

# MISSION<sup>TM</sup> FRONTIERS

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WORSHIP AND MISSION  
FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH

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# 06 ETHNODOXOLOGY

SPARKING LOCAL ARTS FOR  
KINGDOM PURPOSES

/ BRIAN SCHRAG

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# A CASE FOR CONTEXTUALIZED, ARTISTIC COMMUNICATION IN MISSION



## ROBIN HARRIS

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## ETHNO-WHAT?

What did you think when you saw that strange new word—ethnodoxology—on the cover of *Mission Frontiers*? If it is unfamiliar now, it won't be when you're done with this issue. Twenty years ago the term didn't exist, yet now it represents a significant paradigm shift in missions—affirming the engagement of all kinds of culturally appropriate, biblically grounded artistic communication in the mission, worship, and spiritual formation of the church.

Why is ethnodoxology a crucial issue for the *Missio Dei* in this century? Unfortunately, the commonly held misconception that “music is a universal language” has long blinded us to the need for contextualization of artistic forms of communication, including music but also extending to all other art forms. One of the stubborn obstacles to effective mission today is that we are not consistently communicating the gospel in ways that allow it to thrive in local soil. Through foundational articles, stories from the field, and practical how-to advice, this issue demonstrates the remarkable results of applying ethnodoxology principles in cross-cultural ministry.

## ETHNODOXOLOGY FROM MANY PERSPECTIVES

The articles in this issue were written by 15 field-tested authors, all part of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE), a network founded in 2003 and made up of missions practitioners, professors, students, and organizations. This

issue gives just a small taste (roughly three percent) of the contents of a set of two volumes produced by ICE and published in 2013 by William Carey Library. They are the first such book-length resources on the topic of ethnodoxology.<sup>1</sup>

**Foundational:** The opening article (page 6), an interview I did with ethnomusicologist Brian Schrag,<sup>2</sup> lays the groundwork for the rest of the issue, describing the guiding principles of ethnodoxology and exploring how this culturally sensitive way of engaging the arts differs from traditional approaches. He proposes a case for ethnodoxology, affirming its crucial role in cross-cultural ministry as well as established churches, and outlining a vision for a future in which all Christ followers will express their faith through the unique artistic resources God has given them.

**Biblical:** Ron Man's article (page 9) gives a biblical perspective on why church planters, from frontier mission contexts to the urban centers of North America, can balance the need to be biblically faithful while still being culturally relevant. Using the metaphor of the solid pillars and flexible spans of a bridge, he outlines a biblical framework that leaves room for remarkable freedom in a church's expression of worship.

**Historical:** Cultural boundaries of the 21st century are highly permeable, with art forms constantly interacting and influencing one another. Missiologist James Krabill's article (page 13) provides some historical perspective by exploring these realities and observing what happens when we do not employ ethnodoxology methodologies from the beginning.

**Cultural:** Anne Zaki reflects on the insights provided by the “Nairobi Statement,” unpacking four ways that worship and culture interact. Her article (page 16) reflects on how a worshipping community can maintain respect for its own cultural gifts while still embracing and appreciating what God is doing in other cultures.

**Holistic:** Traumatic situations resulting from war, conflict, disease, famine, domestic violence, and sexual abuse touch millions of people. Biblically based arts and trauma healing strategies provide an opportunity for the Church to point toward the good news of Christ's healing power, forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope. Harriet Hill's article (page 20) demonstrates this holistic approach

and shows how the arts can function as powerful vehicles to help suffering people express pain that cannot be put into mere words, and bring those hurts to the cross of Christ.

**Methodological:** In this concise summary (page 22) of his book, *Creating Local Arts Together*, Brian Schrag outlines key methods for applying the principles of ethnodoxology—a seven step, flexible, research-based process for facilitating local arts in community.<sup>3</sup> Since 2011, courses based on this approach<sup>4</sup> have taught participants to develop a personal plan to encourage kingdom-deepening creativity in communities they know.

**Strategies and Glimpses from the Field:** This section (pages 26-37) contains perspectives from a variety of field practitioners in many regions of the world.

- Todd Saurman proposes “The Worship Wheel” as a useful tool, not only for contextualizing worship experiences at church gatherings, but also for engaging with communities outside the church
- Ian Collinge applies best practices in ethnodoxology to the challenges inherent in short-term missions
- Jacob Joseph explores some considerations for developing indigenized Christian worship in India
- Andrew McFarland briefly describes William Carey’s experience in India with local proverbs and songs
- Tom Ferguson evaluates his experiences with an innovative church planting model, incorporating indigenous forms of Bible-storying and arts
- Jim and Carla Bowman tell of one incident from their story-and

arts-based church planting model which is multiplying churches in over 30 countries


- W. Jay Moon writes of a powerful use of Hausa proverbs in witness
- Mae Alice Reggy recounts how chanting scripture led to a deeper engagement with God’s word among the Wolayta in Ethiopia
- Paul Neeley reminds us that since the Zabur (Psalms) are mentioned in the Qur’an, they can be a “safe” part of the Bible to use in song creation for Islamic contexts
- Finally, this issue closes with a challenge from the Global South. Cameroonian theologian and pastor Roch Ntankeh poses hard questions to fellow Africans and Western missionaries alike, including this one: “Are our Western partners ready to trust us in the decision-making process?”

## FULL CIRCLE

This issue of *Mission Frontiers* holds extraordinary meaning for me. Not only do I love featuring some of my favorite articles from the *Ethnodoxology Handbook and Manual*, but God launched my personal journey into ethnodoxology with the 1996 July-August edition of *MF*. In the late 90s I was beginning a decade of cross-cultural service with my husband and family in Siberia, and that *MF* issue, hand-carried to us on the field, rocked my world. Its seminal articles by pioneers in arts and mission served as a clarion call to service for me and others in this movement. The issue presented a vision for combining worship and local arts in ministry—an idea that changed our lives forever.

So now I’ve come full circle: from wide-eyed reader of the first worship-and-mission issue to a guest editor

with the privilege of demonstrating 18 years of the movement’s growth and development. It is my fond hope that these pages will influence not just artists in mission, but even more importantly, those who guide the future of mission strategy: mission leaders and educators.

And so I welcome you into the world of ethnodoxology. I hope you’ll enjoy your journey through this publication, recognizing that ethnodoxology is for everyone, not just for artists. After all, God gave every community unique gifts of artistic communication to tell the Truth, to bring healing and hope and joy in response to the groanings of creation. Many of these gifts, however, lie dormant, misused, or dying. Whether your role in missions is as a leader, trainer, practitioner, or artistic communicator, you can help people reclaim their arts, enter the Kingdom, and thrive.<sup>5</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> “The Handbook” - Krabill, James R., gen. ed, with Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library. “The Manual” - Schrag, Brian. *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach their Kingdom Goals*, James Krabill, gen. ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Originally published online: Schrag, Brian with Robin Harris. “Ethnodoxology’s Time is Here: How Engaging Local Artists Can Expand God’s Kingdom.” *Lausanne Global Analysis* 3:1 (January 2014), (Accessed July 13, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Schrag, Brian. *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach their Kingdom Goals*, James Krabill, gen. ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.worldofworship.org/Training/seminars.php> (Accessed July 12, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> C.f. Brian Schrag’s article, pg. 23 of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*.



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# ETHNO DOXOLOGY:

## FACILITATING LOCAL ARTS EXPRESSIONS FOR KINGDOM PURPOSES

*I, Robin, had the opportunity to interview Brian Schrag about the guiding principles of ethnodoxology and its crucial role in cross-cultural ministry. Below is a portion of our conversation.<sup>1</sup>*

**RPH:** This term—ethnodoxology—is new to most people. What does it mean?

**BES:** Ethnodoxology is a theological and anthropological framework guiding all cultures to worship God using their unique artistic expressions. The term derives from two biblical Greek words: “ethno” from *ethne* (peoples) and “doxology” from *doxos* (glory or praise).

**RPH:** How long has it taken for ethnodoxology to emerge as a strategic missional approach?

**BES:** In 1993, the term ethnodoxology had probably never been uttered on this planet. However, by 2003, a network emerged called the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE). By 2013, ICE was connecting hundreds of individuals and scores of organizations, had produced a remarkable two-volume scholarly and practical foundation for the new discipline, and had helped to spearhead a reorientation of mission education and practice.

### ETHNODOXOLOGY'S POWER

**RPH:** So why is locally grounded artistic communication so powerful for the expansion of the kingdom of God?

**BES:** Artistic communication

- is embedded in culture and so touches many important aspects of a society;
- marks messages as important and separate from everyday activities;
- involves not only cognitive, but also experiential and emotional ways of knowing;

- aids in remembering messages;
- increases the impact of messages through multiple media that often involve the whole body;
- concentrates the information contained in messages;
- instills solidarity in its performers;
- provides socially acceptable frameworks for expressing difficult or new ideas; and
- inspires and moves people to action and can act as a strong sign of identity.

Perhaps most importantly, local artistic communication is generally created and owned locally. There is no need to translate foreign materials, and community artists are empowered to contribute to the expansion of the kingdom of God.

**RPH:** In what ways has the church traditionally engaged the arts in cross-cultural ministry, and how does ethnodoxology connect to those approaches?

**BES:** At least three broad approaches in relation to the arts come to mind:

- Some cross-cultural workers approach the arts in a **Bring It – Teach It** framework, teaching their own arts to people in another community. This can lead to unity among diverse Christian communities, but it excludes local arts and artists.
- In another framework called **Build New Bridges**, artists from one community find ways to connect artistically with members of another community. This approach results in collaborative artistic efforts, often in response to traumatic events.
- In a third approach, arts advocates take a **Find It – Encourage It** stance, learning to know local artists and their arts in ways that spur these artists to create in the forms they know best. The advocate enters local creative processes, helping give birth to new creations that flow organically from the community. This approach usually requires longer-term relationships with people, and above all, a commitment to learn.

Ethnodoxology flows from Find It - Encourage It. Though the approach is not new—Patrick and other missionaries to the Celts engaged with local arts in the 5th century—ethnodoxology has taken its current form in response to relatively recent academic and missiological influences.

## ETHNODOXOLOGY PROCESS

**RPH:** What is the basic process for doing ethnodoxology in a community?

**BES:** This approach typically includes five steps:

1. Learn to know a community and its arts.
2. Identify ways particular artistic genres can meet particular community kingdom goals.
3. Spark creativity in these genres by local practitioners.
4. Encourage community members to improve the new creations.

## ...INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHURCH PLANTING EFFORTS, DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION, EVANGELISM AND SHORT-TERM MISSION OUTREACH.

5. Integrate and celebrate the new works and plan for continuing creativity.

In summary, our job is getting to know people and encouraging them to create arts in contexts that strengthen and spread the kingdom in sustainable ways.

**RPH:** What are the contexts in which an ethnodoxological approach increases kingdom impact?

**BES:** Ethnodoxology can increase the effectiveness of church planting efforts, discipleship and spiritual formation, evangelism and short-term mission outreach, and helping people respond to injustice and trauma.

## CENTRAL AFRICA CASE STUDY

**RPH:** What kind of impact did you see from this approach where you served in Central Africa?

**BES:** In the 1940s, a Congolese evangelist planted the first church among speakers of the Mono language in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He counseled the first Christians to burn their musical instruments and learn to sing Euro-American hymns translated into a trade language—Lingala. When my family and I moved to their community to help translate the Bible into Mono in the early 1990s, we found a church that, while it was active, worshipped through foreign arts and language and had a mixed moral reputation.

With the church leaders, I explored possibilities of integrating older song styles into the lives of Christians, and they eventually decided to form Choraes Ayo, or Love Choirs. These groups composed songs based on Scripture, with lyrics in the Mono language, and in a traditional song style using a local harp. After years of difficulty (including civil war), these groups have spread and are now thriving in many Mono villages. In 2012, Mono pastor Gaspard Yalemoto reported this:



In the past, Mono traditional instruments were only used to worship the gods of our ancestors. However, in 1992, Brian moved to my village and started learning to play traditional Mono songs on the kundi—a local harp. Eventually a small group joined him and began composing Scripture-based songs. Today, in all of the Mono churches, we see a radical change in how Christians live, because God’s message communicated through kundi songs directly touches their hearts. Many declare by their actions that the Spirit has used this to bring them back to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS

**RPH:** If we, the church, adopt the kind of approach you used in DRC, what do you think will happen?

**BES:** If ethnodoxology becomes the primary approach to growth in mission and worship:

- Minority artists and their arts will be well integrated into their community’s church life.
- The church will become an engine for revitalization of minority arts and their communities, rather than a frequent contributor to their demise.
- Sharing of artistic resources in the church will move both from minority to majority cultures and vice versa.
- More artistic forms will be represented around God’s throne (Rev 7:9-12) and in his city (Rev 21:22-27).

**RPH:** What if we do not integrate this approach?


**BES:** If ethnodoxology sputters and dies:

- Protestant and evangelical worship will become more and more like pre-Vatican II Catholicism: essentially uniform expressions of corporate and individual worship. This increases a sense of unity in the worldwide church while diminishing its reflection of God’s creativity.

- Most artists in minority and older traditions will remain outside the church, continuing what seems to be an inevitable slide to disappearance. This slide is caused by globalization, urbanization, some misguided missionary activity, and other factors that strengthen majority arts and smother those from minority communities.

## ETHNODOXOLOGY’S ROLE IN THIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**RPH:** How would you summarize your evaluation of and vision for the church in relation to the arts?

**BES:** The reality I see today is that people communicate in almost 7,000 languages around the world, not just by spoken words, but through artistically rendered song, drama, dance, and story. These communities have non-existent or imperfect relationships with God, and struggle with violence, disease, social upheaval, anger, sexual promiscuity, anxiety, and fear—as do our own societies. God gave every culture unique gifts of artistic communication to tell truth and bring healing, hope, and joy in response to these problems. However, too many of these gifts lie dormant, misused, or dying. If we can help our brothers and sisters—and ourselves—breathe new, redeemed life into these artistic traditions, all cultures will eventually use all of their gifts to worship, obey, and enjoy God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. It will not happen completely on this earth, but we can join God in working toward the next. 

<sup>1</sup> This article was originally published in the March 2014 edition of the *Lausanne Global Analysis* (LGA) and is republished here with permission. Learn more about the LGA and subscribe at [www.lausanne.org/analysis](http://www.lausanne.org/analysis).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from an endorsement for Brian Schrag’s *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual for Helping Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

## DO THEY HAVE SIN? / ROBERTA R. KING

In one church in Africa, worship is announced through drums, “speaking” to those who have not yet arrived: “Hurry, the service is about to begin!” As the drumming continues, rattles and bells enter in, and singing starts. Often in a call-and-response style, the singing includes vibrato and improvised harmony. The congregation rises and

moves energetically in celebration of their new life in Christ.

One newly arrived missionary joined in the celebration of song and dance. Others sat motionless, uncomfortable with the non-Western form of worship and unaware of the statement they were making through their refusal to participate.

The service ended and the believers surrounded the dancing visitor with expressions of welcome and thanks for

worshipping with them. Then they asked, “Why don’t the others worship with us? Do they have sin in their lives?”

Apparently among these Africans only those who have sin in their lives find it difficult to enter into worship and dance.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 184.



# THE BRIDGE



## RON MAN

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## BALANCING BIBLICAL FAITHFULNESS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Every grounded and mature believer would maintain that the Scriptures must guide us as our supreme and final authority in understanding and shaping our worship.<sup>1</sup> After all, worship is *about* God, and it is through the Scriptures that God has revealed to us his nature and ways. Worship is likewise *for* God, and it is the Scriptures that tell us what he expects of us creatures. The Bible is to be our guide in every area of life. So certainly in this crucial area of worship, we must look to it to guide us.

