.worldofworship.org.

³There were several chapters which specifically focused on Bible-storying methods and case studies in ICE's large volume edited by James R. Krabill, Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag—*Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library, 2013), www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com.

⁴Samuel E. Chiang, "Learning from my own mistakes," *Mission Frontiers* 36 (2014):3-4.

The Biblical Basis for Indigenous Arts in Worship¹

John Piper

*John Piper is Founder and Teacher of desiringGod.org, and Chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He served over thirty years as senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. His books include *Desiring God* (Colorado Spring: Multnomah, revised and expanded 2011); *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006); *God Is the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004); and *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003).*

The Centrality of Worship

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the *goal* and *fuel* of missions:

It is the *goal* of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The LORD reigns; let the earth *rejoice*; let the many coastlands *be glad!*" (Ps 97:1 ESV, emphasis added). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise

thee! O Let the nations *be glad and sing for joy!*" (Ps 67:3-4 KJV Cambridge ed.; emphasis added).

But worship is also the *fuel* of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can't commend what you don't cherish. We will never call out, "Let the nations *be glad!*" if we cannot say from the heart, "I rejoice in the Lord . . . I will be glad and exult in thee, I will sing praise to thy name, O Most High" (Ps 104:34 ESV; 9:2 KJV Cambridge ed.). Missions begins and ends in worship.

I am not pleading for the diminishing of missions but for a magnifying of God. Where passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Churches that are not centered on the exaltation of

the majesty and beauty of God will scarcely kindle a fervent desire to “declare his glory among the nations” (Ps 96:3). But when the flame of worship burns with the heat of God’s true worth, then the light of missions will shine to the most remote peoples on earth. Even outsiders feel the disparity between the boldness of our claims upon the nations and the blandness of our engagement with God.

The deepest reason why our passion for God should fuel missions is that God’s passion for God fuels missions. Missions is the overflow of our delight in God because missions is the overflow of God’s delight in being God. And the deepest reason why worship is the goal in missions is that worship is God’s goal. We are confirmed in this goal by the biblical record of God’s relentless pursuit of praise among the nations. “Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!” (Ps 117:1 ESV). If it is God’s goal it must be our goal.

Probably no text in the Bible reveals the passion of God for his own glory more clearly and bluntly than Isaiah 48:9–11 where God says:

For my name’s sake I defer my anger, *for the sake of my praise* I restrain it for

you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.* (ESV, emphasis added)

I have found that for many people these words come like six hammer blows to a human-centered way of looking at the world:

For my name’s sake!
 For the sake of my praise!
 For my own sake!
 For my own sake!
 How should my name be profaned?
 My glory I will not give to another!

The Modality of Worship

Having said this, we should note the startling fact that the New Testament contains remarkably little explicit teaching about corporate worship—what we call worship services. Not that there were no corporate gatherings for worship. First Corinthians 14:23 speaks of “the whole church” assembling together. Acts 2:46 speaks of the early church “attending the temple together



and breaking bread in their homes” (ESV). And Hebrews 10:25 speaks of “not neglecting to meet together” (ESV). But this is not much, and the remarkable thing is that even when the gatherings are in view, the apostles do not speak of them explicitly as worship.

Let me illustrate this so we can feel its full force. In the Old Testament, the most common word for worship is the Hebrew word *hishtahavah* (or a related form of that word). Its basic meaning is “bow down,” with the sense of reverence, respect, and honor. It occurs 171 times. In the Greek Old Testament, 164 of those instances of this Hebrew word are translated by the Greek *proskyneom*. In the Greek New Testament, this is the main word for worship.

But when we look at its use, we notice something astonishing.² It is common in the Gospels (twenty-six times)—people would often bow down worshipfully before Jesus. And it is common in the book of Revelation (twenty-one times) because the angels and elders in heaven often bow down before God. But in the Epistles of Paul, it occurs only once, namely, in 1 Corinthians 14:25, where the unbeliever falls down at the power of prophecy and confesses that God is in the assembly. And the word doesn’t occur at all in the letters of Peter, James, or John.

