

## WORSHIP—BEFORE AND AFTER: Completing the Ethnodoxology Cycle<sup>1</sup>

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At the initial Global Consultation on Music and Missions (GCOMM)<sup>3</sup> in September 2003 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, keynote speaker John Piper reminded participants that “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,” and “Worship is . . . the fuel and goal of missions.”<sup>4</sup> The statements emphasize the close relationship between the life of the believer within the walls of the church and outside its walls in relationship to a lost world, that is, as Christ’s worshipers we are His “image-bearer” to those who seek Him or have never heard (Acts 1:8).

This article emphasizes the missional aspects of the work of the ethnodoxologist<sup>5</sup> in three distinct stages: (1) before the planting of a church, (2) during the planting and development of the church, and (3) after the planting of the church. The arts are key to understanding and accessing culture; the planting and development of the church in worship, discipleship,

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<sup>1</sup>This article was adapted from a keynote presentation at the 2023 Global Consultation on Arts and Music in Missions (GCAMM), held September 11–14 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

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<sup>3</sup>The original title and concept of GCOMM was later expanded to include all the arts. GCAMM 2023 was a celebration of the 20th year of the first GCOMM.

<sup>4</sup>John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 11.

<sup>5</sup>The official definition of “Ethnodoxology,” as developed in May 2019 by the board of the Global Ethnodoxology Network (GEN), states: “Ethnodoxology is the interdisciplinary study of how Christians in every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions.” See <https://www.worldofworship.org/what-is-ethnodoxology/> (accessed November 30, 2023).

and evangelism; and the equipping of national leadership. The purpose here is to clarify and demonstrate the complexities related to the use of the arts, in particular music, in cross-cultural ministry.

### BEFORE THE CHURCH

The work of the ethnodoxologist begins with the initial contact seeking to establish relationships of trust. You are the observer, transitioning to the participant-observer as you become more engaged with the culture. Finally, as one becomes more culturally proficient the ethnodoxologist may become a selective participant, carefully discerning activities in which to participate that will not compromise their position as a believer.

The objective here is to gain cultural credibility leading to eventual use of the arts as a means of presenting the gospel message. We might refer to this as the pre-evangelism phase. In so doing we recognize that the arts are the cultural library. As such they embody the cultural and religious worldview. We are learning the hearts (how they feel) and minds (how they think) of the people as expressed in their cultural languages.

The acquisition of the spoken language is foundational. This should provide for a depth of understanding of local idioms, proverbs, and folklore, giving us a more thorough sense of presenting the gospel message with such clarity as to avoid the potential of syncretism.

Ethnodoxologists must also gain an understanding of cultural “do’s and taboos.”<sup>6</sup> Included here is an awareness of non-verbal communication (hand or other physical gestures, issues of time and space, gender awareness, etc.). Much of this is accessible in the language of the arts. A basic list includes the following:

- The significance of signs and symbols<sup>7</sup>
- The significance of animal imagery<sup>8</sup>
- The significance of color<sup>9</sup>
- The music language of the local culture.

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<sup>6</sup>“Do’s and Don’ts of Cross-cultural Communication,” Office of International Services, University of Pittsburgh, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://www.ois.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/docs/CrossCulturalCommunicationAdvice.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>See Miranda Bruce-Mitford, *Signs & Symbols: Thousands of Signs and Symbols from around the World* (New York: DK Publishing, 1996).

<sup>8</sup>See Bruce-Mitford, *Signs & Symbols*.

<sup>9</sup>See Jeremy Girard, “Visual Color Symbolism Chart by Culture,” ThoughtCo., updated September 25, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/visual-color-symbolism-chart-by-culture-4062177>.

In general, we are seeking gospel or redemptive analogies that can become cultural keys or compasses that can be used as a means for communicating scriptural truths, that is, how do the languages of arts in the new culture illustrate a potential connection to the gospel message.

An example from central Asia serves as an illustration of this process.<sup>10</sup> When we (a team of western missionaries) arrived in a particular village, we were greeted by an individual who had determined to be our host. As we sat together at lunch, in the middle of our conversation he indicated that he could arrange a meeting for us with some musicians who specialized in the old style of music for that ethnic minority. It would occur the next afternoon at a specified location.