People change. Times change. Cultures change. Only in the pages of Scripture can we hope to find an unchanging standard for our worship. And with all the debates about worship forms, styles, and practices which continue to rage today, the church of Jesus Christ desperately needs a *unifying* understanding of the unchanging, nonnegotiable foundations of worship—and we must turn to the Scriptures for that purpose.

Yet even with this commitment to the Scriptures as our guide for worship, we immediately run into a problem when we go to the New Testament for models and guidelines for congregational worship. That problem has been summarized by John Piper as the “stunning indifference” of the New Testament writers to issues of form and practice in corporate worship.<sup>2</sup>

We search the pages of the New Testament in vain for detailed instructions, much less structures or liturgies. Even in the Epistles, where we might reasonably expect Paul and the other writers to address these issues as they write to guide brand new churches, we find frustratingly few details.<sup>3</sup>

This presents us with a crucial question: just what is it in the Bible that is supposed to govern and determine our worship? It is a reasonable assumption that the virtual silence of the New Testament writers on the matters of form and style for worship means that

the Lord intends for us to have considerable latitude and flexibility in these areas. Yet our worship services still need to look like *something*, so how are we to make choices? Is it just a case of “anything goes”?

## A MODEL FOR BIBLICAL GUIDANCE AND FREEDOM: “THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE”

I would like to suggest a model that gives biblical guidance, yet at the same time allows for biblical freedom. By way of illustration, this model may be based on certain characteristics of a *suspension bridge*, similar to the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City or the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

## THERE ARE A HOST OF PRINCIPLES THAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE TO GUIDE US... IN FASHIONING BIBLICALLY APPROPRIATE YET CULTURALLY MEANINGFUL EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP.

In a suspension bridge, the weight is supported by both the towers and the suspension cable. The towers are sunk deep in the earth and are meant to be as stable and immovable as possible. The suspension cable, or span, on the other hand, while sharing a significant portion of the load-bearing, has by design a great deal of flexibility to expand and contract, thus allowing the bridge to withstand variations in temperature, wind, weight load, and other conditions. It should also be pointed out that, while both the stationary columns and the flexible span are important parts of the bridge’s construction, it is ultimately the cable that transfers much of the weight of the road bed and its traffic to the towers, so that the towers are crucial to the bridge’s integrity and durability.

What can we learn about our worship from this illustration? Our worship needs to be supported by firmly rooted biblical foundations—the two towers of the bridge. The flexible cable span suggests the liberty that the New Testament seems to allow for individual faith communities to constitute their corporate worship in ways that fit their situation. Like any art form, Christian

worship allows for much creative expression, but within defined parameters. The Bible provides for those parameters, as well as that freedom.

## THE FIRST TOWER: “BIBLICAL CONSTANTS”

The first tower suggests an immovable aspect of Christian worship that we could term “Biblical Constants.” These are non-negotiables, elements that simply *must* be present for our worship to be considered Christian.

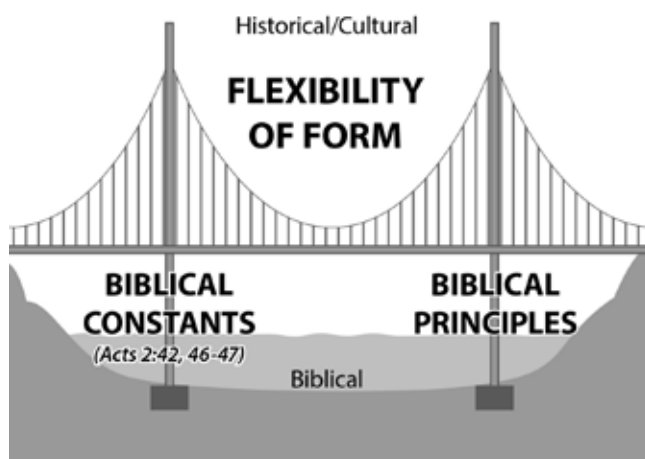
What are these elements? One clue may be found in Acts 2. Luke has just recounted the events of the day of Pentecost: the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus’

followers, Peter’s sermon, and the conversion and baptism of about three thousand people (2:41). In the very next verse, Luke tells us what these believers did when they gathered together: “And they devoted themselves to the *apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer . . . praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people*” (2:42,47; italics added). The words in italics suggest a list of crucial activities for the people of God when they congregate:

1. The word of God
2. Fellowship
3. The Lord’s Supper
4. Prayer
5. Praise

A number of commentators have assessed these verses

as something more than simply a *description* of what the earliest church did, but rather as a *prescription* of normative practice for the church of all ages.<sup>4</sup> Indeed I have often given an assignment to students to list what activities are consistently found in every Christian worship service, in every denomination around the world, and down through history—and the results they come up with generally correspond very closely with the list found in Acts 2:42,47! These elements seem to be nonnegotiable constants which define and characterize truly Christian worship—elements that must therefore be represented in some form in every church’s corporate gatherings.<sup>5</sup> These “Biblical Constants” serve as one foundational pillar for our worship.<sup>6</sup>



## **GOD IS MUCH MORE CONCERNED WITH OUR HEART THAN WITH THE FORM OF OUR WORSHIP.**

### **THE SECOND TOWER: “BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES”**

Just because the New Testament does not provide many specifics about how to do worship in local congregations, this does not mean that “anything goes” and that we have no biblical guidance concerning worship. As with other areas or practices in our lives that are not specifically addressed by the Scriptures (e.g., movies, smoking, internet use), there are most certainly biblical principles in God’s word to be applied with wisdom and honesty to our situation and worshiping in it. There are a host of principles that can be drawn from the pages of Scripture to guide us and to guide the leadership of local churches in fashioning biblically appropriate yet culturally meaningful expressions of worship. These principles serve as the second tower in our illustration, giving further stability and strength to the worship structure as a whole.

Biblical principles are different from biblical constants because, as has already been mentioned above, principles must be applied and sometimes *applied* differently in different situations.

What follows then is a list of biblical principles that pertain to the practice of worship in the local church.<sup>7</sup> In each case, the principle is stated, followed by a supporting scripture verse (or verses) and an explanatory paragraph.

**1. God’s glory, and our joyful celebration of it in worship, should be the focus and goal of all life and ministry.**

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor 10:31 NASB)

**2. Worship is first and foremost for God.**

“Worship God.” (Rev 19:10; 22:9 NASB)

**3. Worship is a dialogue between God and his people, a rhythm of revelation and response.**

“Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.” (Ps 96:4 NASB)

**4. The Word must be central in our worship.**

“Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.” (Ps 150:2 NASB)

**5. Worship is the responsibility of all God’s people.**



Alan Hood © Wycliffe Canada 2011

“So we your people and the sheep of your pasture will give thanks to you forever.” (Ps 79:13 NASB)

**6. Our worship is acceptable in and through Christ our High Priest.**

“In the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” (Heb 2:12, NASB)

**7. Our response of worship is enabled, motivated, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

“We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.” (Phil 3:3 NASB)

**8. Worship is the response of our entire lives to God.**

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” (Rom 12:1 NASB)

**9. God is much more concerned with our heart than with the form of our worship.**

“I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice.” (Hos 6:6 NASB)

**10. Worship should promote the unity and edification of the body.**

“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 15:5,6 NASB)

**11. Young and old need each other in the body of Christ.**

“Young men and maidens, old men and children: Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted.” (Ps 148:12,13, NIV 1984)



## 12. These things must be taught and retaught.

“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.”  
(1 Thess 4:1 NASB)

### THE SPAN: FLEXIBILITY AND FREEDOM


The span, with its built-in elasticity and flexibility, represents the freedom that the New Testament seems to allow for wise, prudent, and biblically based application of culturally meaningful expressions. The “heart language of the people” is to be considered when making decisions about forms, styles, music, and other artistic expressions of faith.

We can certainly see the application of this principle, consciously or not, in the vast array of worship expressions that have developed throughout the history of the Christian church and in churches around the world today. There has been, and is, an enormous variety in terms of architecture, atmosphere, form, structure, style, dress, music, liturgy, and other expressions. God, who has created the world and humanity with such incredible diversity, must certainly rejoice in such worship variety from his people.<sup>8</sup> One would never use Bach organ fugues for worship in an African tribal village—a form that would have little or no meaning for this people. And conversely, some of the most natural cultural expressions of various African villages would be incomprehensible to most northern Europeans. In many contexts in Africa, drums are the *primary instrument* for worship—not a debated add-on! Recent developments in missions have given more weight to the importance of helping local faith communities develop their own indigenous forms of worship music, rather than simply borrowing and translating songs from the West—as was the practice for far too long in many church planting contexts.

The virtual silence of the New Testament as to the specifics of congregational worship practice seems to allow for local churches, as the fundamental unit of the body of Christ on earth, to have considerable autonomy and freedom in such specifics. Individual or clusters of congregations can work out the issues involving the balance of biblical constants and flexibility in the worship of their own churches. This does not mean that it is an easy task, however, as recent history has amply demonstrated. The so-called “worship wars” are symptomatic of the kind of danger into which freedom of this sort can cast us, and we might indeed be left wishing that Paul had simply prescribed a set liturgy for all time and left it at that! God obviously wants his people to apply biblical wisdom and discernment in this, as well as in many other areas where he has chosen not to spell everything out for us.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

“Man looks at the outward appearance; but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7 NASB). We squabble about so many little things related to worship, but God is looking for people who will worship him in spirit and truth. The externals are not nearly as important to him as they are to us! God is not as worried about which songs you sing as he is about you “making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:19 NASB).

In today’s raging worship debates we desperately need to see that there are biblical constants and principles that we can really agree on. And then we need to have the grace and maturity to allow for the flexibility for which God seems to allow. There is far more that binds us as worshipers than divides us through our different expressions—“there is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4–6, NIV 1984). Let us obey Paul’s command to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:1–3, ESV). 

- <sup>1</sup> Originally published in a slightly different form in Ron Man, “Worship Bridges,” *Worship Leader* (September 2005): 18–21. Published in expanded form in Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 17–25. Used by permission.
- <sup>2</sup> Piper, John 2000 “Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning: The Pursuit of God in Corporate Worship”. Minneapolis: Desiring God Ministries, 13.
- <sup>3</sup> Piper suggests that this lack of detail may arise from the need for the message of the gospel to go out into every nation and culture (we are to “go and tell”). Therefore, Christian worship must be flexible to allow for cultural differences—whereas in the Old Testament the worship of the one true God was rooted in one culture and place (Jerusalem), and the message to the world was one of “come and see.” For more on this, see Piper’s chapter in the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, “The Missional Impulse Toward Incarnational Worship in the New Testament.”
- <sup>4</sup> For example, R. C. H. Lenski writes: “Here we have a brief description of the religious life of the first Christian congregation. All the essentials are present and are in proper order and harmony. The church has always felt that this is a model.” See Lenski, R. C. H. 1961 *Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 117.
- <sup>5</sup> Allowing, of course, for periodic rather than weekly celebrations of the Lord’s Supper—though the practice of the early church was certainly weekly if not more often.
- <sup>6</sup> Some scholars who advocate drawing more guidance for Christian worship from the Old Testament might want to add more elements to these biblical constants.
- <sup>7</sup> These principles and their supporting material have emerged from the process of constructing a guiding philosophy of worship in a particular local church.
- <sup>8</sup> Reggie Kidd in his book *With One Voice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) explores various legitimate expressions of worship in the US today that use art music, folk music, and popular music.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM MISSION HISTORY IN AFRICA<sup>1</sup>



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# CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE MUSIC

**S**ome churches and religious movements in Africa have from the very beginning sung their own locally composed music.<sup>2</sup> However, many, if not most, other churches—particularly those founded by Western mission societies or organizations, beginning with the chanting of the first Latin Mass on the west coast of Africa in 1482—have passed, or are currently passing, through a number of stages on their way to developing a music for worship they can call their own.

## SIX STAGES OF MUSIC DEVELOPMENT IN MANY SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES

The six stages we will examine briefly are: importation, adaptation, alteration, imitation, indigenization, and internationalization. We do not mean to imply that all churches have passed through every one of these stages or have done so in this precise order. However, the stages occur frequently enough to be helpful for ongoing reflection.

### Stage 1: IMPORTATION—Where hymn tunes, texts, and rhythms all originate with the Western missionary

For much of Africa's church history, the hymns of Watts and Wesley or portions of the Latin Mass were simply taken over from the West and reproduced as accurately as possible by new believers in African worship contexts. Interestingly, with time many African Christians came to genuinely cherish Euro-American music traditions and consider them as "their own."

Asante Darkwa, speaking for many other Ghanaian Christians, has noted that

the hymn tune is perhaps the most commonly understood form of Western music by literates and preliterate Africans. Christians sing their favorite hymns not only at church services but also at wakes and burials and in other situations in which they find solace and comfort in those ancient and modern hymns which have done a wealth of good spiritually to Christians all over the world.<sup>3</sup>

Not all Africans, however, have felt as “at home” with Western musical traditions as this might suggest. For many, there has persisted a lingering, underlying sense of alienation, of “spiritual unsuitability” with the Western music legacy introduced by the missionaries. Nigerian E.

Bolaji Idowu stated it harshly years ago when he wrote:

Again and again, as we have observed, choirs have been made to sing or screech out complicated anthems in English while they barely or do not at all appreciate what they are singing... We must not be deceived by the fact that people have borne their martyrdom to this affliction without complaint so far.<sup>4</sup>

And so we move to what often follows as the second stage of hymn development.



“Punayima Kanyama, master performer of gbaguru wisdom songs in the DR Congo” (Photos in this article are by Heather Pubols, used by permission)

## **Stage 2: ADAPTATION—where imported hymn tunes or texts are in some way “Africanized” by rendering them more suitable or intelligible to worshipers in a given setting**

At the adaptation stage of development, nothing is substantially changed with the imported hymn tune or text. But an effort might be made to adapt the tune to the context of a particular faith community by introducing the use of drums, rattles, or other locally produced instruments. The West African Cherubim and Seraphim Church frequently does this with well-known Western hymns such as “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” accompanied variously by harmonica, drums, electronic keyboards, or cow bells.<sup>5</sup>

Or again, the decision might be made to translate the text of a hymn from a Western language into a locally spoken one—a practice generally as helpful to new converts as it is satisfying to the missionaries themselves. “You cannot

appreciate what it means to hear ‘Nothing but the Blood of Jesus’ sung in a strange language away out in a bush town!” reported Christian and Missionary Alliance workers in 1930, one year after their arrival in Côte d’Ivoire.<sup>6</sup>

We must note here, however, that translated hymns—though perhaps more fully understood than those remaining in a “foreign” language—are often little more than “shortcuts,” “temporary stopgaps,” and “from the point of view of their art, not the best.”<sup>7</sup> One common predicament is that

## **EVERY FACE LIGHTS UP; THERE IS AN UNMISTAKABLE FEELING AS OF THIRSTY DESERT TRAVELERS WHO REACH AN OASIS.**

many African words, based on tonal patterns, have their tones (and meanings!) altered when they are sung to Euro-American tunes. One serious case is reported by Idowu where the English expression “miserable offender,” translated into Yoruba and sung to a certain European tune, became “miserable one afflicted with tuberculosis of the glands.”<sup>8</sup>

## **Stage 3: ALTERATION—where some part of the missionary’s hymn (tune, text, or rhythm) is replaced or otherwise significantly modified by an indigenous form**

What happens at the alteration stage is more than a simple “translation” of Western tunes (with rattles) or texts (with language) into an African idiom. There is rather a substantial alteration or total substitution of some part of the Western hymn by tunes, texts, or rhythms of indigenous composition or flavor. Examples of this type of modification might be: (1) where Western tunes are retained, but new, locally written texts replace the Western ones;<sup>9</sup> or (2) where Western texts are retained and put to new, locally composed tunes.<sup>10</sup>

## **Stage 4: IMITATION—where tunes, texts, and rhythms are locally composed or performed, but in a style that is inspired by or replicates in some way a Western musical genre**

“Nearly all the well-known Ghanaian composers, as well as students, have tried to write hymn tunes,” according to Asante Darkwa.<sup>11</sup> One of the most famous of these was Dr. Ephraim Amu, who as an expert in Ghanaian traditional music also studied at the Royal School of Music in London, 1937–40. He eventually composed and published a collection of forty-five choral works.<sup>12</sup> Illustrations abound across the continent of African musicians who have composed songs for worship, for example, in the styles



of nineteenth-century revivalist hymns, southern gospel, four-part male quartet arrangements, and increasingly on the contemporary music scene in the popular genres of “praise and worship” choruses, country and western, hip-hop, reggae, and rap.