This is remarkable. The main word for worship in the Old Testament is virtually absent from the letters of the New Testament.³ Why is this?

Why are the very Epistles that were written to help the church be what it ought to be in this age almost totally devoid of this word and of explicit teaching on the specifics of corporate worship?

The Locality of Worship
Jesus becomes the new “place” of worship. I think the reason is found in the way Jesus treated worship in his life and teaching. His main statement is found in John 4:20–24. But before we look at this text, consider a few other things he said. For example, his attitude toward the temple, the main place of Jewish worship, was not at all what the Jewish leaders thought it should be.

When he wove a whip and drove out the moneychangers, he said he did so not for the sake of proper sacrifices but for the sake of prayer—in fact, prayer for *all the nations*. “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations” (Mark 11:17 ESV). In other words, he focused attention away from the outward acts of Jewish sacrifices to the personal act of communion with God for all peoples.

Then he said two other things about the temple that pointed to a radically altered view of worship.

He said, “Something greater than the temple is here,” referring to himself (Matt 12:6 ESV), and “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19 ESV). This attitude toward the temple got not only him killed (Mark 14:58; 15:29) but also Stephen (Acts 6:14). That’s how important it was.

Jesus identified himself as the true temple. “Something greater than the temple is here.” In himself he would fulfill everything the temple stood for, especially the “place” where believers meet God. He diverted attention away from worship as a localized activity with outward forms and pointed toward a personal, spiritual experience with himself at the center. Worship does not have to have a building, a priesthood, and a sacrificial system. It has to have the risen Jesus.

Jesus loosens worship from place and form. What Jesus did to worship in the way he related to the temple is made explicit in John 4:20–24. Here he uses the word *proskyneom*—the dominant Old Testament word for worship—and shows that it is laden with outward and localized meaning. Then he transforms it into a concept that is mainly inward rather than outward and mainly pervasive rather than localized.

The woman at the well said, “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” [The word for “worship” used here is the common Old Testament word *proskyneom*. Note the localized emphasis in her mind.] Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father” (John 4:20-21 ESV).

Here Jesus loosens worship from its outward and localized connotations. Place is not the issue: “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” He goes on: “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24 ESV).

Here is the key sentence: True worship, which was anticipated for the age to come, has arrived: “The hour *is coming* [in the age to come] and *is now* here [in me!].” What marks this true future worship, which has broken into the present from the glorious age to come, is that it is not bound by

localized place or outward form. Instead of being on this mountain or in Jerusalem, it is “in spirit and truth.”⁴

Jesus strips *proskyneom* of its last vestiges of localized and outward connotations.⁵ It will not be wrong for worship to be in a place or to use outward forms, but he makes explicit and central that this is *not* what makes worship worship. What makes worship worship is what happens “in spirit and truth”—with or without a place and with or without outward forms.

This is likely the best explanation as to why *proskyneom*—the central Old Testament word for worship—was virtually boycotted by Peter, James, John, and Paul in the letters they wrote to the churches⁶:

- The word did not make clear enough the inward, spiritual nature of true worship.
- The word carried significant connotations of place and form.
- The word was associated with bodily bowing down and with the actual presence of a visible manifestation to bow down before.

In the Gospels, Jesus was present in *visible* form to fall before, so the word *proskyneom* is used

with some frequency. In the book of Revelation, the act of bowing down usually happens before God's manifestation in heaven or before false gods on the earth. Therefore the word *proskyneom* is widely used in Revelation as well.

But in the Epistles something very different is happening. Jesus is not present in visible glory to fall before. As a result, the tendency of the early church was to deal with worship as primarily inward and spiritual rather than outward and bodily, and primarily pervasive rather than localized.

The Totality of Worship

The next most frequent word for worship after *proskuneo* in the Old Testament is the word *latreuo* (over ninety times, almost always translating '*abad*'). This is usually rendered "serve," as in "You shall not worship their gods nor serve them" (Ex 23:24 NASB).