Arriving the next afternoon, after a brief time of tea and conversation in which each of us indicated how old we were, the local musicians advised us that they would perform a seven-act opera for us. The leader of the ensemble informed us that this was the most famous story of his people. A brief plot summary of select acts follows, with reference to potential gospel analogies in the New Testament:

- Act I: The battle between the east and west tribes, a battle so bloody that the blood flowed into the river and the blood and water became one. (John 3:3–6; 1 John 5:5–8)
- Act II: The princess of one of the emperors is deeply concerned about the battle and wants the fighting to end. She pricks her finger, and with her own shed blood writes a letter pleading for the peace of the people. (Heb. 9:22, 13:9–14; Rev. 1:5–6)
- Act III: The presence of all the sheep and the shepherds on the hillside. (John 10:1–18)
- Act VII: A prayer for the souls of the dead that they may return to the clouds from which they came. (Rev. 1:7–8, 5:1–10)

Gospel analogies can become a basis for presenting the gospel story as we connect them with biblical themes, such as substitutionary atonement, Jesus as the Passover Lamb or the Good Shepherd, the resurrection, and eternal life.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Example based on the personal experience of the author, April 2005.

<sup>11</sup>Before this experience, our translator (who was an anthropologist) repeatedly stated, “I have no

Once the ethnodoxologist has become sufficiently culturally literate, each of the arts can play a significant role in presenting the message. Using both the visual and performing arts of the local culture, the possibilities are seemingly limitless. Chronological storytelling (orality) is one very effective method, although it is important that the sequence of stories provides a clear revelation of God’s redemptive plan beginning with the first three chapters of Genesis.<sup>12</sup> As music often plays a key role in worship practice, and can contribute in many other ways in the development of Christian community, the following will consider specific challenges to its use in cross-cultural settings, with attention to the concept of “contextualization.” Appropriate contextualization is essential for the ethnodoxologist seeking to assist new believers as they establish the principles for the use of the arts in the planting of the church.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE AND COMPLEXITIES OF CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Contextualization is the process of using local cultural concepts and forms of communication in the process of applying biblical principles in worship, discipleship, and evangelism. This includes not only the spoken language, but the languages of the local arts. According to the *Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities*,<sup>13</sup> the practice of Christian worship in a local cultural setting involves four considerations:

- Worship is transcultural: It transcends culture.
- Worship is contextual: It relates to the local culture.
- Worship is counter-cultural: It is transformative.
- Worship is cross-cultural: It relates to all cultures.

While all four of these relate to church planting, the following will focus on the complexities of contextual music making in cross-cultural settings.

To develop a more complete understanding of how music is used in

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idea what an ethnomusicologist is or does.” But after the performance the translator turned and said, “Now I know what it is that an ethnomusicologist is and does!”

<sup>12</sup>See Stephen Lonetti, *The Chronicles of Redemption* (n.p.: LifeGate Worldwide, n.d.).

<sup>13</sup>“Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities” (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996). Available at <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/nairobi-statement-on-worship-and-culture-full-text/> (accessed December 8, 2023).

cross-cultural worship contexts, one must confront several issues. First, we must dispel the myth that music is a universal language. Such is not the case. Not unlike the variety of spoken languages, there are multiple music languages, many of which are not compatible with the western music system or even each other.<sup>14</sup> This becomes especially evident in those languages that are tonal in nature. In tonal languages, the lexical meaning of a word can change drastically based on micro-variations in tone on a given “word.” Consider the following examples:

- Example 1 (Southeast Asia): A missionary team decided that the tribe should learn the hymn “How Great Thou Art” as part of the worship repertoire. Unfortunately, the musical tones applied to the opening phase “O, Lord, My God” changed the meaning to “Unlucky Old Man,” but they sang it anyway because that is what the missionary said was true worship.<sup>15</sup>
- Example 2 (Philippines): A missionary had been to a missions conference. Several missionaries were talking about how their people were singing. He became concerned that the members of his newly planted church were not. As part of the discipleship process he shared the text of the hymn “Nearer, My God, to Thee.” The people agreed and determined to practice singing these words. When the missionary had them try and sing the words with the traditional western tune (Bethany), there were two problems: (1) The pitches were completely foreign to their own scale system, and they could not match the pitches; and (2) the pitches applied to the word “nearer” changed the meaning to “further.” They queried the missionary. “Make up your mind. Are we to get closer to God, or further?” The missionary did not recognize their music language as music or singing.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, these western tunes did not “translate” well, resulting in failed communication of important ideas about God and one’s relationship with God.