### Stage 5: INDIGENIZATION—where tunes, texts, and rhythms are locally produced in indigenous musical forms and styles

Many first-generation Christians in Africa have resisted using indigenous tunes, languages, and instruments in worship because of the emotional and spiritual associations these tend to conjure up from their former lives.

What is also true, however, is that nothing more inspires and brings to life the church in Africa than singing and dancing the indigenous “heart music” of the culture. Whenever such music is introduced into the African worship experience, something almost magical immediately sets in. “At once,” writes Idowu, “every face lights up; there is an unmistakable feeling as of thirsty desert travelers who reach an oasis. Anyone watching...will know immediately that [the] worshipers are at home, singing heart and soul.”<sup>13</sup>

Indigenous, locally composed music does not need to be the only diet for the church. But a healthy church will make it a goal, for “when a people develops its own hymns with both vernacular words and music, it is good evidence that Christianity has truly taken root.”<sup>14</sup>


### Stage 6: Internationalization—where tunes, texts, and rhythms from the global faith family beyond both the West and one’s own local context become incorporated into the life and worship of the church

This stage is the newest, almost unexplored frontier of worship music for the church. In contrast to “contextual” music, it is what the 1996 Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture has called “cross-cultural” music.<sup>15</sup> This will be the encounter of the twenty-first century, vastly broader and richer than the bilateral relationships that have characterized so much of the colonial experience between Europe and Africa up until now. The internationalization of music today moves us ever closer to the biblical vision of where all history is headed—the vision of a coming day described by the evangelist John in Revelation 7:9,10 when all languages, tribes, and nations will together proclaim, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

## CONCLUSION

When one stops to consider the sheer volume of musical production being generated across the thousands of movements and denominations and the tens of thousands

of local worshipping communities in Africa today, it simply boggles the mind.

Perhaps the life and counsel of Ghanaian hymn composer and ethnomusicologist Ephraim Amu is the best we can do in imagining how multiple music traditions can coexist as separate yet hybrid realities. Amu as a young student and professor during the peak of the colonial era of the 1930s and 1940s consciously chose to free himself from the cultural expectations of his day by refusing to dress in Western-style clothing and wearing instead traditional Ghanaian cloth made from locally spun cotton. Amu lived biculturally and reportedly loved to serve soup to guests in earthen pots and water in calabashes on a table adorned with imported cutlery. “There is no harm in embracing the good things of other cultures that have universal values,” Amu once said, “but by all means let us keep the best in our own.”<sup>16</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Selected portions of this essay have been adapted from Chapter 28 in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (hereafter *Ethnodoxology Handbook*) and from my chapter, “Encounters: What Happens to Music When People Meet,” in *Music in the Life of the African Church*, eds. Roberta R. King, Jean Ngoya Kidula, James R. Krabill, and Thomas Oduro (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 57–79.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most remarkable examples of this grows out of the early 20th-century ministry of the Liberian evangelist, William Wade Harris in Côte d’Ivoire, West Africa. For a description of that incredible story, see my account in Chapter 65, “How a West African Evangelist Unleashed Musical Creativity among New Believers,” in the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*.

<sup>3</sup> Asante Darkwa, “New Horizons in Music and Worship in Ghana,” *African Urban Studies* 8 (Fall 1980): 69.

<sup>4</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 30–31.

<sup>5</sup> See video clip in James R. Krabill, “Theology of Song,” in *Global Consultation on Music and Missions: The Proceedings*, eds. Paul Neeley, Linda Neeley, Paul McAndrew, and Cathy McAndrew, CD-ROM (Duncanville, TX: EthnoDoxology/ACT, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Ellenberger, “Gossiping the Gospel in French West Africa,” *The Alliance Weekly*, September 13, 1930: 598.

<sup>7</sup> J. H. Nketia, “The Contribution of African Culture to Christian Worship,” *International Review of Missions* 47 (1958): 274.

<sup>8</sup> Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, 33.

<sup>9</sup> For examples, see W. J. Wallace, “Hymns in Ethiopia,” in *Practical Anthropology* 9 (November–December 1962): 271; and Mary Key, “Hymn Writing with Indigenous Tunes,” *Practical Anthropology* 9 (November–December 1962): 258–59.

<sup>10</sup> For examples here, see the lively debate among Roman Catholics about the adaptation of the liturgy to new contexts of ministry.

<sup>11</sup> Darkwa, “New Horizons,” 69.

<sup>12</sup> Ephraim Amu, *Amu Choral Works, vol. 1* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Vida Chenoweth and Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* 15 (September–October 1968): 212.

<sup>15</sup> Lutheran World Federation, Nairobi Statement. See also the article by Anne Zaki in this issue, based on her longer chapter in the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, “Shall We Dance? Reflections on the Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture.”

<sup>16</sup> J. H. Kwabena Nketia, introduction to Amu, *Amu Choral Works*, 8.



# FOUR WAYS CULTURE & WORSHIP RELATE



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Christianity, like every other religion, was born in a particular historical and cultural context, in a particular time and place.<sup>1</sup> For Christianity, this context happened to be the ancient Middle East at the beginning of the first century. While the historical context of Christianity's birth is unchangeable and static, like the recorded time and place on one's birth certificate, its cultural context no longer exists. Culture by definition is dynamic and constantly changing, sometimes slowly and gradually, at other times rapidly and dramatically.

Christianity has always stood in tension with prevailing cultures, no matter where it existed. But as humans we hate tension. We are wired to resolve tension. We look for symmetry. We want a clean end to every mystery novel, an answer to every complex riddle. But what happens when Christianity insists on maintaining its foundations *and* its original cultural forms, no matter what new culture it finds itself in? What happens when Christians see the tension as a chaotic mess, rejecting its constant demands to review one's priorities and revisit difficult questions? A crisis occurs.

A survey of various Christian traditions shows us that some churches try to resolve the tension by downplaying the differences between culture and faith. They try to blend in by matching their beliefs and practices—their entire religion, form and foundation—to those of the contemporary culture. History has proven over and over again that such faith communities lose their salty effectiveness (1 Sam 8; Matt 5) and give up their call to help reshape and reform culture (John 17). What *was* originally a healthy tension breaks down into bland duplication of the ungodly values of the context—a crisis.

Other Christian traditions have tried to resolve the tension by taking the opposite extreme, isolating themselves in opposition to the culture. This can take the passive shape of retreating to fundamentalist convictions, insisting that faith must be practiced in its original and purest forms, crediting the “good ol’ days” for bygone exuberance and growth. But it can also become aggressive, imposing itself on others, fighting about differences in worldview, faith, and practices—a crisis.

In their wisdom the writers of the Nairobi Statement foresaw the shadow of such crises hovering over the church in our human tendency and temptation to resolve tension at all cost. In an attempt to navigate away from these crisis points between Christianity and



culture, they produced this document to help churches view the tension as an ongoing conversation to be protected, preserved, and even promoted. They have carefully designed a four-way conversation in which each persona has a role to perform, yet always remains in dialog with the other partners.

They have chosen to focus on worship as “the heart and pulse of the Christian church” (section 1.1), the most regular corporate event that is both expressive and formative of the beliefs and practices of a faith community.

### FIRST: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS TRANSCULTURAL

Christian worship contains the same substance for everyone everywhere. In all its diverse expressions, it is beyond culture. This is true not only of the central actions mandated by Scripture, but also of the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ (section 2.2).

This transcultural dimension is probably the single most important factor to the sensed unity of the worldwide church, visible and invisible, across time and space. We read the same letter to the Romans which was read long before us by Saint Augustine in Northern Africa and Luther in Western Europe. We remember and celebrate Christ’s death and resurrection in the Lord’s Supper, in parallel with believers in a megachurch in Korea, and in

## NAIROBI STATEMENT ON WORSHIP AND CULTURE<sup>2</sup>

### CHRISTIAN WORSHIP RELATES DYNAMICALLY TO CULTURE IN AT LEAST FOUR WAYS.

**FIRST**, it is trans-cultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture.

**SECOND**, it is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture).

**THIRD**, it is counter-cultural, challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture.

**FOURTH**, it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures.



a reed-roofed hut in the Amazon. We all sing the Psalms, with our own musical styles, instrumental accompaniment, and languages.<sup>3</sup> Understanding these universal and ecumenical elements of Christian unity gives local churches the freedom to use disciplined creativity for authentic contextualization.

### SECOND: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS CONTEXTUAL

Worship reflects local patterns of speech, dress, architecture, gestures, and other cultural characteristics. Jesus’ incarnation into a specific culture gives us both a model and a mandate. The gospel and the church were never intended to be exclusive to or confined to any one culture. Rather, the good news was to spread to the ends of the earth, rooting the church deeply into diverse local cultures. “Contextualization is a necessary task for the church’s mission in the world” (section 3.1).

In his book on global worship, Charles Farhadian stresses how important it is to “appreciate the immense variety of expressions of Christian worship in order to take seriously the social and cultural context that plays such a significant part in worship...[with] emphasis on culture as the potential, not the problem of worship.”<sup>4</sup>

The Nairobi Statement outlines two useful approaches to ensure adequate contextualization. First, *dynamic equivalence*—which involves re-expressing components





of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value, and function. For example,

moderate, mediating voice in the vicious conflict. This prayer demonstrates how worship goes decidedly against the surrounding cultures of intolerance and war, refusing to bow down to the false gods of greed, racism, and uncompromising self-righteousness, choosing instead to transform people and cultural patterns by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God, the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6; Mic 6:8).

## **PUBLIC WORSHIP...IS A SUPERB WAY TO PRACTICE NOT BEING THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE AND LEARN TO SEE THE WORLD RIGHT-SIDE UP.**

the lordship of Jesus is taught among the Maasai tribe in

Kenya by painting a black man dressed in a red robe, since red is the color of royalty and is always worn by the village chief. The second approach is *creative assimilation*, which involves enriching worship by adding pertinent components of local culture. For example, in Egypt the harmonic sound of an *oud* (lute) is used to add a fuller expression to psalms of lament.

Both of these tools go beyond mere translation and must be used with caution. Discernment is essential to decide how to equivocate and assimilate, while preserving the transcultural elements of unity and ecumenicity with the church universal. As the Nairobi Statement says, “The fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected” (section 3.5).

### **THIRD: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS COUNTER-CULTURAL**

Christians in the Middle East take their call to be peacemakers very seriously, intentionally designing worship that breaks down barriers and promotes reconciliation through prayers like the following:

*Gracious God, you have promised through your prophets that Jerusalem will be home to many peoples, mother to many nations. Hear our prayers that Jerusalem, the city of your visitation, may be for all—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—a place to dwell with you and to encounter one another in peace. We make this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.*<sup>5</sup>

In a meeting with a delegation of Christian leaders, the president of a Middle Eastern country said that Christians have a vital presence in the region because they offer a

Every culture contains some sinful, broken, dehumanizing elements that are contradictory to the gospel and present us with rival “secular liturgies that compete for our love.”<sup>6</sup> Christian worship must resist the idolatries of a given culture. This doesn’t mean that we become anticultural; rather, it challenges us to become careful readers of our culture in light of biblical truths.

In commenting on Psalm 73, John Witvliet writes, “Public worship, then as now, is a superb way to practice not being the center of the universe and learn to see the world right side up. Worship is, by the Spirit’s power, like spiritual cataract surgery that restores vision, clear and true.”<sup>7</sup>

### **FOURTH: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS CROSS-CULTURAL**

At a seminar in North America on using songs from other cultures in worship, a participant asked this question: “I am a pastor of a small rural congregation, and my entire congregation is Anglo-European descendants, so why would we sing African or Asian or Latin songs in worship?”


This question betrays a faulty assumption that when we worship with songs, prayers, instruments, and visual arts from other cultures, we do it for “them”—meaning people who come from those cultures. While it is a great act of hospitality to make “them” feel welcome and included (a most commendable practice in the growing context of immigration and refugee resettlement), we must also realize that we do this for “us”—meaning people who feel at home in the commonly used language and musical style of “our” worship. Sharing worship resources cross-culturally expands our view of God and the church as transcending time and space, develops our repertoire of worship expressions, and crystalizes our understanding of the kingdom of heaven.

There are, of course, many issues to consider when engaging in cross-cultural worship—such as authenticity, instrumentation, languages, ethnic identities, and respect. To do this fourth aspect properly, we must faithfully practice the first three aspects by asking questions like: What elements of transcultural faith are we celebrating? To what degree do these elements fit in our local context? What brokenness in my culture will these borrowed practices help redeem and reform? Asking such questions will help us avoid slipping into the danger of viewing our own cultural processes as superior to others.

One of the most common, though often unspoken, reasons for not engaging in global worship is our fear that somehow our own heritage will be lost. C. Michael Hawn responds to this fear most eloquently: “Liturgical plurality is not denying one’s cultural heritage of faith in song, prayer, and ritual. It is a conscious effort to lay one’s cultural heritage and perspective alongside another’s, critique each, and learn from the experience.”<sup>8</sup>

The Nairobi Statement reminds us of what is at stake when we plan Christian worship. It helps us to major in question asking. The topic of worship practices is important not just for cultural anthropologists, missionaries, and missiologists, but for all Christian leaders and believers. And those of us who are novices in this area must enter the conversation with more questions than assertions.<sup>9</sup>

My hope and prayer is that local Christian communities may be instructed and inspired by the Nairobi Statement to see a third way when viewing the tension between

worship and culture. Though sometimes difficult and unsettling, tension is not an evil that deserves rejection, but a four-way conversation that holds great potential to help us faithfully uphold the gospel’s beauty and power while engaging culture, and in so doing we follow the example of Christ. 

- <sup>1</sup> Condensed from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 64–71. Used by permission.
- <sup>2</sup> Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies, Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities (Nairobi: Lutheran World Federation Department for Theology and Studies, 1996). To view the full text, see [www.tlcwv.org/pdf/nairobi\\_statement.pdf](http://www.tlcwv.org/pdf/nairobi_statement.pdf) and for Spanish and Korean translations, visit the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship website at [www.worship.calvin.edu](http://www.worship.calvin.edu).
- <sup>3</sup> See the sidebar below by Paul Neeley—“The Psalms: Let All Nations Praise the Lord.”
- <sup>4</sup> Farhadian, Charles E. 2007 *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, x.
- <sup>5</sup> For the full text, see Churches for Middle East Peace, “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem” (2006), accessible at <http://www.cmep.org/sites/default/files/PrayforJerusalemLiturgy.pdf> (page 2).
- <sup>6</sup> James K. A. Smith, in a lecture at the Calvin Worship Symposium, January 2011.
- <sup>7</sup> Witvliet, John D. 2011 “Worship in a Beatitude-Shaped World: Learning from Psalm 73” *Reformed Worship* 100: 5.
- <sup>8</sup> Hawn, C. Michael 2007 “Praying Globally: Pitfalls and Possibilities of Cross-Cultural Liturgical Appropriation.” In *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices*, Charles E. Farhadian, ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 210.
- <sup>9</sup> John Witvliet, 2003 “Worship Worldwide” (seminar presented during a conference on World Christianity at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI).

## THE PSALMS: Let All Nations Praise the Lord

/ PAUL NEELEY

The biblical psalms have been the songbook of devotion for God’s people for 3000 years. They have also been used in frontier missions among UPGs and in trauma healing workshops.