When Paul uses it for Christian worship he goes out of his way to make sure that we know he means not a localized or outward form for worship practice, but a nonlocalized, spiritual experience. In fact, he takes it so far as to treat virtually all of life as worship when lived in the right spirit.

- "I serve (*or worship*) [God] in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel" (Rom 1:9 NASB; parenthesis added).
- True Christians "*worship* God in the Spirit of God . . . and put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3 NASB, emphasis added).
- "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of *worship*" (Rom 12:1 NASB, emphasis added).

The praise and thanks of the lips is called a sacrifice to God (Heb 13:15). But so are good works in everyday life (Heb 13:16). Paul refers to his own ministry as a "priestly duties [of worship]" and he calls the converts themselves an "offering acceptable [in worship]" to God (Rom 15:16 NIV 1984; cf. Phil 2:17). The money that the churches sent Paul was described by him as "a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God [in worship]" (Phil 4:18 NASB). And Paul's own death for Christ he calls a "drink offering [to God]" (2 Tim 4:6).

The same thrust is furthermore seen in the imagery of the people of God—the body of Christ—as the New Testament "temple" where spiritual sacrifices are offered (1 Pet 2:5 NLT), where

God dwells by his Spirit (Eph 2:21, 22) and where all the people are seen as the holy priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Second Corinthians 6:16 shows that the new covenant hope of God's presence is being fulfilled even now in the church as a people, not in any particular service: "We are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (NASB).

Worship, thus, in the New Testament is significantly deinstitutionalized, delocalized, and deexternalized. The whole thrust is gradually taken off of ceremony and seasons and places and forms and is shifted to what is happening in the heart—not just on Sunday, but every day and all the time in all of life.

The Radicality of Worship

Worship in the New Testament, in short, moves toward something radically simple and inward, with manifold external expressions in life and liturgy. One of the reasons for this stunning indifference to outward form is a vision for missions that is usable across thousands of cultures and therefore not to be laden with externals.

All the focus of this worship is on the reality of the glory of Christ, not the shadow and copy of religious objects and forms. There is no authorization in the New Testament for worship buildings, or worship dress, or worship times, or worship music, or worship liturgy, or worship size, or thirty-five-minute sermons, or Advent poems, or choirs, or instruments, or candles. In fact, the act of getting together as Christians in the New Testament to sing or pray or hear the word of God is never even called worship. Do we distort the biblical meaning of "worship" by using the term almost entirely for an event for which the New Testament *never* does?

All of this makes us very *free* and, perhaps, very *frightened*—free to find place and time and dress and size and music and elements and objects that help us orient radically toward the supremacy of God in Christ. And *frightened* because almost every worship tradition we have is culturally shaped rather than biblically commanded. The command is a radical connection of love and trust and obedience to Jesus Christ in all of life.

There is a reason for this radical spirituality of worship in the New Testament. And the reason

is this: the New Testament is a missionary document! The message found here is meant to be carried to every people on earth and incarnated in every culture in the world. And that is why our High Priest came and ended tabernacle and sacrifices and feasts and vestments and dietary laws and circumcision and priesthood.

The Old Testament was mainly a “come-and-see” religion. The New Testament is primarily a “go-and-tell” religion. And to make that possible, Jesus has not abolished worship, but made it the kind of radically spiritual engagement with God that can and must happen in every culture on the earth. Worship is not trivialized in the New Testament, but intensified, deepened, and made the radical fuel and goal of all missions.

The frightening freedom of worship in the New Testament is a *missionary* mandate. We must not lock this gospel treasure in any cultural straitjacket. Rather let us find the place, the time, the dress, the forms, and the music that kindle and carry a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. And may our communion with the living God be so real and the Spirit of God so powerfully

present that the heart of what we do becomes the joy of all the peoples we are called to reach.

Conclusion

The New Testament is not a manual for worship services. Rather, it is a vision for missions in thousands of diverse people groups around the world. In such groups, outward forms of worship will vary drastically, but the inner reality of treasuring Christ in spirit and truth is common ground.