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<sup>14</sup>Robin Harris, “The Great Misconception: Why Music Is Not a Universal Language,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 82–89.

<sup>15</sup>Example based on personal conversation, Urbana Conference, Champaign, IL, December 1996.

<sup>16</sup>Example based on personal conversation, Biak International Airport, Indonesia, April 1989.

Second, we must consider the issue of music as function versus music as entertainment. In many non-western cultures music tends to be associated with a specific function, such as a lullaby, a naming ceremony, or some other life-cycle activity. In western culture, we might hear a lullaby at a concert or even music associated with death, completely out of context with its intended function. Although we may be surrounded by music multiple hours per day, the genre to which we listen may not relate to the implied context of musical selection. For example, we may attend a concert featuring Brahms's *German Requiem* outside the context of a funeral mass. In this case the event may be more about the music—"art for art's sake." In contrast, we understand that to sing Christmas carols or "Happy Birthday" outside the context of its specific season or event may be deemed as inappropriate. Functional music occurs in connection with the related event. Using music outside of its intended context can minimize or completely negate its intended meaning or relegate it to the functional classification of music for entertainment or recreation.

### A CONTEXTUAL MODEL FOR MUSICAL MEANING

Is music, in and of itself, moral, immoral or amoral? This can be a very difficult question for many people. Consider the following based on a model of music and meaning from Jeff Titon's *Worlds of Music* (fig. 1).<sup>17</sup>

**FIG. 1. CONTEXTUAL MODEL FOR MUSICAL MEANING, BASED ON JEFF TITON, *WORLDS OF MUSIC*.**

Musical Performance Elements	Related Music-Culture Aspects
MUSIC	AFFECT
PERFORMER	PERFORMANCE
AUDIENCE	COMMUNITY
TIME/SPACE	MEMORY/HISTORY

According to Titon, music has an "affect," which is its "meaning"—its "power to move."<sup>18</sup> What music is perceived to mean is determined by the individual culture or consumer of music. When you tap your feet, or

<sup>17</sup>Jeff Todd Titon, ed., *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2009), 15–19.

<sup>18</sup>Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 15.

clap your hands, why do you do so? What does it mean? In essence, music has no innate “power.” The power of music to move us is based on our understanding of the medium and the submission of our will to whatever we perceive that power to be. It is a learned response.

Next, the actual performance of the music must be considered.<sup>19</sup> In the performance, the performer attempts to recreate the musical affect. The relative success or failure of that attempt depends on the skill of the performer and the relative familiarity of the genre by those consumers of the music.

Here the performance of music assumes the presence of an audience.<sup>20</sup> The audience is comprised of the entire listening community—the consumers of music. It is the audience or consumer that makes the rules. If they do not like the music they will not come to the event, purchase the music or the recording, or provide financial support to the organization or church.

Finally, music always occurs in a specific time and space. When and where music occurs and the event with which it is associated establishes a “memory history,” the perceived meaning of the song.<sup>21</sup>

As particular songs are repeated in similar situations, a strong ethical connection develops with that context, be it good or bad. Based on these concepts and individual experiences with music, various listeners may “attribute” morality or immorality to a song or an entire musical genre (see fig. 2).

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<sup>19</sup>Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 15.

<sup>20</sup>Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 15.

<sup>21</sup>Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 17.