I’ve led workshops to translate some Psalms and set them to culturally-appropriate music in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo and Benin. The workshop in Benin was among a people group that did not have a single known Christian at the time—not even the Bible translators;

all were Muslim. Because the Zabur (Psalms) are mentioned in the Qur’an and are regarded as inspired by God, they were a “safe” part of the Bible to use in translation and song creation. And because many cultures in West Africa influenced by Islam have an “arts patronage” system established, it was easy to commission songs based on Psalm excerpts from a local Muslim composer, who made part of his living by composing songs for a small payment. The recorded songs were welcomed by the Muslim community, and not perceived as threatening as if we had started by making NT passages into songs. And since the alphabet and literacy were in the early stages of development, indigenous Scripture songs were by far the best way for the

majority of the people to learn God’s Word. This way they could get used to the idea that it could be sung using their local music system and language.

Psalms 117 is one of my favorite Psalms:

*Praise the Lord, all you nations;  
extol him, all you peoples of the earth.  
For he loves us with unfailing  
covenantal love,  
and the faithfulness of the Lord  
endures forever.  
Praise the Lord!*

What a wonderful call to the nations to find their true calling: worshiping the King of Kings as revealed in Scripture!

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# THE ARTS AND TRAUMA HEALING



## HARRIET HILL

Harriet Hill serves as the Program Director for the Trauma Healing Institute, a ministry of the American Bible Society. She became involved in Bible translation as a means to Scripture Engagement in 1980, serving with SIL first in Cote d'Ivoire, then across Africa, and finally internationally. She completed her PhD at Fuller in 2003 and currently co-teaches a modular course on Arts and Trauma Healing at GIAL's Center for Excellence in World Arts (Dallas, Texas).

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## SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

**W**hen people are overwhelmed with intense fear, helplessness and horror in the face or threat of death, they can be traumatized.<sup>1</sup> Trauma manifests itself as symptoms such as:

1. intrusive thoughts in which people re-experience the event;
2. avoidance of things associated with the event;
3. being on alert all the time.

For traumatized people to find healing, they need to express their pain. They need a safe place to express it, where they will not be attacked physically or verbally. They need someone who will listen.

Both internal and external forces work against this expression of pain. Since pain hurts, denial can sometimes seem like a better option. The church and culture are often complicit in this denial, teaching Christians that they should express praise and joy in all circumstances. In many places around the world, human feelings of anger, doubt, and abandonment are not accepted as appropriate for Christians. I observed this in



the words of a South Sudanese priest who said to me, “I saw my son get shot. I praised God. I need to be an example to the believers.”

## THE BIBLE HONORS VOICES OF PAIN

In fact, however, laments are sprinkled throughout the Bible. Christ lamented on the cross: “Why have you abandoned me?” A psalmist laments, “How long, oh Lord?” There are more lament psalms than any other category in the book of Psalms. One entire book of the Bible, the book of Lamentations, is a lament. Kathleen O’Connor writes, “Lamentations expresses human experiences of abandonment with full force. And because God never speaks, the book honors voices of pain. Lamentations is a house for sorrow because there is no speech for God.”<sup>2</sup> She adds, “Any words from God would...undercut anger and despair, foreshorten protest, and give the audience only a passing glimpse of the real terror of their condition. Divine speaking would trump all speech.”<sup>3</sup> Laments like the book of Lamentations show the way for those who are traumatized to express their pain to God honestly and forcefully.

## THE USE OF ART FORMS IN HEALING PAIN

People can use their art forms as they seek healing from their pain. My experience in Africa has shown me that almost every culture of that continent has a lament tradition: certain melodies, certain kinds of poetry, certain dances and postures. Often these lament traditions have been condemned as heathen and off-limits for Christians. I have observed that when African Christians understand the structure of lament Psalms in the Bible, it only takes a bit of encouragement for them to use their own lament traditions to express their pain to God. In thirty minutes of centering prayer and listening to the inner cry of their hearts, laments are expressed.


Sometimes these laments are expressed in prose, but more often words alone do not suffice; they must be expressed in song, dance, poetry, visual arts, or drama. Sometimes these laments are expressed by individuals or as a group. The piercing cry of a Niaboua pastor grieving the death of his sister still rings in my ears.

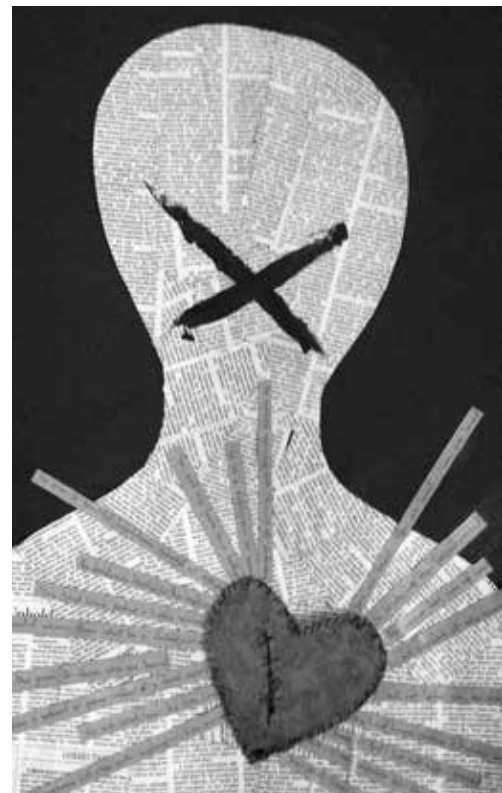
Laments do not know age, color, or gender. Children can lament as well as adults, Westerners as well as Southerners. When pain is expressed, healing often follows. And the songs shared bring healing to others.

People can also learn new art forms. I lived in Africa for twenty years and never saw adults draw pictures;

certainly not church leaders. But when Africans were given some markers and paper and a bit of explanation at the workshop—“get quiet inside and let the pain come out through your fingers”—it seemed that drawing is a native language of Africa. As people drew their pain, they were able to express it in ways that words cannot. One pastor from Côte d’Ivoire looked at his drawing and said, “That’s it! That’s how I feel! I didn’t realize it was so bad.” And as a small group we discussed the drawing, unpacking layer after layer of pain and loss.

## BRINGING OUR PAIN TO THE CROSS

Getting the pain out is part of the healing process.<sup>4</sup> As Christians, we can bring that pain—those drawings, sung laments, poetry, enacted pain—to the cross of Christ, because he died not only to forgive our sins but also to carry our sorrows. At the cross of Christ those pains that we have been able to express are absorbed by his death, bringing healing to our wounded hearts.<sup>5</sup> 



Jessica Martin—“Mended Grief.”

<sup>1</sup> This has been adapted and used with permission from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 177–178.

<sup>2</sup> O’Connor, Kathleen 2002 *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this topic, see Hill, Harriet et al. 2013 *Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help*. New York, NY: American Bible Society.

<sup>5</sup> A graduate level intensive course on the topic of Arts and Trauma Healing is offered at GIAL’s Center for Excellence. For more information, see [www.gial.edu/academics/arts-and-trauma-healing](http://www.gial.edu/academics/arts-and-trauma-healing).

# CREATING LOCAL ARTS TOGETHER

## SEVEN STEPS FOR FACILITATING ARTS IN COMMUNITY



**BRIAN SCHRAG**

Brian Schrag is SIL International's Ethnomusicology and Arts Coordinator and is the founder of GIAL's Center for Excellence in World Arts in Dallas, Texas. He has served as an ethnomusicologist and a Bible translator for Wycliffe Bible Translators in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon, and holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology (UCLA).  
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**CASE ONE:** In northwestern DR Congo, Mono Christians are making a fundamental change in how they communicate with God. Instead of using only international and regional artistic genres in their gatherings, they have integrated local arts. This movement is spreading from the hub of Bili to many other villages, and they are seeing a “radical change in how Christians live, because God’s message communicated through kundi (traditional harp) songs directly touches their hearts.”<sup>1</sup>

**CASE TWO:** In Central Asia, a large ethnolinguistic community is experiencing intergenerational healing: Instead of letting national education replace traditional learning, they are integrating local arts into the educational system. Because of this, older people are experiencing renewed respect and value, and children are learning the best parts of their traditional culture while succeeding in government schools. One official remarked, “I see the students growing in their confidence in learning, but also they are growing in their ability to learn.”

**CASE THREE:** In Richmond, Virginia (US), multiethnic churches have begun to worship, well...multiethnically: At least one worship leader is composing theology-rich songs for his African-American context, and teaching others to become students of their congregations, especially in learning about the arts of minorities among them. David Bailey writes, “We have a 70 percent rule—if you find yourself comfortable more than 70 percent of the time, then something is wrong, because that means your culture is dominating the community!”<sup>2</sup>

In each of these cases, a community has to overcome barriers like these to succeed:

- Rifts in communication between older and younger generations
- Unfounded negative self-identities
- Lack of skills and perspective necessary to meet changing demands of globalized economies and media and
- Theological misunderstandings

Also in each case, a person with special perspective and skills helped the community overcome obstacles with activities like these:

- They gathered church leaders and facilitated Bible studies on creation, worship, music, arts, and the kingdom of God
- They provided a framework for younger and older community members to meet, listen to each other, learn from each other, and together plan ways to integrate older traditions into modern realities
- They commissioned artists to integrate Scripture into new examples of old arts
- They helped create a Community Arts Survey<sup>3</sup>

A new manual reduces thousands of insights from situations like these into a user-friendly,

flexible, research-based approach that you can use in a community you know: *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals* (William Carey Library 2013).<sup>4</sup>

## WHAT'S IN THE MANUAL

This manual emerged from a relatively new community of practice: ethnodoxology.

Ethnodoxologists and friends (not everybody uses this word) invest themselves in incarnational relationships with communities, helping them unleash their unique arts in deepening and spreading the kingdom of God. Our ultimate goal is to help others create, offering insights gained from our scholarship and experiences ministering in rural and urban contexts all over the world.

In particular, the manual gently walks you through the Creating Local Arts Together approach, euphonically known as CLAT. See the figure below. The CLAT approach has seven key steps:

1. **MEET a Community and Its Arts.** Explore artistic and social resources that exist in the community. Performing Step 1 allows you to build relationships, to participate with and understand the people, and to discover the hidden treasures of the community.
2. **SPECIFY Kingdom Goals.** Discover the kingdom goals that the community wants to work toward. These could include deeper worship, greater shalom, healthier families, more disciples of Christ, and more. Performing Step 2 ensures that you are helping the community work toward aims that they have agreed on together.
3. **SELECT Effects, Content, Genre, and Events.** Choose an artistic genre that can help the community meet its goals, and activities that can result in purposeful creativity in this genre. Performing Step 3 reveals the mechanisms that relate certain kinds of artistic activity to their effects, so that the activities performed have a high chance of succeeding.
4. **ANALYZE an Event Containing the Chosen Genre.** Describe the event and its genre(s) as a whole, and its artistic forms as arts and in relationship to broader cultural context. Performing Step 4 results in detailed

### A Better Future: More Signs of the Kingdom



knowledge of the art forms that is crucial to sparking creativity, improving what is produced, and integrating it into the community.


5. **SPARK Creativity.** Implement activities the community has chosen to spark creativity within the genre they have chosen. Performing Step 5 actually produces new artistic works for events.
6. **IMPROVE New Works.** Evaluate results of the sparking activities and make them better. Performing Step 6 makes sure that the new artistry exhibits the aesthetic qualities, produces the impacts, and communicates the intended messages at a level of quality appropriate to its purposes.
7. **INTEGRATE and Celebrate for Continuity.** Plan and implement ways that this new kind of creativity can continue into the future. Identify more contexts where the new and old arts can be displayed and performed. Performing Step 7 makes it more likely that a community will keep making its arts in ways that produce good effects long into the future.

## ONE SHORT WEEK TO LEARN THE APPROACH: ARTS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

You can pick up this manual, start reading and applying it, and probably see small changes in and around you very soon. Better yet, you can immerse yourself in the arts-in-the-kingdom world for one week, walking out with two things: a deep understanding of the CLAT approach and a plan to apply it to a community you know. This happens in Arts for a Better Future (ABF) seminars.<sup>5</sup>

ABF instructors lead participants through three CLAT cycles. In the third and final cycle, participants break into small groups, choose a community they know well, and use the manual to draft a plan to encourage kingdom-deepening creativity in that community. The results are amazing.

## YOU SHOULD DO IT

God gave every community unique gifts of artistic communication to tell the Truth, and bring healing and hope and joy in response to the groanings of creation. Many of these gifts, however, lie dormant, misused, or dying. You can help people reclaim their arts, enter the kingdom, and thrive. 

<sup>1</sup> Personal correspondence with Rev. Gaspard Yalemoto, November 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Bailey, David M. 2013 "Honoring Diverse heart Languages in a Christian Community," *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, 445.

<sup>3</sup> To download a Community Arts Survey form, go to [www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com/eduresources](http://www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com/eduresources).

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com/manual](http://www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com/manual).

<sup>5</sup> For information about venues, see "Short Courses in Ethnodoxology" at [www.worldofworship.org](http://www.worldofworship.org).



**I Refuse... to fear the darkness**

**THE CHURCH  
WAS BURNED.  
NOTHING WAS LEFT.**

**Nothing except the believers.  
They chose to forgive.**

**In spite of the danger in their "closed"  
country, they stayed,  
not to do battle with guns and hate,  
but with faith and love.**

**They refused to fear the darkness that entraps  
people when common sense says,  
"protect yourself."**

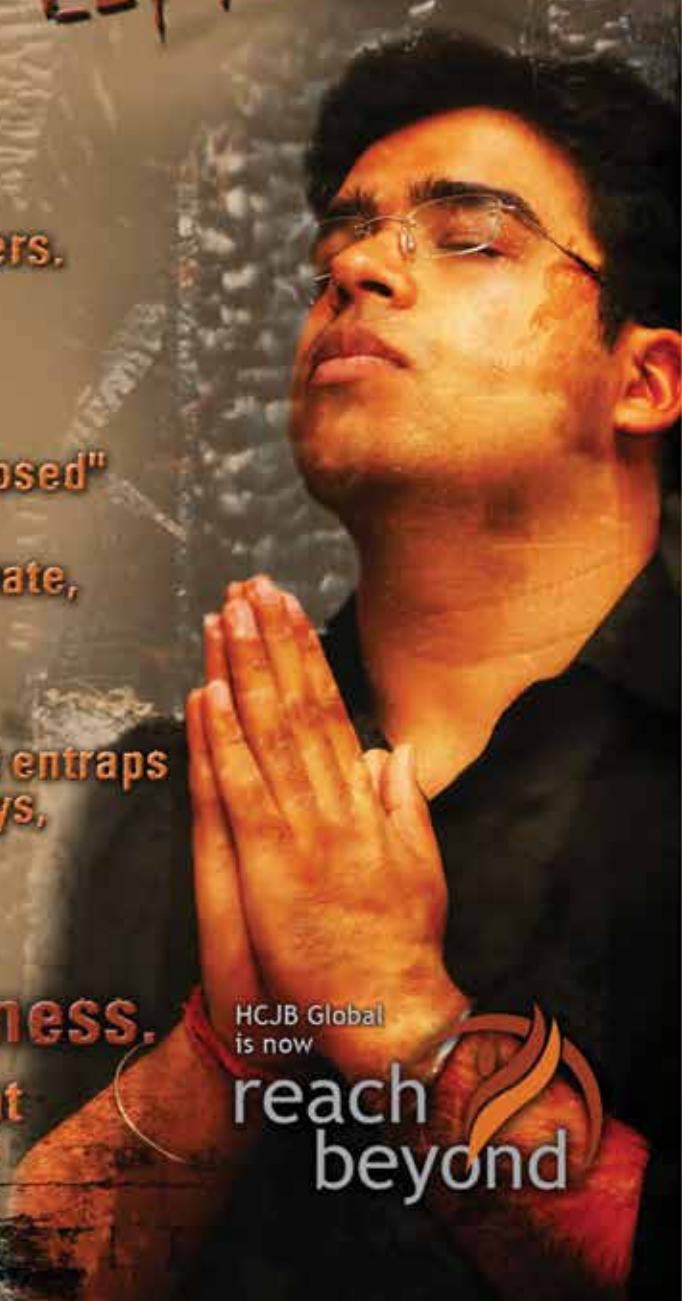
**(From the Reach Beyond Manifesto\*)**

**Refuse to fear the darkness.**

**Sign the Manifesto now at  
[reachbeyond.org](http://reachbeyond.org)**

HCJB Global  
is now

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# THE WORSHIP WHEEL

**W**e developed the Worship Wheel as a tool or set of modules for use in arts workshops with Christ-followers from indigenous minority groups in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Many workshop participants have responded positively to this tool, and other workshop leaders throughout the world have reported on its usefulness in their specific contexts.

