

Editorial

Worship Ministry: An Intersection of Ideas

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Worship and church music ministry is a complex and often challenging task, similar to (or, some would suggest, a subset of) pastoral ministry. Likely the most significant reason for this is that it finds itself at the intersection of biblical investigation, philosophical inquiry, historical reflection, and real-life practical realities. Yet few people (especially busy ministers) devote themselves to a thorough grasp of essential ideas in each of these critical arenas. Most ministers of music and worship recognize the importance of understanding what Scripture has to say about their work, yet they may have little time to wrestle through philosophical quandaries or trudge through the bogs of history past. On the other hand, students and scholars of worship and music ministry may relish the hours of research as they prepare to debate the finer points of aesthetic philosophy or pontificate about liturgical theory, but they remain chained in their ivory towers, unable to direct their efforts to the practical life of local church ministry.

For this reason, John E. Simons (Editor-in-chief), R. Allen Lott (Associate Editor), and I (Managing Editor) are very pleased to present the second volume of *Artistic Theologian*, the title of which itself reflects this often confounding relationship between theological and aesthetic concerns. Yet the journal was created to provide a central resource for dialogue across all spectrums of worship and music studies and practice. This volume in particular offers scholarly essays that explore each of these important issues that impact the work and ministry of worship and church music ministry students, scholars, and practitioners.

Like pastoral ministry, which takes into account Scripture, philosophy, history, and methodology, worship and artistic ministry must consider several of what may appear to be only thinly connected disciplines. First, worship ministers must be faithful to Scripture. Only ministers who understand the Bible's teachings concerning the church, the gospel, a Christian's relationship with God and others, and the nature of worship can faithfully lead God's people to worship in spirit and *truth* (John 4:24).

Second, worship ministers must have a grasp of how various theological presuppositions affect philosophy of ministry and practical application in the local church. Too many worship ministers jump into questions of practice without realizing how their (often unstated) theological commitments already answer many of the questions for them. Furthermore, errant theology will inevitably lead to unbiblical practice in worship.

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Third, worship ministers must carefully consider several philosophical categories that unavoidably intersect with corporate worship. Questions concerning beauty (is it a principle of the object or “in the eye of the beholder?”), culture (is it the same as “race?”), and musical meaning (is it universal or relative?) will always be present, to one degree or another, in the life of a worship minister.

Finally, worship ministers must be aware of what has come before them. Edmund Burke’s oft-repeated axiom, “Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it,” is as true for corporate worship as it is for any other sphere. Understanding what has happened in the history of worship allows ministers to learn from both the strengths and weaknesses of their predecessors, and it provides a healthy awareness of what has led to problems in the church today.

Commitment to each of these areas of study must come first before a worship minister can progress to a biblically faithful and personally meaningful ministry. Yet ministry is the goal, and so a proper focus on the practical realities of local church life should always be the reason behind diligent consideration of scriptural, philosophical, and historical matters.

Each of the articles in this volume of *Artistic Theologian* touches on one (or more) of these vital subjects. Ron Man opens the volume with a practical commentary that directs the worship minister’s attention to the ultimate leader of worship—Jesus Christ. Man demonstrates how the high priestly, mediatorial role of Christ is that which reveals the Father, without which no one would be able to approach God in worship.

David M. Toledo follows Kevin Bauder’s article from our [last volume](#) (“Why Pastors Should Be Learned in Worship and Music”) with a compelling argument for “Why Worship Leaders Should Study Theology.” Toledo argues that the Bible connects worship (doxology) with theology, and therefore, those who desire to lead others in this important corporate activity must actively pursue theological education.

The next three articles each present biblical studies relevant to worship ministry. First, Calvin Pearson investigates the appearance of “lifting hands” in the Bible so as to determine its appropriateness in corporate worship today. He concludes that every occurrence of raising hands in Scripture is connected with lament, and this should impact contemporary practice.

Gregory J. Stiekes surveys the liturgical elements found in the pastoral epistles, including public prayers, public readings, and public proclamations. Stiekes presents helpful exegesis of passages relevant to these acts, suggests areas for further study, and draws implications for corporate worship today.

John Makujina explores two passages of Scripture relevant to a Christian philosophy of music, 1 Corinthians 14:6–11 and Exodus 32:17–18. Makujina specifically targets Christians who assert a philosophy of musical pluralism, using exegesis and implications from these two passages to argue *reductio ad absurdum* that since not all of what is called music today should be considered music, the common assertion that music is relative is untenable. He then contends that the chaos-aesthetic underlying rock music has attempted to break the musical boundaries implied by these passages, and thus contradicts what the Bible itself assumes about music.

The final two articles of this volume study matters of history. First, Preston Lee Atwood traces the hymnody of the early Swiss Brethren Anabaptists, including those of Felix Manz, George Blaurock, and Michael Sattler, and notes their use in evangelism, devotion, and

exhortation. Atwood provides helpful analysis of their literary qualities, form and sources, and theological congruity, supplying available English translations of many of the hymns.

Finally, David W. Music presents a fascinating biographical sketch of influential Southern Baptist church musician William J. Reynolds. Music notes highlights of Reynolds's life, his ministry in church music, his influence through the Baptist Sunday School Board, and his mentorship as a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The journal concludes with abstracts of recent doctoral dissertations in the School of Church Music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as reviews of recently published books on subjects related to worship, music, aesthetics, and culture.

Our hope and prayer is that these essays will encourage hearts, stimulate minds, and enflame spirits of ministry for worship and church music students, scholars, and ministers. As always, we accept submissions of essays or book reviews to *Artistic Theologian*. Please visit www.ArtisticTheologian.com for style and submission guidelines. Submissions for the next volume of the journal are due August 1, 2014, and we plan to publish in the spring of 2015.