**FIG. 2. CONTEXTUAL MODEL FOR MUSICAL MEANING AND MORALITY.**

Musical Performance Elements	Related Music-Culture Aspects
MUSIC	AFFECT
PERFORMER	PERFORMANCE
AUDIENCE	COMMUNITY
TIME/SPACE	MEMORY/HISTORY
<i>ATTRIBUTED MORALITY</i>	

Further examples show this to be true. Consider various performances of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” with lyrics that testify to common Christian and non-Christian experiences but lack a clear reference to Jesus Christ. How was the meaning of the song impacted by the performer or context in which it was sung? Which verses did they use or omit? Did it remain a Christian song with a gospel message? Did everyone in the same context attribute the same meaning to the song?

Musical choices in the context of local church worship in the United States also reveal the complexities of musical meaning and attributed morality. Why do worship leaders choose the music they do for specific services? Is it the leadership or each individual in the congregation that determines the meaning (or morality) of the song? Or does an individual accept or reject a song because of the music genre regardless of the spiritual value of the text?

**VARIOUS APPROACHES TO CONTEXTUALIZATION**

In his book *Insights for Missionaries*, Paul Hiebert suggests three historical approaches to contextualization:

(1) *Denial of the Old: Rejection of Contextualization*—Traditionally the tendency of missionaries has been to reject the old, assuming the use of any art form in any way associated with pagan use or practice should be summarily rejected. Only (ethnocentric) western forms were acceptable. In such cases there were two tendencies adopted by the local culture: (1) old worship forms moved underground; or worse (2) the western religion



was totally rejected as irrelevant. In final analysis, missionaries tended to become police.<sup>22</sup>

The experience of a missionary from Indonesia illustrates this approach. To his great disappointment, the entire second generation of the church that had been planted was leaving the church. They told him that he had deceived them. He had dressed like them, lived like them, eaten their food, and translated God's word into their language. Now he was "making" them sing American songs. Obviously, if this was *the* sovereign God, he would have understood their music. "We're going back to the old religion."<sup>23</sup> An entire generation had rejected the message as culturally irrelevant, and the missionary would now need to retract his approach to correct the issue.

(2) *Acceptance of the Old: Uncritical Contextualization*—This approach to contextualization affirms that all arts are essentially good, and few, if any, need to be changed. The greatest issues here are: (1) the rejection of Christianity by second and later generations (see the example above) who may not understand or be aware of the meanings of past pagan practices and choose to return to the old religion, and (2) the emergence of syncretism as the new practices are combined with the old.<sup>24</sup>

(3) *Dealing with the Old: Critical Contextualization*—In this approach, old forms are neither rejected nor accepted. Rather former practices are evaluated by scriptural truths. As the new congregation matures, it is they who become involved in those decisions. It is they, then, who will make the final decision, and become more inclined to follow them. The church thus becomes a local entity, more prone to long-term continuity. As Hiebert asserts, "A church only grows spiritually if its members learn to apply the teachings of the gospel to their own lives."<sup>25</sup>

The critical approach to contextualization can be demonstrated based on experiences in Indonesia and Africa.<sup>26</sup> When a new biblical principle was taught in the Taliabo language and needed to be set to music, the different leaders from the three clans would assemble. What tunes could or could not be used to accommodate the desired text? Were there old associations with the tune that might confuse a non-believer or a new

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<sup>22</sup>Paul Hiebert. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1986), 185.

<sup>23</sup>Personal conversation with the author, Crown College, Fall 1992.

<sup>24</sup>Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 186.

<sup>25</sup>Hiebert. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 190.

<sup>26</sup>Based on personal interviews with missionaries conducted by the author in 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1995.

believer? If so, those tunes were rejected. Eventually they just began making new tunes for new texts.

In Zambia, when an existing music program that ethnocentrically promoted the supremacy of western music was adapted to include local musical styles, the locals asked, “Is it okay if we do African music?” Based on this third approach to contextualization, the response was, “Certainly, but not without an evaluative process that applies biblical principles.”<sup>27</sup> Syncretism was rampant in the area, and leadership needed to be carefully provided with the appropriate biblical foundations to ensure appropriate contextualization.

### THE CHURCH PLANTED

With the new body of believers established, three primary relationships emerge. The arts can play an effective role in each relationship, which are connected closely to Christian practices.