It is based on the idea that, depending on the culture, arts can be used for a wide variety of purposes, as they are combined with beneficial texts. These arts and their texts can be directed toward:

1. Us, the creators
2. Others
3. God or
4. Various combinations of all three.

Although there were already beneficial uses of arts in many communities prior to the coming of the gospel message, we had observed in our work that borrowed and translated arts were often being used for these purposes at the expense of the local arts.

While the Worship Wheel can be used for liturgical development, it is also intended for use in the larger sense of “worship” as service to the Lord through transformed lives. This worship involves offering ourselves and our cultures as a living sacrifice of praise, where there is no need to conform to forms of worship imported from the rest of the world (Rom 12:1,2). The Worship Wheel has proved to be a useful tool, not only for contextualizing worship experiences at church gatherings, but also for engaging with communities outside of the church. It has often been used as a practical way to encourage believers who are cultural insiders to reflect on many possible ways to use the music and arts of their culture as acts of worship within their communities and throughout their lives.

The Worship Wheel is usually one of the last sets of activities we lead during an arts workshop. Sometimes we have even had to wait for follow-up workshops, especially if no local composers were present at the workshop. Together with the participants, we need to first deepen our understanding of how music and the arts are typically used within their communities. We also need to help them realize that we are not trying to impose forms used by other communities, nor are we trying to push people to create unnatural or inauthentic expressions of their faith. Usually we wait until people are already creating arts in natural and authentic ways. At that point, this tool helps them find a wider variety of culturally appropriate artistic genres, themes, and uses that may even incorporate other arts as well.

After various arts genres and their uses have been explored, and at least some arts have been created, we reflect on how some of these genres are used and how they might be adapted as expressions of a believer’s life and faith. We begin by presenting only the inner four parts of the wheel, which consist of the following categories:



## TODD SAURMAN

Todd Saurman has a BS in Music Therapy, an MA in Intercultural Studies/Ethnomusicology, and a Ph.D. in Social Science. He has worked in Asia with SIL International for the last 18 years as an advocate for the music and arts of ethnic minority groups. In Thailand he trains others as catalysts for the creation of culturally relevant arts throughout Asia.

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1. Arts for yourself
2. Arts for others
3. Arts for the Lord
4. Arts for celebrations and ceremonies

Often we present and explore just one of these categories at a time, depending on the genres and uses that the group has already explored. But these four categories are not mutually exclusive. The advantage of the four categories is that they help participants think of types of arts not yet explored in the workshop. These new types include some that believers had not previously thought of using to express their faith.

The outer part of the diagram—at the ends of the arrows—is derived from previous workshops and is a guide to help the leaders them spark ideas, preferably from arts genres and contexts discussed previously by the group. Not every use listed on the outer part of the diagram will be relevant or appropriate in every context, and often groups will offer new

ideas. The list is always expanding and changing, depending on the culture to which the activities are applied. Every group is different, and the participants will benefit most from the activity if the ideas come from them.

We added “the Holy Spirit” in the middle of the diagram at the wise suggestion of a seasoned missionary, who no doubt saw that, without the discernment and transformation that the Spirit brings, the activities could encourage conformity to the forms of a culture rather than an organic transformation of the culture.

The activity does not need to be presented as a circular wheel at all. One workshop leader has adapted it as a tree. Others have just made lists under each of the four categories. The most important aspect of this workshop tool is the principle of exploring cultural arts genres and

how believers could creatively use them to express and communicate their faith. The activity can be used to compare the types of arts used in church and the types of arts typically used within their culture. For example, there may be no Christian songs that teach stories from the Bible, but there may be many songs from the culture that either tell stories or are part of traditional storytelling.

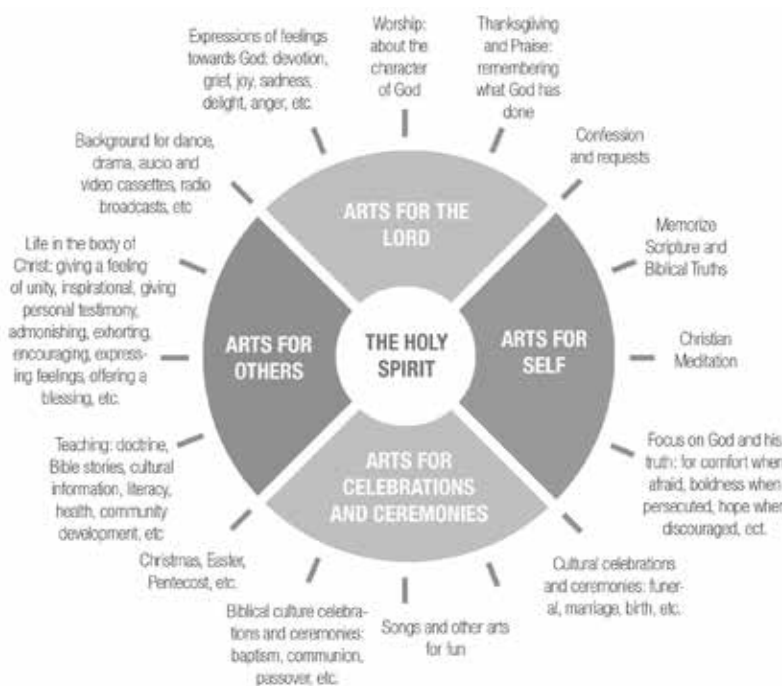
Ephesians 5:15-20 is a great devotional to introduce the four main sections of the wheel. There are various kinds of songs:

1. We “speak to one another”—songs for others.
2. Music we “make in our hearts”—songs for when we are by ourselves.

3. Music to the Lord, including giving thanks to God for everything—songs to the Lord.

4. Verses 15 and 16 talk about wisely making the most of every opportunity—songs for special occasions, such as ceremonies, celebrations, and festivals.<sup>2</sup>

The lists developed in these workshops can become a resource for church leaders and composers for years to come. About



seven years after one workshop, we returned to that area. One of the participants showed me his notes around the Worship Wheel on the yellowed pages of his old weathered notebook. It soon became obvious that the exercise helped him do further research on his community’s musical heritage and for contextualizing his faith. MF

<sup>1</sup> This article was adapted from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 167–169. Used by permission. For a more detailed description of how to facilitate an arts creation workshop using the Worship Wheel, see chapter 122 (pp. 380–388) of the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, “Encouraging the Development of Relevant Arts in the Lives of Believers” by Todd and Mary Beth Saurman.

<sup>2</sup> These four types of songs can be applied to other arts as well.

# A FRAMEWORK FOR INCORPORATING **THE ARTS** IN SHORT-TERM **MISSIONS**



**IAN COLLINGE**

Ian Collinge is an ethnomusicologist and ethnodoxology practitioner and trainer. After pastoring a new church plant in London, he spent several years in Asia, researching indigenous music and developing music and arts resources for churches. Since returning to England, he has been teaching ethnomusicology, world worship music, and multicultural worship in Christian training institutes. In 2008 he and his wife, Helen, launched Resonance ([www.resonancearts.net](http://www.resonancearts.net)), a cross-cultural arts ministry of WEC International. Contact: [ian.collinge@wecinternational.org](mailto:ian.collinge@wecinternational.org)

**A**s I jotted down Hausa lyrics and melodies on a four-week visit to church members in Nigeria, I had no idea that eight years later a focus on the arts of others would become central to my life's calling.<sup>1</sup> In Nigeria I realized the power of local arts to move people as I saw believers struggling with English hymns, but becoming enthusiastic and animated when they sang indigenous praise songs accompanied by gourds.

On this trip, I had taken my violin to entertain a group of isolated foreigners. Artistic short-termers usually do demonstrate their own arts in the host culture, and for good reason: this is what they know! Such efforts can have powerful impact, but my reflections in this article emphasize that short-term workers can also make a significant impact through involvement with culturally appropriate arts. Potentially, short-termers can make an even greater impact in this area if they come humbly to learn from the culture and build friendships, with a desire to validate and encourage the arts of the local believers.

## MISSIONAL QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Some practical and missiological questions are crucial to ask at the outset: How can anyone learn enough about others' arts, culture, and language to play any useful role on a short-term trip? Will their efforts not actually result in importing arts from globally dominant cultures and unintentionally promoting models that undervalue local forms of creativity?

## FOUR EXAMPLES OF MEANINGFUL SHORT-TERM ENCOUNTERS

The following accounts illustrate various ways that arts specialists can engage with local arts in short-term cross-cultural mission, with each type of engagement having the potential for life-changing effects.

1. In 2008 two music graduates went to Cambodia. Briefly trained in fieldwork methods, they visited a remote village. With their encouragement, local believers created a Christian song in their mother tongue—as far as they knew, it was the first Christian song in their language in that whole region. Not only did villagers, including a Buddhist monk, want to learn it, but the believers continued songwriting after the visit.
2. In 2010 a small team helped in a workshop for four language groups in Nepal. Each group created new songs, and the first Christian songs in a minority language and style were composed, inspiring a heavy metal musician to imagine a renaissance of his traditional culture. One team member has since returned long-term.
3. Working as short-term teams, visual artists have at times incorporated local imagery into their art or into their work with local artists. Then they have displayed the art in accessible spaces and set aside times for interaction with the public about the art. In one situation a painting on display depicted a lock, through which could be seen a light-filled opening.<sup>2</sup> An old man strolled past and then “stood stunned . . . someone

had just painted his life.” When he asked, “Can you please tell me, what is the key that will unlock the door of my life, and let me run into the light of God?” the artist was able to share about the light of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

4. In 2010 a professional harpist spent some months in Japan and started to learn the koto and shamisen and some Japanese melodies. The churches arranged harp recitals where she included traditional melodies, drawing many who otherwise excuse themselves from church events. Returning to her home country, she played outside for a wedding. A Japanese passerby stopped to talk, touched by the Japanese melody she was playing. This harpist has now returned full time to Japan, sometimes accompanying a Japanese Christian singer, ministering to many through music, including survivors of the 2011 quake and tsunami.<sup>4</sup>

## HOW CAN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAMS FACILITATE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE ARTS?


Most disaster stories about short-term missions (STM) arise from inadequate preparation and self-centered attitudes of spiritual tourism. If the focus of a project is to encourage local arts creation, many of these hazards can be avoided, and the project can result in genuine benefits to all parties, since from initial recruitment to final debriefing the emphasis is on the needs of the receiving community. Particular attention needs to be paid to training, motivation, strategy, and relational intention.

1. *Training.* Prioritizing culturally appropriate arts in STM requires specialized training that equips participants to focus on the people, culture, and arts of their host community. If ethnodoxology practices are new to these interns, their preparation will need to be longer than normal to equip them well for their roles as arts researchers and facilitators.
2. *Motivation.* During recruitment and training the expectations of all parties should be made clear. As learners and helpers, a short-termer’s motivation should arise from a genuine desire to assist nationals. Demonstrating their own art may at times be desirable, but the main aim is to engage with the arts of that community and to encourage cultural insiders in their own creativity.
3. *Strategy.* A clear strategy needs to be agreed on so that guests truly serve the local church. Frequently the biggest service they do for the local church is to energize their creativity and provide special stimulus for them to arrange an event. The arts for the event are often produced in a workshop, and such an arts workshop should generally

have an experienced facilitator—an “arts catalyst.” This facilitator should guide the process, help if creativity dries up, mentor the short-term workers, and work with local leaders. Such a facilitator may be a leading member of the visiting team, a national, or a field worker.

4. *Relational intention.* If the guests’ intention is to build authentic relationships, it is very helpful for the strategy of both senders and hosts to include plans for ongoing contact, often through successive visits. A long-term strategy of this nature is more likely to result in significantly greater benefits to the receiving community than can be achieved in a single visit. On a first visit, visitors build relationships as well as do research and encourage arts creation, as needed. On later visits this process can go to a deeper level. Eventually a worker may return for a more long-term stay or visit regularly, getting to know the people, language, and culture better. As this happens, the believing artistic community may also suggest continuing strategies.

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHORT-TERM ARTS ENGAGEMENT

How can arts students and practitioners get involved? Fortunately, since the rise of ethnodoxology from the mid-1990s, short-term programs with an explicit focus on culturally appropriate arts have been developing. Organizations with such programs include Heart Sounds International (OM Arts) and Resonance (WEC International).<sup>5</sup> In addition, since this field is developing so quickly, interested people can contact a range of agencies to consider where they can best offer their gifts to Christ’s service. 

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 151–154.

<sup>2</sup> Drake, Bill “The Lock and the Door”, OM Arts International, [www.missions-trips-arts-billdrake.blogspot.com/2010/10/lock-and-door.html](http://www.missions-trips-arts-billdrake.blogspot.com/2010/10/lock-and-door.html).

<sup>3</sup> Also see Anonymous, “Peace Reflected Artistically in North Africa”, OM Artslink, Summer 2007, [www.omartslink.org/getInspired/inspiredNorthAfrica07.php](http://www.omartslink.org/getInspired/inspiredNorthAfrica07.php); Anonymous, “Finding Riches Stored in Secret Places”, OM Artslink, 2009, [www.omartslink.org/news/news\\_NA\\_finding\\_riches.php](http://www.omartslink.org/news/news_NA_finding_riches.php); and similar stories on this website. For more on this type of artistic engagement, see chapter 30 by Geinene Carson in the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, Visual Arts as a Bridge to Engaging People of Other Cultures.

<sup>4</sup> For more examples of artistic involvements in situations of trauma healing, see the article by Harriet Hill on pages 20–21 in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*, “The Arts and Trauma Healing in Situations of Violence and Conflict”.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.heart-sounds.org](http://www.heart-sounds.org) and [www.resonancearts.net](http://www.resonancearts.net). Other agencies with cross-cultural arts training and/or ministry include ACT International ([www.actinternational.org](http://www.actinternational.org)), GIAL’s Center for Excellence in World Arts ([www.gial.edu](http://www.gial.edu)), and OM Arts International ([www.arts.om.org](http://www.arts.om.org)).



# INDIGENIZED CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN INDIA: SOME CONSIDERATIONS



## JACOB JOSEPH

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One of the greatest challenges of the Indian Christian church is its Western heritage. Most mainline denominations follow a Westernized liturgy and music in their worship. When missionaries came to India they translated the Bible and their own hymns into the local languages for use in worship. But now even a century later, churches still use the same hymnal and the translated Book of Common Prayer for worship. In addition, the Indian church has largely adopted Western pews and postures, with newer generation churches increasingly adopting songs from Euro-American contemporary Christian music, making the worship of the church even more Western. With that in mind, I would like to propose in this article some possibilities toward further indigenization of Christian worship in India.<sup>1</sup>

## CHANGE OF FOCUS FROM EVANGELISM TO WORSHIP

Until now, the primary motivation behind indigenization was to attract more people to the church. That motivation has sometimes caused people of other religions to think that the Christians are faking something to make Christianity more attractive. Attempts at indigenization in the area of mission have given a negative picture of Christianity as a kind of “wolf in sheep’s clothing.”<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, the church should change for the sake of worshipping God in the language and culture of the people, not simply to attract more churchgoers. As American pastor John Piper says:

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.<sup>3</sup>

To make the indigenization authentic and meaningful, the church needs to initiate radical changes from the center: that is, in their worship. Then indigenized missions will flow naturally from the indigenized worshipping church.