I believe that God intends to leave the matter of form and style and content to the judgment of our spiritual wisdom—not to our whim or our tradition, but to prayerful, thoughtful, culturally alert, self-critical, Bible-saturated, God-centered, Christ-exalting reflection driven by a passion to be filled with all the fullness of God. I assume this will be an ongoing process, not a one-time effort.

God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of his name among the nations. Let us bring then our affections into

line with God's and, for the sake of his name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join his global purpose.

The Great Commission is first to delight yourself in the Lord

(Ps 37:4). And then to declare, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy" (Ps 67:4 ESV). In this way God will be glorified from beginning to end, and worship will empower the mission efforts of the church until the coming of the Lord.

¹This chapter was compiled by James R. Krabill, the general editor of the *Worship and Mission for the Global Church* handbook, with permission of the author, from two sermons, one chapter, and one article by John Piper. The four sources are as follows: John Piper, "The Supremacy of God in Missions through Worship," *Mission Frontiers*, July–August 1996, www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-supremacy-of-god-in-missions-through-worship; John Piper, "The Inner Simplicity and Outer Freedom of Worldwide Worship," in *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 239–54; John Piper, "Our High Priest Is the Son of God Perfect Forever" (sermon, December 8, 1996), Desiring God Foundation, www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/our-high-priest-is-the-son-of-god-perfect-forever; and John Piper, "Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning, Part 1" (seminar for the Bethlehem Institute, September 12, 2008), Desiring God Foundation, www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/seminars/gravity-and-gladness-on-sunday-morning-part-1#InwardExperience.

²Heinrich Greeven, in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 765, observes the “astonishing fact” that while *proskyneom* is abundant in the Gospels (twenty-six times) and Acts (four times) and Revelation (twenty-one times), it is almost completely absent in the epistles (Heb. 1:6 and 11:21 are Old Testament quotations). Apart from Acts 24:11, where *proskynein* is a technical term for worship in the temple, the only instance of *proskynemesis* in the primitive Christian community is in 1 Corinthians 14:25, where there appears to be an actual falling down. Elsewhere there is reference to kneeling in prayer (Acts 9:40; 20:36) and lifting the hands (1 Tim. 2:8), but the word *proskynein* is not used. Greeven concludes: “This is, however, a further proof of the concreteness of the term. *Proskynemesis* demands visible majesty before which the worshiper bows. The Son of God was visible to all on earth (the Gospels) and the exalted Lord will again be visible to His own when faith gives way to sight (Revelation).”

³See the note above for the few apparent exceptions in the Book of Hebrews.

⁴In line with what we saw in note 2, Heinrich Greeven remarks that “if instead of naming a place to which the pilgrims should go to worship, Jesus says that the true place of worship is in the spirit and in truth: this is an oxymoron. Undiluted *proskynein*, the act of worship which is concrete in place and gesture, is lifted up to a new dimension: ‘spirit and truth.’” Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, 764.

⁵I am aware that Jesus may not have spoken Greek with this woman at the well and so may not have actually used the word *proskyneom*. But I take it that John’s rendering of Jesus’ intention is accurate and that John’s use of *proskyneom* faithfully captures what Jesus wanted to communicate about the meaning of worship carried by that word.

⁶Another important word for worship, *sebomai*, is used twice in the Gospels (“In vain do they worship me” [Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7 ESV; emphasis added]) and eight times in Acts, always for God-fearing Gentiles except once for pagan worship (Acts 19:27). The absence of this word in the Epistles is again remarkable. It is as if the apostles, in their letters, avoided words that were current for synagogue worship, both *proskyneom* and *sebomai*.





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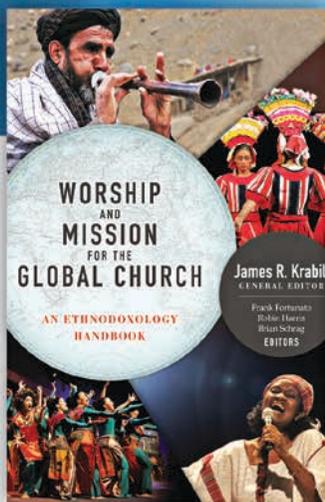
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