- The relationship of the believer (self) to God: Worship
- The relationship of the believer (self) to other believers: Discipleship, Care, Nurture
- The relationship of the believer (self) to non-believers: Outreach, Evangelism

In the following, the role of the arts will be seen in each of these Christian practices, thereby contributing to the development of Christian relationships with God, other believers, and non-believers.

### WORSHIP

Before giving examples of how local arts contribute to worship, brief mention will be made of related scriptures. The Old Testament gives many examples of the use of the arts in worship. We see this in 1 Chronicles

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<sup>27</sup>Why is the music issue of such great significance? Consider the fact that music is the first language that we learn, well before the spoken language. Research now indicates that the fetus begins to form its musical language as soon as the auditory system begins to develop. The auditory system is fully functioning approximately twenty weeks from conception. Research indicates that within a year after the child is born it will recognize and prefer music to which they were exposed in the womb. It is the development of this auditory system that enables the child to learn the intricacies of the spoken language. Considering all these factors it is the musical language that becomes the most important aspect of our identity. We seem to be able to adapt to changes in our living condition, our food preference, even our language, but we just cannot seem to accept a change to our musical language. See Daniel J. Levitin, “My Favorite Things,” in *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of Human Obsession* (New York: Penguin Group, Inc., 2007), 223–46.

23–25, and in the instructions for the construction of both the tabernacle (Exod. 25–38; Num. 4:1–20, 10:1–10) and the temple (2 Chron. 2–4), culminating in one of the most significant times of worship recorded in Scripture (2 Chron. 5:1–10). The descriptions are replete with signs, symbols, colors, and animal imagery. The spiritual gift here is wisdom, that is, the ability to use the arts in ways that accurately reveal the character of God (Exod. 31:3; Col. 3:16).

In the New Testament, key verses include Ephesians 5:18–20. Here the source of the music is the filling of the Holy Spirit. The result is making music, along with thanksgiving and mutual submission “out of reverence for Christ” (v. 20). Music making does not appear to be an option for the believer, but rather a symptom of a Spirit-filled life. It is the external expression of an internal condition. Three examples may provide some insight into this phenomenon.

First, new believers on the tiny island of Taliabo in Indonesia produced distinctly Christian songs after first responding positively to the Christian gospel in 1987.<sup>28</sup> These people were traditionally animists who for generations had been involved in a revenge cycle of taking the heads of their enemies. Once their “sin barrier” (those factors in their lives that prevented a proper relationship with God) was removed they burst into song.<sup>29</sup> It seemed that every new teaching or scripture was immediately set to music. It was their memory system. Whenever a new song was needed the leaders of the three previously warring clans came together in a process of critical contextualization to make sure there were no musical connections with the former pagan practices.

Likewise, the Tugutil on the island of Halmahera (also in Indonesia) began to sing, despite an ancestral taboo against singing or playing a music instrument.<sup>30</sup> According to the superstition, the spirits become angry when they hear the music, except for two ancient chants that were part of the planting festival. If you made music at any other time the spirits might attack your home, and you and your family would get sick and die.

Once the Tugutil understood the gospel and their sin barriers were removed, they came to the missionary with an urgent request. They said that if they did not start singing their “guts were going to burst out all over the ground!” When the missionary asked what they wanted to sing

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<sup>28</sup>Based on personal experiences of the author from 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1995.

<sup>29</sup>By the time the author arrived in 1989 the Christians of Taliabo had already composed seventy-five songs for worship, and by my fourth trip in 1995 they had composed over 200.

<sup>30</sup>Based on personal experience of the author, 1990.

they said, “God’s story.” The resulting text began with the creation and fifteen verses later ended with the ascension.

The greater problem for the Tugutil was: “How do we sing?” The missionary responded, “I don’t know. Just open your mouths and start.” What came out was remarkable. No one seems to know the source, other than the Holy Spirit. They broke the taboo, and their faith was affirmed, as was the power of the sovereign God.

Yet, an encounter with the Kara people in Brazil was a different story.<sup>31</sup> To the ethnodoxologists, any indigenous music seemed to be the purview of three shaman brothers. Every day, for hours on end, we listened to their singing and playing. By the end of the first week, we had developed an aural sense of their music system. It consisted of what appeared to be a four-tone scale, the equivalent of scale tones one, three, five, and six of the western major scale, with tones five and six always sung below one and three.