## WORSHIP POSTURE

Christian churches should consider returning to Indian heritage in their worship styles. Churches might leave their pews behind and follow the more typical Indian style of sitting on the floor and praying while kneeling. This worship posture may even draw the worshiper closer to the original meaning of the word worship as it is used in the Bible. The Hebrew word *hīstābʿwā*, translated as “worship,” literally means “to bend oneself over at the waist.”<sup>4</sup> Expression of homage, devotion, and awe in the presence of God can be expressed by removing sandals and cleansing oneself before entering the worship space.<sup>5</sup>

## LANGUAGE OF WORSHIP

The language of worship needs to become more culturally understandable, creating a new liturgy with awareness and understanding of aspects of Indian culture. Even if

churches continue to use their Western liturgies—for example, based on the *Book of Common Prayer*—they can be translated into the common (vernacular) languages of the people.

It is also important to develop indigenous terminologies to teach Christian doctrine. William Carey and his team developed Sanskrit terms for their biblical translation, providing a set of standard Sanskrit terms for the theological education of future generations.<sup>6</sup> The contemporary church needs to continue to seek out these culturally relevant terms for theological concepts. Using Indian words to explain Christian doctrine will lead people to a better understanding of their faith, and that understanding will lead to clearer, more appropriate worship.

## ARCHITECTURE OF THE WORSHIP SPACE

The architecture of the worship space is another area that might be indigenized. Today most of the mainline Christian worship spaces are imitations of Western structures, ignoring the significance of appropriate architecture altogether. What would it look like to have a Christian theological perspective on architectural design?


## ROLE OF MUSIC

As I suggested above, I believe the idea of indigenization and change in the church should begin with the church's worship, rather than specifically with its outreach to others. The common music styles of the people, such as *bhajans* and *keerthans*, could be given a place in corporate worship. This is the music that every Indian hears early in the morning from the temples. These forms, originating in the Hindu *bhakti* (devotion) traditions, are easily adaptable for congregational use.

Another musical possibility is the reconfiguration of the hymns into Indian musical forms. Hymns carry a rich theology from throughout the history of the faith, and they can be used effectively in Indian contexts by connecting them to indigenous melodic forms and adapting the lyrics appropriately.

## CONCLUSION

Indigenization is not an attempt to appear like other religions of the country or to compromise with other religious faiths. Marva Dawn offers a good criterion to evaluate our attempts for indigenization: “We make use of the cultural forms, new and old, but we dare never let up in the struggle to make sure they are consistent

with the ultimate eternal world to which we belong.”<sup>7</sup> That ultimate eternal world, according to Rev. 7: 9-10, includes a future of peoples worshiping God with the unique cultural gifts he's given them. This is a future worth “worshiping toward”<sup>8</sup>—a future in which all of India's people groups will have a new song to sing before the throne of the Lamb. 

<sup>1</sup> A longer version of this article was previously published in the *Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith*, vol. 2 (2014), WP1-11; available at [www.artsandchristianfaith.org/index.php/journal/article/view/8](http://www.artsandchristianfaith.org/index.php/journal/article/view/8). The longer version of this article proposes additional areas of indigenization, including the reading of Scriptures, preaching styles, and integration of worship into the everyday life of the believer.

<sup>2</sup> Hindu critic Sita Ram Goel views the indigenization process as “disguised in Hindu form” and “casting covetous glance before mounting a marauding expedition,” (quoted in Bharati, Dayanand 2004 *Living Water and Indian Bowl: An Analysis of Christian Failings in Communicating Christ to Hindus, with Suggestions Toward Improvements*, revised edition. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 79).

<sup>3</sup> Piper, John 2010 *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 15. See also, Piper's article “The Missional Impulse toward Incarnational Worship in the New Testament” in Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 96.

<sup>4</sup> Peterson, David 2002 *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 57–58.

<sup>5</sup> See Exodus 3:5 and Exodus 19:10.

<sup>6</sup> Mathew, C.V. 1999 “The Saffron Mission: A Historical Analysis of Modern Hindu Missionary Ideologies and Practices”. Delhi: *Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Dawn, Marva 1995 *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 10.

<sup>8</sup> C. Michael Hawn writes about worship that can “pull the hope of Revelation into the present” in that it will “give us glimpses of the gathering described in Revelation 7” in Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 430.



# BIBLE STORYING WITH THE CREATIVE ARTS FOR CHURCH PLANTING



**TOM FERGUSON**

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**A**ugust 1996: It was time for the festival celebrating the founding of Tsévié, the town where we were living in Togo. The stadium field was covered with traditional musical groups demonstrating their prowess, creating a veritable smorgasbord of sound for a new ethnodoxologist like myself.<sup>1</sup>

The central piece was a presentation of the story of the village's founding. Atumpani, the talking drums for the Ewé people, told the epic story that was translated into both Ewé and French languages for those uninitiated in the language of the drum. As the story unfolded, dancer-actors played it out for all to see. The crowd was thoroughly captivated. And then it occurred to me how powerful it would be if God's story could be told in this way. Thus began my journey into the realm of storying with music and other arts.

## LOCAL STORY CRAFTERS AND MUSIC

Among the Kotokoli people of Togo and the Bisa people of Burkina Faso, story-based songs have been used with radio broadcasts of Bible stories. These programs have become extremely popular within the Muslim population. In Mali, a story crafter composed songs for every story in his language's story set. He also has begun creating music videos from these songs. Story crafters among a North Indian people composed a song in place of a story, finding that the story would be more easily told through song.


## VISUAL ARTS AND STORYTELLING

The visual arts are also being used in conjunction with stories. A small group of believers in North India created songs for a Christmas outreach party for family and friends. Two young artists in the group were commissioned to paint scenes from the nativity story on large canvases. These were hung around the venue and were used to tell the Christmas story. The following year the believers added drama to their presentation.

Believers in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa combine Bible storytelling and henna art to share the gospel. Women use henna to draw beautiful designs on their hands and feet for special occasions. While drawing the henna designs, the women talk, build relationships, and share the Bible story they are drawing. When women are wearing henna, others admire the art on their hands, opening doors for the story to be shared again and again.<sup>2</sup>

## EMPOWERING STORYTELLER CHURCH PLANTERS

The value of using the performing and visual arts with stories is growing among storying practitioners and trainers. Impromptu drama and storyboarding are tools regularly used to help teach a story. A new song creation module is included as part of the storying church formation training in South Asia.

Increasingly as church planters, storytellers, and creative artists are trained and empowered, creative arts paired with Bible stories become powerful tools for communicating the message of Scripture. 

<sup>1</sup> This article was condensed and reprinted with permission from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 103–105.

<sup>2</sup> See more about henna art in chapter 27 of the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, "Contextualizing Visual Arts for Faith Sharing," by Scott Rayl.




# STORY AND SONG: AN INNOVATIVE CHURCH PLANTING MODEL

**H**armattan winds have hovered over desert Africa for weeks, picking up Saharan sands and filling the sky of the Paga Na village with a brown haze. In this sand-gray dusk, the hushed, unnatural silence of the windswept, sub-Saharan village is spellbinding and disconcerting. Only a subtle breeze invades the soundless, palm-lined footpaths and the swept earth patios. But the silence of this southern Togolese village is about to end; the storyteller is coming!

And into the quiet hamlet the clear, resonant voice of his recitation will emerge, startling and powerful, heralded by drums. And when the departing flamingo sun finally sets, shirtless men leave their game of *adi* (mancala), the baguette sellers disburse, the tailors close up their makeshift stands, cranky bicycles are abandoned hastily, and yawning children resting on outdoor cots under coconut trees are wrestled from sleep. As the pulse of the drums intensifies and the storyteller takes his place on the low, carved bench, the village is mobilized and excitement permeates the air. The elders arrive in regal togas made of the wild, leaping colors of African cloth. Antoine, the animated storyteller—church planter exchanges ritual, formalized greetings with his audience. The fetish priestess, clothed in white and waving her horsehair amulet, acknowledges Antoine with penetrating eyes that speak of a past immersed in *juju* and prayer to the fetish. Night falls, the burning log crackles. They are ready for the story.

The listeners are electrified as the biblical story of creation begins: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The poetic, melodious pattern of the story flows from Antoine’s lips. When he reaches the repeating phrase “and God saw that it was good,” he sings a song in call-and-response style. The song was written by Antoine’s friend Timothée, a believer gifted in music with a vision to reach out to his people. This song is designed to reinforce the story; the words of the song are: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth. It was empty, and darkness was over the surface of the deep.” The call and response is choreographed by the composer in a traditional style that glorifies God the Creator. As the villagers quickly memorize the song response and join Antoine, their voices become a chorus of blissful harmony.

Then dancing intercepts the story. The headman dances as well, thus placing his approval on the story and the event. The drum language continues. Amidst the steaming equatorial heat sitting stiffly in the air, the pulsating rhythm of the drum reaches to the stars and sounds deep into the tropical night. The storytelling and singing continue in this way. As the fire dims, the story ends. There is not one villager who wishes to leave that place. The story in this setting has connected them to the Word and to their history. It has involved and inspired them as they interact with the story through song and dance.<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> This article was condensed and reprinted with permission from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 229–231.

## JIM AND CARLA BOWMAN

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# INDIGENOUS PROVERBS: OPENING DOORS TO THE HEART



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As the heavy metal gate to his home slowly creaks open, “Ali” approaches and peeks through a small crack between the gate and the compound wall to see who’s entering. Suddenly he bursts through the gate like a broken dam spilling out pent-up water.<sup>1</sup>

“You have come back! I knew you would not forget me,” Ali exclaims with a loud voice, his eyes as wide as the newly opened gate. Rushing over to give me a big hug, the tall, lean African man then puts his arm around my waist and accompanies me to the house.

“Forget you? How could I do that? I have sent messages to you, but it’s always better to come see you in person. The elders say, ‘*Tuntoming a yok ka nansa; ka kan yok suiya*’ (‘To send a message by someone cools the legs; it does not cool the heart’).”

Ali’s smile broadens as the proverb quickly sinks into his soul. This is the “sweet talk” that Ali enjoys since it’s entertaining, memorable and promotes quick understanding. Amid the laughter, his grip around my waist tightens as he launches into the traditional greetings—asking about families, health, and more.

“We have a proverb in Hausa that says, ‘What the heart loves, there the legs will go,’” Ali offers. I smile and then ponder the meaning.

Seeing the puzzled look on my face, Ali helps. “Think about it. What the heart wants to do and where it wants to go, it tells the feet to move, and the feet obey.” Ali knows that much of the joy of proverbs lies in discovering the meaning. So he shouldn’t explain it too quickly and spoil the challenge for me.

“Yes, I see. The heart leads the way, and the body then follows,” I respond, as the fog slowly clears away.

“Have you ever seen the heart go somewhere it did not want to go, but it had to listen to the feet?”

Wagging my head back and forth satisfies Ali. We are connecting at his cultural level, opening doors of understanding.

Ali concludes with his widest smile yet. “You see. What the heart loves, there the legs will go!”

Enjoying this bantering and negotiating meaning between two people from two different worlds, I respond, “Now I understand. The feelings of the heart are so strong that they pull the feet to where they may not otherwise want to go.”

Ali now has a look of total satisfaction, like a school teacher who delights in the facial expression of a student who finally learns an important point.

“It is interesting how the heart pulls so strongly that it forces people to go to far away places,” I continue. “I think God’s heart is like that, as well.”

Ali’s curiosity is now aroused. We have had plenty of spiritual conversations before, but our cultural backgrounds are so far apart that the doors of understanding are often closed or, at

best, slightly cracked open. Now, though, Ali's own proverb has opened a door for spiritual understanding.

"God loves people because he is the one who created them. He made them expressly to be with him. His heart pulled so strong that his feet had to come to earth and be with them."

"You mean he wanted to move among them?"


His choice of words surprise and delight me, as Jesus is perhaps best described as Immanuel, meaning "God among us."

"Yes," I affirm, "that is why Jesus came to earth. God's heart pulled so strongly that his feet had to come among us. Jesus was the feet of God!"

Ali listens intently. Now the door of his heart is opening widely, and meaning flows through like a river. While Ali's proverb is enjoyable and memorable, it also communicates spiritual meaning in a way that feels right in his own culture. I and other missionaries had spoken to him before about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and about putting faith in him. As a Muslim, Ali agrees that Jesus was a good person, but he does not understand the role Jesus plays in God's plan of salvation. Why would God want to come to earth anyway? Ali believes God created everything but now is far removed from daily events. He understands God as the ultimate judge but until now has not considered how God's heart may be moved by the people he created. And for Ali, it makes sense.

While all of Ali's questions are not answered this day, he's beginning to understand the ways and purposes of God through proverbs and concepts he appreciates. This explanation of Jesus' coming to earth is congruent with some of his own deeply held core values and affirms his own worldview. It describes Jesus in uniquely African and also fully Christian terms and metaphors. In the past, Christianity was presented to Ali in foreign terms and practices. Proverbs are now opening the door for Jesus to be at home in Ali's own culture.<sup>2</sup>

"There is a God whose heart pulls so strong that his feet must come to be with us," Ali says. "Hmm, that is good news. I would like to know more about this."

The crack in the gate is widening for further learning—for him and for me. One day, will it burst open? 

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in a slightly different form in Moon W. Jay 2009 *African Proverbs Reveal Christianity in Culture: A Narrative Portrayal of Builsa Proverbs Contextualizing Christianity in Ghana*, American Society of Missiology Monograph Series 5. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. This chapter was also featured in Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 229–231. In both cases, this work has been used by permission of W. Jay Moon. For more information on gathering and using proverbs, see also two articles by Pete Unseth on the *Ethnodoxology Handbook* DVD.

<sup>2</sup> To learn how indigenous proverbs can open ears to hear the gospel, rooting it in African soil, and clearing foggy communication, see Moon, W. Jay 2004 "Sweet Talk in Africa: Using Proverbs in Ministry." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 40:2, 162–69.

## CHANTING THE SCRIPTURES

/ MAE ALICE REGGY

When a New Testament translation project for the Wolayta of Ethiopia began in the early 1970s, the government would not allow books to be printed in indigenous languages; only in Amharic, the official language. The solution, at least short-term, was to record the translation as it was being done, making it accessible immediately and especially to those who could not read—about 80 percent of the some 2 million Wolayta speakers.

The Wolayta may not have been book-oriented then, but they did have a rich oral tradition, which included their cultural chanting and singing styles. So chants and songs were added to the tapes to break up the reading. These also served as devices for memorizing

the Scriptures. The word of God would become fixed in people's hearts and minds when reinforced by tunes and chants the Wolayta loved, and would spring to their lips throughout the day.

By the time the Wolayta New Testament was printed in 1981, many Christians already knew some parts of the text by heart.

To record each passage, a few verses were read, lasting about a minute. Different voices spoke for the various participants in Gospel narratives. Before the listeners could lose interest, the next few verses would be chanted in traditional Wolayta style, in an antiphonal response along with the cassette. The chanter would sing only the words of the text, but the antiphonal response would provide an application of the passage to listeners' own lives or a reinforcement of the subject being taught. The antiphonal refrains emphasized major truths and

stirred in the listeners a rhythm that prevented drowsiness, as they listened in the dark of night after a hard day's work in the fields.

After a minute or two of chanting had finished, another short reading followed. And then again the pace changed—the reading would be followed by a song composed from a key verse in the passage. The tune fixed the words in the listeners' minds, as the singer on the tape repeated the memory verse four times in a contemporary Wolayta song form. The listeners would again be encouraged to sing along with the cassette, to memorize the Scripture verse. And in this way they continued listening, chanting, and singing God's word.

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# CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE WORSHIP: A CAMEROONIAN PASTOR'S CHALLENGE



## WAKE-UP CALL AT A SONGWRITING WORKSHOP

A few years ago I was in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for a songwriting workshop that brought together six different language groups. At the workshop a significant event happened that led me to realize more than ever before that it was time to do something for the restoration and development of our indigenous worship in a way that fits our culture.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the workshop we had a closing celebration. As usual for such occasions, we invited some church members and leaders to attend and hear about what was done at the workshop. Their presence is usually a great source of encouragement to the participants and a powerful way to promote the purposes and goals of the workshops. Among the guests was a third-generation pastor among African pastors of the DRC. He was in the first generation of those who held a BA in theology and was in addition, at the time, an important member of the federation of churches in his region.

According to the schedule for the celebration, the workshop participants were to present songs, and several guests had been invited to speak, but the pastor was not on the program. Toward the end of the celebration, however, he insisted on taking the floor. He was amazed, he said, that he had had an opportunity there to hear the Lord being praised, not only in his mother tongue, but also with rhythms and instruments from his village. He was so overwhelmed to have this wonderful experience during his lifetime that he burst into tears, unable to control his emotions.

The pastor's reaction was a great shock to me because, according to my African education and training, a man, especially an elderly man, must not show his tears. The fact that this man was so overwhelmed by culturally appropriate worship that he could not control himself showed that the need for such worship in our society was critical and a serious cause for concern.

## WHY IS CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE IMPORTANT?

One could ask: Why must we restore and develop culturally appropriate worship? Do we really need to invest in that domain? How will it benefit us? Moreover, is it possible for us as Africans to achieve such a goal, considering the complexity of the task?

The term "restoration" refers to putting something back into its normal state, making all necessary repairs or adjustments. It implies that something has been damaged in some way, either consciously or unconsciously. Culturally appropriate worship needs such restoration because of the actions and attitudes of some early missionaries during the colonial period. Some of their actions, whether right or wrong, resulted in tarnishing the image of culturally appropriate worship, degrading and diluting it so that it came to be considered as "non-Christian."

In this vein Paul Hiebert tells us that some early missionaries had a tendency to reject all that was not of their culture, even characterizing those values as pagan. This led them to

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replace local values with other values they did not consider pagan; most notably, Western values. As Hiebert says, “Drums, cymbals and other traditional instruments were replaced with organs and pianos”<sup>2</sup>

### USING OUR MUSIC AND METHODS TO WORSHIP IS PLEASING TO GOD

What is our responsibility with regard to this sad situation? We want to encourage the church and our people to understand that using our music, our instruments, and even our methods to worship the Lord is very pleasing to God. As the apostle Paul said to Timothy, all that the Lord created is good and nothing must be rejected (1 Tim 4:4). Moreover, the very first verses of the Bible tell us it was God, Elohim, who created all things from the beginning. It was not the devil, nor a people group, nor a culture that created these things (Gen 1:1). What the Lord expects from us is to receive his good creation with thanksgiving.

The story about the pastor who was so moved by culturally appropriate worship shows us how important it is to work for the restoration of the kind of worship that takes into consideration local cultural values. It shows us, in fact, how urgent it is to develop such worship by helping us imagine the joy and freedom that can be unleashed in the hearts of local worshipers. It also enables local people to hear and receive the gospel. This is confirmed by Paul Keidel when he says that “music that speaks to the hearts of the Christians increases their desire to worship and stimulates them to talk to others about Christ, since it is in harmony with their faith.”<sup>3</sup>

The joy and freedom that stem from culturally appropriate worship is, for us, the main reason to organize seminars and workshops on traditional music. Our objective is to make known and to promote the place of our cultural heritage in worshiping God. By so doing, we can help quench the thirst

of the people living in larger towns who are disconnected from their traditional realities and who do not master their mother tongue, but who love traditional music.


Besides, in most of our churches, services are generally conducted in the languages of the former colonizers and worship is always in the Western form. In such a context, we want to create an interest in traditional values without of course totally rejecting Western forms of worship. That is why we can say with Brian Schrag, “I am not devaluing new, urban, or national art forms... But I am trying to promote arts and artists with few champions.”<sup>4</sup>

### THE TIME HAS COME TO ASK SOME SERIOUS QUESTIONS

Conscious of the fact that we are better placed than most of our people to communicate through our traditional music, we work hard to help them grasp that vision, to understand its relevance and the challenges at stake. This hard work is needed, despite the fact that we are in a postcolonial context. It is true that we are at a peculiar moment in history where we witness revival among Africans and the development of Afrocentrism. It is still proper and urgent, nonetheless, that

**“I AM NOT DEVALUING NEW, URBAN, OR NATIONAL ART FORMS...BUT I AM TRYING TO PROMOTE ARTS AND ARTISTS WITH FEW CHAMPIONS.”**

we ask ourselves some serious questions:

- Do we have the means to achieve our goal?
- How far are we ready to go?
- What price are we willing to pay for the fulfillment of our dream, knowing that we cannot correct one mistake by making another mistake?
- Are our Western partners ready to trust us in the decision-making process?
- Are they ready to allow us to have our autonomy?<sup>5</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> This article was adapted and reprinted with permission from Krabill, James R. et al, eds. 2013 *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 93–95.

<sup>2</sup> Hiebert, Paul 1985 *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 184.

<sup>3</sup> Translation by Brian Schrag from Keidel, Paul 2008 *Les défis de la mission interculturelle*. Lyon: Edition Clé, 120.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Schrag’s article in the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, “Ethnoartistic Cocreation in the Kingdom of God,” 49–56.

<sup>5</sup> See Adadevoh, Delanyo 2007 *Leading Transformation in Africa*. Orlando: ILF Publisher.



# MOMENTUM THROUGH THE HURDLES: THE CPM CONTINUUM

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Recently I trained a group of colleagues laboring faithfully in one of the harshest areas on earth. Yet after years of witness, the results have only been isolated individual disciples. Virtually all the disciples are first generation, that is, they have been led to faith by the foreigners. Progress toward sustained church planting movements (CPMs)—characterized by at least four generations of new disciples and churches—has been slow.

As I pondered why they were stuck at 1) isolated believers (not groups or churches) and 2) first generation only, two thoughts became startling clear:

- Progress *had* been made. For many years, teams had reported no salvations or baptisms. Now they were getting baptisms. A huge obstacle had been hurdled and it was worth celebrating.
- But then the reality hit me: They were getting what they were aiming for—new first generation

disciples—*not* churches and *not* second, third, or fourth generation disciples. Their very success was keeping them from getting to movements.

This is the quandary that many CPM-focused laborers face. We know that generations of new disciples and churches must emerge and multiply for this to become the spiritual DNA that births an on-going movement. And faced with the stark lostness of a people group, we know that the first major hurdle to clear is winning new believers (first generation).

Leaping across the first hurdle is cause for a major celebration! You should have a party just like heaven does (Luke 15:7).

## PROBLEM #1: GETTING GOOD AT THE FIRST HURDLE

But winning the first generation is just the first hurdle. Church planting movements or disciple multiplication movements are characterized by at least

four generations of new disciples and churches. Therefore the next hurdles are winning enough believers to form Christ communities—churches—and envisioning and equipping new disciples to win another generation of disciples themselves, who in turn will do the same.

Getting good at the first hurdle—trained outsiders (e.g. missionaries) winning the first converts to Christ—sometimes is the chief enemy of crossing the next few hurdles. We are so thrilled to finally have believers that we continue our same actions and get the same results—isolated individual disciples that do not result in new churches or a second generation of believers.

The more proficient we become at winning the first generation, the more difficult it is for that generation to emulate our stellar efforts. And perhaps the less motivated we become to train them to do so.

## PROBLEM #2: GETTING WHAT WE AIM FOR

This points to a second problem: we are getting exactly what we have been aiming for. We have been aching for new believers for so long that we have not aimed beyond that. From the beginning our aim should have been fourth generation believers and churches, and beyond.

Imagine a hurdler running a 400-meter race. He has ten hurdles to jump, the first at 45 meters. The gun fires and the sprinter emerges from the



blocks full of energy. He successfully leaps across the first hurdle and the next hurdle looms 35 meters ahead. But suddenly he pulls up and stops.

With a grin on his face and hands on his hips he jogs back to the blocks and gets set to run again. Once more he shoots out of the blocks and clears the first hurdle a bit more cleanly. Once again he pulls up.

Over and over he runs the race—of one hurdle. He is getting much better at what he is aiming for—crossing the first hurdle—and his times improve with each venture. But that was not the design of the race. The race was ten hurdles. His end-vision is wrong.

In the same way, when our aim is first generation believers, we eventually get there, but not much further, because we forget the race is multiplying generations of disciples and churches.

### PROBLEM #3: NOT LETTING MOMENTUM FROM EACH HURDLE PROPEL US OVER THE SUBSEQUENT HURDLES

At some point in time the hurdler realizes he needs to cross the second hurdle. He lines up at a point in the track after the first hurdle and starts sprinting toward the second hurdle. But his speed and momentum fail to carry him across it successfully. Repeatedly he tries, becoming more fatigued and frustrated with each attempt. Eventually he labels the second hurdle as “impossible” to clear.

Remarkably, this is the same label that many laborers in the kingdom put on their contexts—“*impossible*.”

*“It’s impossible to get enough believers together in the harsh environment to form a church.” “It’s impossible to get first generation believers to lead others to faith.” “Missionaries can do it, but locals cannot.”*

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## WE WORK SO LABORIOUSLY ON WINNING THE FIRST GENERATION THAT WHEN WE FINALLY GET THEM, WE CAMP OUT...

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We work so laboriously on winning the first generation that when we finally get them, we camp out and focus only on their spiritual health, not helping them boldly win another generation within hours and days. Perhaps this is because we fail to realize that spiritual health includes *their* ability to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).

Frequently we assume that if it took us weeks or months to lead them to Jesus, that they require the same time for winning their family and friends to faith. While it might take us weeks or months, it may only take them hours or days to win family and friends to faith because these people know and trust them. A common refrain by workers in multiplication movements is: “It took me days (or weeks) to lead him to faith, but in just minutes (or hours) he led his friends to faith.”

That brings us to a final problem: we fail to let momentum from each hurdle carry us through the next hurdle. Track and field coaches will attest that the forward lean and momentum of a sprinter are the keys to carry him through each hurdle. He must not slow down, stand too erect or stop short, or the next hurdle becomes difficult or impossible to clear. Instead he must lean forward and increase speed in clearing each successive hurdle.

Practitioners that are getting to movements have in their mind the tenth hurdle from the moment they start out of the blocks and look at each hurdle as the opportunity to carry them through the next hurdle. They expect each generation of disciples to be the momentum toward the next. *Did we win our first believer or our first household? What will it take to help them win the next generation within days and start a church within weeks? What will it take to help this first generation equip the second generation to start a third generation within weeks and months after that?* Crossing each new hurdle should require less time, not more time. The race should accelerate. Otherwise spiritual momentum is not at work.

The best way to cross hurdles is to push through them as rapidly as possible.

In CPMs the exhilarating speed of momentum, while unnerving at times, is our friend. We are running a race to see multiplying generations of new disciples and hundreds of new churches emerge

into movements that can saturate a people group and beyond.

## PUSHING THROUGH THE CPM CONTINUUM

Steve McGill, hurdles coach, comments on one of the elite hurdlers: “[In the 60m hurdles], compare [Terrence] Trammell to the other hurdlers as they descend off hurdle one. See how the others stand up, whereas Trammell stays forward. For five hurdles and through the finish line, Trammell never stands erect. I think that’s where being a sprinter and having a sprinter’s mentality helps him. Sprinters are taught to drive for as long as they can. Thirty, forty, fifty meters. Hurdles who don’t have a sprinter’s mentality stop driving as soon as they clear the first hurdle.” (<http://hurdlesfirstbeta.com/free-articles/training-tips/maintaining-forward-momentum-emphasis-added>)

As I coach missionaries and church planters, I advise them to keep the end-vision in the forefront of their mind and to let each breakthrough be the fuel toward the next one. If they view their work as a progression along a continuum from lostness to a sustained church planting movement, then they keep asking the question: “What will it take, by God’s grace, to get us to the next stage and the one after that in the next few weeks and months?”


As they evaluate the status of their situation on the continuum below (e.g. “We’re about at a 1.5—first generation believers”), then their

efforts are focused on what it will take to get to a stage 2 (second generation churches), and then a stage 3 and so on. Each hurdle is occasion to lean forward toward the next stages on the continuum.

In a number of CPMs, missionaries and local believers have pushed from stage 1 to stage 3 or 4 in a year’s time. Part of the reason is because they tenaciously press through the hurdles with all God’s power working within them (Col. 1:29). Their goal is not to get to a “1” but to get to a “3” or “4” in that span of time. All their efforts are focused on finding the people God has prepared, developing them into Christlikeness and maintaining momentum with them.

Such missionaries and church planters never stop first hurdle work (personally leading people to faith and discipling them) but they give more and more attention to clearing the subsequent hurdles. Failure to do so results in loss of momentum and failure to get to a movement of God. Like McGill comments above, we must view ourselves not as hurdlers but sprinters gaining momentum throughout the race.

So one of the most effective tools for evaluating the current status of our work and what is needed is the CPM Continuum. It gives us a chance to celebrate each hurdle passed and points to the next hurdles to clear.

What are you aiming for? What is the status of your work? What would it take, by God’s grace, to move it two whole steps forward in the coming year? Now run! 

## The CPM CONTINUUM

**0—You are in your new context but have no CPM plan yet**

**1—Moving purposefully 0 to 1—**  
Trying to consistently establish first generation believers & churches

**1.1—**Purposeful activity trying to find and win persons of peace but no results yet

**1.2-1.3** Have some new first generation believers

**1.4-1.5** Have consistent first generation believers

**1.6-1.7** Have one or some first generation churches

**1.8** Have several first generation churches

**1.9—**Close to second generation churches (you can see it happening soon)

**2—Moving purposefully 1 to 2—**  
Purposefully moving from first to second generation churches and starting to see the some second generation churches emerge

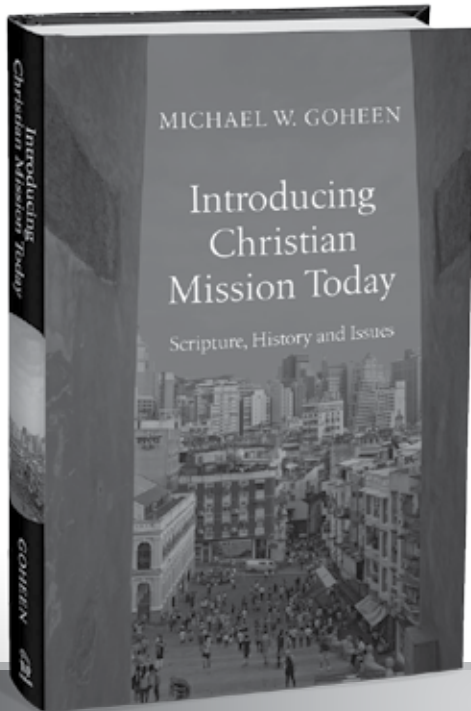
**3—Near CPM—**Some third generation churches are emerging

**4—Emerging CPM -** Some fourth generation churches are emerging

**5—CPM -** Consistent fourth generation and beyond churches in multiple unrelated streams (multiple contexts)

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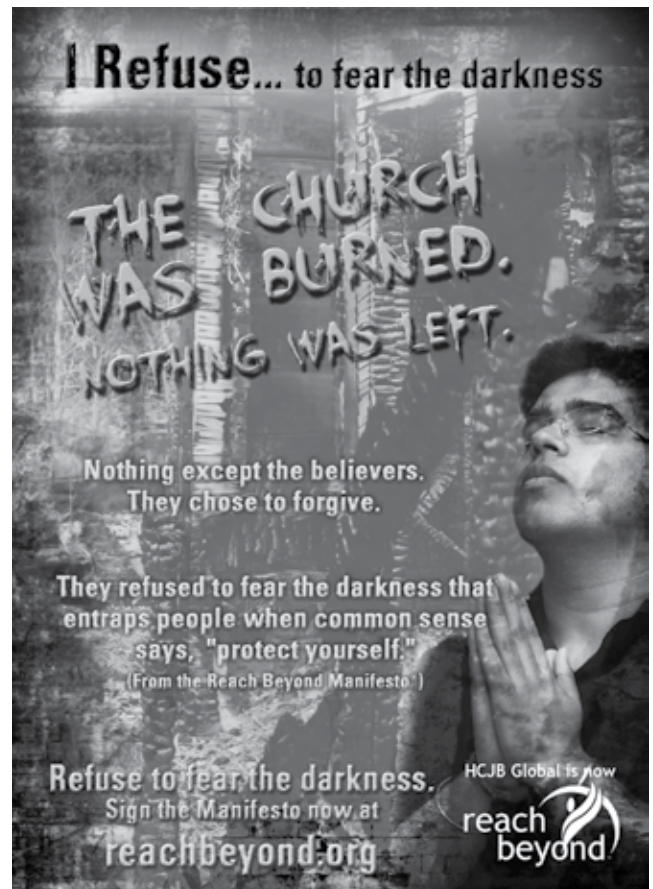


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# THE TRANSFORMATION OF A MISSION HOSPITAL IN CONGO

GLENN J. SCHWARTZ / Executive Director Emeritus, World Mission Associates.