Using some of the texts from the western songs that had been translated into their local language, the ethnodoxologists attempted creating some songs compatible to their music system that might be acceptable to them. We first sang them to the missionaries. They encouraged us to sing them for the people who gathered that evening. Their immediate response was, “These are good men. They are singing our music. . . . Sing it again.” I argued that we had brought these songs from another village. They disagreed. “Nobody has music like ours.” Immediately the songs began to be heard throughout the village.<sup>32</sup>

Each of the next two evenings two different women brought a sick child, requesting the missionaries to pray for them. The first mother said, “They told me to take my baby to the healer (shaman), but I told them that there was only one God, and He had all the power.” A request for such a prayer had never happened in the thirty-two years the missionaries had been there.

While it may be a temptation to want to write the people’s first songs, ethnodoxologists should first wait and see if and how the Holy Spirit moves. For one reason, original songs composed by the new believers can become a valuable testing ground for how the people have processed what they have learned from biblical teaching.

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<sup>31</sup>Based on the personal experience of the author and fellow ethnodoxologist Héber Negrão, May–June 2015.

<sup>32</sup>During our time working with the Kara, we were able to complete nine songs.

## DISCIPLESHIP

The next relationship that the arts can benefit in a newly planted church is that of discipleship, when believers care for and nurture other believers. In Colossians 3:14–17, Paul instructs believers to teach and admonish using music in Christian education, “teaching and admonishing” (v. 16). As Neti Nina of the Taliabo people said, “We love God’s word that you have brought us, but these songs have sprung up from those of us who have had our sin barriers removed. Now we can sing them and use them to teach our children and grandchildren for the years to come.”<sup>33</sup> New Christian songs were being used for discipleship.

Furthermore, Paul’s admonition to teach and admonish—through music—“in all wisdom” (v. 16) points to the need to use the arts in ways that facilitate acceptable worship and spiritual growth. The antithesis is using the gift of music as a means of entertainment, fun, or as a marketing tool for the church in the ministry context. There is a clear distinction between these uses of music and the use of the arts in worship, discipleship, and outreach for spiritual purposes. The presence of “goosebumps” or the sensation of the soundwave striking the body may simply be an impact of a learned response to a specific genre. The spiritual outcome requires the involvement of the mind, that is, the evaluation, application, and response to the truth (Ezek. 33:32; John 4:24). The temporal impact of the “fun” experience cannot compare to the eternal value of the “joy” of salvation.

Another aspect of the relationship of the believer (self) to other believers is the care and nurture of others in need of healing. One way the arts may assist in healing (physical, emotional, or spiritual) is through a form of music therapy. For example, a young Taliabo mother died giving birth to triplets. That next Sunday the church in sorrow seemed unable to sing praises to God. A Christian named Di Nama came to the front of the church and said, “I hope what I am doing will help us all bring our joy back again.” He took out his bamboo flute and played the tune for the Taliabo doxology, “Lord, we want to thank You, You Three.” As he continued playing, the congregational began to hum along with him. As he finished the congregation responded, “Bia,” meaning “it is good.” The depression was broken, and the singing went on with enthusiasm.<sup>34</sup>

In another instance, a Taliabo mother was in labor. The child was not in the correct birthing position. It was assumed she and the baby would

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<sup>33</sup>Based on the personal experience of the author, 1990.

<sup>34</sup>Based on the personal experience of the author, 1990.

both die. It was the first birth in a Christian family without an offering given by the shaman to the local deity. “Have you sung your songs and prayed to God?” the missionary asked. Immediately the church members assembled began to praise God with one of their new Taliabo songs of praise. On the first verse the baby turned, and on the second verse the baby was born.<sup>35</sup>

## OUTREACH

It is clear that Scripture mandates the use of music as a means of worship and discipleship, but there are no specific directives that either prohibit or endorse the use of music for evangelistic purposes. There are several biblical references that demonstrate the use of music before all nations in the act of worship. The evangelistic by-product is the revelation of the character of God as worthy of our worship (2 Sam. 22:50; 1 Chron. 16:8–9, 23–24; Ps. 18:49; Rom. 15:9).