Author of *When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement* available at [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org)

I have just finished reading a remarkable book about medical missionary ministry or what the author prefers to call inter-cultural health care. The author, Dr. Dan Fountain and his wife, Miriam, were medical missionaries in Congo for 35 years. The title of the book is *Health for All: The Vanga Story*.<sup>1</sup> When God decided to bless the people of the Vanga District in Congo, he chose to use Dan and Miriam Fountain and a Congolese man by the name of Mr. Musiti, among others. Dr. Fountain's personal testimony includes what he sensed as a call to Jesus (not to missions) as a child. He specifically chose to study at a secular university (Colgate) so that he would be forced to encounter non-Christian views of the world. Dr. Fountain felt this was essential in order to share the Gospel in the many cultures he would encounter over the years.

This column is a combination book review and case study on the transformation of a mission hospital in North Western Congo/Zaire. It contains many lessons on local sustainability that I felt would be of interest to readers of *Mission Frontiers*. I believe this story should be read and reread by every medical missionary involved in cross-cultural healthcare. In fact, I believe it should be required reading for non-medical missionaries as well.

Dr. Fountain found himself and his wife, Miriam, travelling to Africa by ship in 1961—the same year that

I first travelled on a ship from the USA to Africa. For the next 35 years Dr. Fountain led a major effort to prepare a hospital to provide health care for a quarter of a million people in the Vanga District. I have often told about different ways that the transition to self-reliance occurs. One of those ways is when the Lord removes the missionaries against their will. That is what happened at Vanga before Dr. Fountain arrived.

An expatriate medical doctor (Dr. Osterholm) had served at Vanga for twelve years. During that time he taught a member of the hospital staff (Mr. Musiti) to do all sorts of medical procedures. Then came the political turmoil of the early 1960s in Central Africa. When Dr. Osterholm was forced to leave, he turned the keys of the hospital over to Mr. Musiti. He told him that in the shoebox in his office desk in the hospital there was enough cash to pay staff for about one month. He then told Mr. Musiti that when that cash ran out, he should close the hospital and leave.

Little did anyone know at the time that this single event would be the most significant step in the indigenization of Vanga Hospital. Part of the transition had to take place in the mind of Mr. Musiti who was soon confronted with a crisis. A patient needed a C-section, and there was no doctor there to do it. Mr. Musiti knew the gravity of the situation and took counsel with the church elders. They reminded him that he had participated in many such

operations over the past twelve years and that he should proceed for the sake of the mother, the child and their family. This he did, and there even came a day when Mr. Musiti had to do a C-section on his own wife.

After eighteen months with no medical doctor at Vanga, Dr. Fountain arrived on the scene. During that eighteen months everything was in the hands of Congolese staff who did not close the hospital, but managed it amid the political turmoil in the country. The hospital was there for Dr. Fountain to step into. But the die was cast; the hospital had its own administrator in Mr. Musiti, and Dr. Fountain made sure that ownership stayed just where it should be—in the hands of Congolese staff.

There was more than enough for everyone to do as they tried to help a quarter of a million people to get "health for all." The most significant thing they did was to convert the hospital from primarily curative care into a place to train staff who would go to the surrounding Vanga district to start village health clinics. Among their primary objectives was a plan to develop preventive health care in order to cut down on the number of long treks people were making on foot or by ox cart to reach the hospital. Care was taken to make sure that the village health clinics were in local ownership. On one occasion people in a village wanted a clinic and asked Dr. Fountain to provide the means. He asked what they needed. The quick answer was


“money.” He asked what they might have from their own resources to use toward the building. They said they had cassava—a food staple. So Dr. Fountain suggested that they each bring a bag of cassava which could be sold to get the funds they needed. The entire building was built with local resources.

While this story shows a significant shift over the years to preventive care, it also shows the shift to local ownership. Dr. Fountain worked tirelessly to limit his own involvement so that local people would be owners or at least co-equals in the decision-making process.

One of the striking parts of this story is the role of the medical staff in dealing with cultural issues normally in the hands of traditional practitioners

of religion. Dr. Fountain had a remarkable ability to get to the heart of cultural issues that were characteristic of conflicting worldviews. He says that the single most important influence in his preparation for medical missionary service was reading a book called *Bantu Philosophy* by Placide Tempels (which has become a classic). One of the main themes of the book is the importance of understanding “soul force,” something that Dr. Fountain believed must be recognized if one was to see authentic spirituality develop among African believers.

In my next column in *Mission Frontiers* I would like to delve into the cultural issues which Dr. Fountain grappled with every single day. These are most

enlightening. This book is filled with ideas that will help missionaries to get a grasp of surrounding cultural dynamics. I can honestly say that if I had been introduced to Bantu Philosophy—or if I would have had this book about the Vanga story available to me as a younger missionary in Central Africa, things would have been significantly different. Look for my analysis of the cultural issues of this story in the next issue of *Mission Frontiers*. There is just too much to include here. In the meantime, I heartily recommend that you get a copy of *Health for All: The Vanga Story*. 

<sup>1</sup> *Health for All: The Vanga Story* is available through William Carey Publishers. [www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org). See page 45 for more information on how to order this book.

## NEXT STEPS IN ETHNODOXOLOGY: Tools and Resources

### COMMUNITY

- International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE)
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  - [www.gcommhome.org](http://www.gcommhome.org)
- Regional networks:
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    - [www.etnoartes.com](http://www.etnoartes.com)
  - Philippine Ethnoarts Community of Practice (PECOP)
    - [www.pecop.org](http://www.pecop.org)
  - Korean Ethnodoxology Initiative
    - [www.tinyurl.com/KoreanEthnodoxology](http://www.tinyurl.com/KoreanEthnodoxology)

### MEDIA

- Videos from 2013 Consultation on Arts in Mission
  - <http://tinyurl.com/arts-in-mission-videos>
- YouTube channels for ICE and ethnodoxology
  - [www.youtube.com/user/ethnodoxology](http://www.youtube.com/user/ethnodoxology)
- Heart Sounds Int'l and “Sounds of Global Worship”
  - [www.youtube.com/user/HSIOM](http://www.youtube.com/user/HSIOM)

### SEMINARS

See the “short courses” button at [www.worldofworship.org](http://www.worldofworship.org)

### BOOKS & JOURNALS

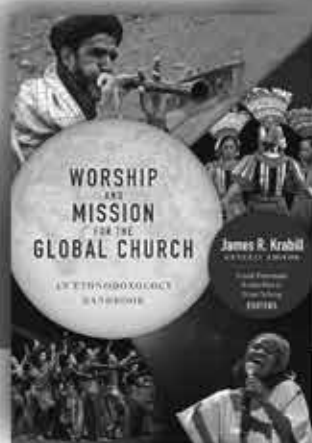
- Ethnodoxology Handbook and Manual
  - [www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com](http://www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com)
- Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith (ICE journal)
  - [www.artsandchristianfaith.org](http://www.artsandchristianfaith.org)

### UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE-LEVEL DEGREES

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- Center for Excellence in World Arts at GIAL—[www.gial.edu](http://www.gial.edu)
- Fuller Seminary
  - [www.brehmcenter.com/initiatives/globalworship](http://www.brehmcenter.com/initiatives/globalworship)
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Clint Archer

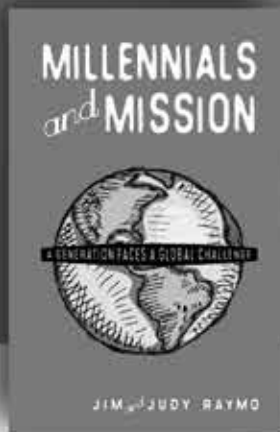
*Holding the Rope* gives an insightful look into the preparation, philosophy, and application of short term cross-cultural ministry. Archer addresses the issues with candor, humor, and most importantly, grace. He provides viable solutions to common problems, and encourages churches, pastors, and volunteers to adopt a biblical and practical approach for engaging in short term missions. "Holding the rope" is more than a catchphrase. It articulates an entire philosophy of ministry. Christian missions is too daunting an enterprise to attempt alone, but the synergy of combined efforts can accomplish untold advancement for the kingdom of God. This book is a tool for those serving the servants, a guide and celebration of those who hold the ropes.

List Price: \$12.<sup>49</sup> • **Our Price \$9.<sup>99</sup>**

ISBN 978-0-87808-628-3 Clint Archer (Author)  
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# New Releases



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Jim and Judy Raymo

This book focuses on the passing of the torch in cross-cultural missions and church ministry to the Millennial generation. Jim and Judy Raymo grapple with big questions and concerns in *Millennials and Mission*, while giving an in-depth look at this up-and-coming generation of young people and the future of missions in its hands. They highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this populous group born between 1982 and 2000, comparing and contrasting its characteristics with those of the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. In spite of the challenges ahead, *Millennials and Mission* gives a clearly optimistic picture of the Millennial generation's potential contribution to accomplishing the Great Commission.

List Price \$14.99 • Our Price \$11.99

ISBN 978-0-87808-536-1  
Jim and Judy Raymo (Authors)  
WCL / Pages 152 / Paperback 2014



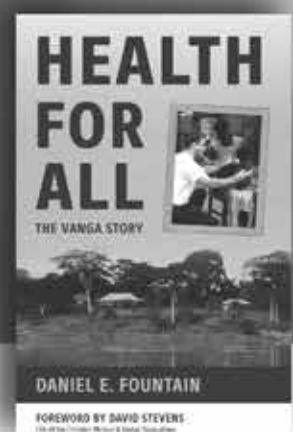
## Leading Multicultural Teams

Evelyn and Richard Hibbert

Churches and mission agencies are increasingly characterized by cultural diversity. As a result, many Christians find themselves working as part of a multicultural team. Leading these teams is a complex challenge that requires team leaders to understand how to help multicultural teams thrive. Team leaders need to know how to help team members grow in particular qualities and acquire specific skills related to multicultural teamwork. This book integrates insights from the Bible, team theory, leadership, and intercultural studies to explain how leaders of multicultural teams can help their teams become enriching and enjoyable contexts to work in, at the same time as achieving their purpose.

List Price \$35.95 • Our Price \$28.75

ISBN 978-0-87808-477-7 Alan Tippett (Author)  
Doug Priest (Editor)  
WCL / Pages 416 / Paperback 2014



## Health for All

**The Vanga Story**

Daniel E. Fountain

*Health for All* tells the story of an ever-increasing vision—from curative care to community health, from a barely functioning hospital to a network of successful health services, from a lack of qualified workers to a local residency training program, from biomedical reductionism to whole person care, from cultural stalemate to worldview transformation. Dr. Fountain's insights into health and wholeness have changed countless lives and communities. Part memoir, part history, part textbook, *Health for All* is the legacy of a man who patterned his life and labor after that of the Great Physician.

List Price \$14.99 • Our Price \$11.99

ISBN 978-0-87808-535-4  
Daniel E. Fountain (Author)  
WCL / Pages 234 / Paperback 2014

# GIVING AND HAPPINESS



GREG PARSONS

/ GLOBAL DIRECTOR,  
U.S. CENTER FOR  
WORLD MISSION

**G**iving is an interesting aspect of our lives. You would think that it would be painful to give away what is “ours,” but a number of recent studies show that givers are actually happier.

Authors Elizabeth Dunn and

Michael Norton looked at tons of scientific research on how people feel when they use their money. Their book *Happy Money: The Science of Happier Spending* details study after study about what makes people happy when it comes to money. One chapter is focused on investing in others.

Here are a few of the things from the book: “Remarkably, there is almost no evidence that buying a home—or a newer, nicer home—increases happiness.” (p 2) There was also no relationship at all between the Blue Book value of the car and the amount of enjoyment the owners got from driving it. (p 29)

Beyond that, the amount of money individuals devoted to themselves was unrelated to their overall happiness. What did predict happiness? The amount they gave away. (p 109)

People given a gift card to give to someone else were happier than those who were given a gift card to spend on themselves. And “how people spent the money mattered much more than how much of it they got.” (p 109) If, in addition to giving to someone, they

spent time with the person, they were also happier. (p 119)

It turns out that investing in other people and spending time with them brings the most benefits to the giver, affecting not only happiness but health and other areas of life. But actually, this shouldn’t be a surprise.

Like many things, the Scriptures tell us to expect this. According to 2 Cor. 8:2, the churches in Macedonia had “...a severe ordeal of suffering, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in the wealth of their generosity.” Paul goes on to say they begged for the opportunity to give and gave beyond their means. But all of that was the overflow of their having given themselves to the Lord first.

Commentators often talk about the major theme of Philippians being joy. In chapter 4, Paul expresses “great joy in the Lord” because of their concern for him and giving to his life and ministry. He tells them that he sought not the gift, but “the credit that abounds to your account.”

Jesus established this giving principle in his simple but profound statement:

“Do not accumulate for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But accumulate for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:9-21 NET)


In his book, *The Law of Rewards: Giving What You Can’t Keep to Gain What You Can’t Lose*, Randy Alcorn says everything we have now will be destroyed...and everything we give

to the Lord in life becomes treasure in heaven that cannot be destroyed or taken away.

Meditate on that for a few minutes. Think about what you are doing with your time and earthly treasure.

My wife and I have been supported missionaries since 1982. While we have been on the receiving end of many faithful and joy-filled churches and individuals, we have also seen this work in our own giving.

I learned this even before we were married. A few years before we joined staff at the USCWM, I was in seminary and was going on a 12-week overseas mission trip to SE Asia. I came to church one Sunday as some of the money was coming due for the trip. After the college/young adult class I was leading was over, I sat in church, about to tithe my small amount. I wondered where the funds for my trip would come. Should I give to my own short-term trip? The answer was yes, just not at the expense of giving (and serving!) my local church. So I put my usual amount in the offering. As I returned to the classroom, there was an envelope there with my name on it, with a cash gift about five times the amount I had given to the church.

It doesn’t always happen that directly, but I’ve learned that giving our lives and resources is in reality investing in both our rewards in heaven and in people’s lives today. What are you investing in? Who are you investing in? Can you think of someone who needs the encouragement from you today—either by a word of encouragement or a gift? God works in such a way that joy and reward is yours. 

Follow Greg on Twitter: @parsonsg



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