It is a basic requirement that the ethnodoxigist become proficient in the cultural languages of the ethnic group with which they are working, for contextualization becomes a key vehicle for presenting the gospel message in ways that lead to Christian maturity and the avoidance of syncretism.

## AFTER THE CHURCH PLANT

The final phase of the ethnodoxigist’s work—now that an indigenous church has been firmly planted—is the equipping of the national church leadership to assume total responsibility. This includes the training of musicians to serve in worship leadership. The level of content and method of delivery of this training may vary according to the local leadership needs, but adequate equipping in both music and theology should be included. One strategy for such training involves the development of summer music camps open to believers and non-believers, thus providing both discipleship and evangelistic opportunities for those attending. Summer camps also provide practical experience for future leaders and teachers.<sup>36</sup>

Once a strategy for equipping local leadership is in place, the ethnodoxigist must develop and adopt exit strategies. Now the ministry is left

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<sup>35</sup>Based on the personal experience of the author, 1990.

<sup>36</sup>Music in World Cultures uses summer music camps as a means of discipleship and evangelistic outreach. Worship leaders and musicians who have been musically and theologically equipped serve as camp leaders and assistants, which provides supervised experiences in which they apply their knowledge and skills. See <https://miwc.org/where-we-are/eastern-europe> (accessed December 9, 2023).

to those who have been prepared. Well-equipped and spiritually mature local leadership is far superior to outside control. Although the potential issues can be complex, understanding of the intricacies of local culture is far better served by insider leadership evaluating the application of critical contextualization.

What then will the continuing relationship be with those we have equipped and left behind? Brief consideration of typical issues follows. Each of these points to ways that ethnodoxologists can successfully exit the field after a church is planted.

(1) *The Realistic Assessment of Musical Needs*: Considering all aspects of a potential project, what are the real needs of the people? Do they really need ten electric keyboards when their scale system is not compatible with the western keyboard? What strategies for developing their keyboard skills have you put in place? Do they even have electricity? Of what practical use are western music instruments if they have no one to provide long-term proper instructors, or anyone to maintain them?

(2) *Finance and Funding*: Based on the local economy, what is the potential for total assumption of funding and financial control? Is financial independence a possibility? Are there ways to adjust current practices to provide for financial independence? Are you prepared to fund what the local economy cannot sustain?

When assistance for establishing schools of music in the churches is requested, each school should be required to submit a business plan for independence within a specified time limit. With the approval of the plan the supporting entity may provide seed money on a declining basis over the pre-determined time span, beginning with one hundred percent. Annual reviews (accountability) must be required to ensure continued support.<sup>37</sup>

(3) *Legal Issues*: It should be emphasized that to maintain biblical integrity and Christian witness, government policies and legal requirements for registration should be followed. This includes the paying of required registration fees and taxes.

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<sup>37</sup>Based on the experience of Music in World Cultures work in Ukraine from 1997 to 2023, the process of development required some adjustment in the traditional means of delivering music instruction, both philosophically and financially. Music teachers previously were providing private instruction for a fee of \$0.45 per hour. Few families could afford that. With encouragement and demonstration, they adopted a new plan of group instruction. The fee was reduced to \$0.25 per hour, with ten students in a class. More families were able to afford the fee, and the income for the instructor increased from \$0.45 per hour to \$2.50 per hour. As the economy of Ukraine improved, and the concept was expanded, most schools were able to be established without outside funding. Similar programs have now been established in several other countries.

(4) *Relationship with the Mission Agency*: In some cases, only temporary assistance may be needed. Locals can be equipped and then are able to take on full leadership of the operation. In other cases, it may be necessary to establish a more long-term relationship. This may involve continued education, funding, or development of projects outside the normal scope of your ministry. There is nothing wrong with being available for counsel and encouragement, especially with the communication technology now available.

## CONCLUSION

The growth of and demand for the contributions of the ethnodoxologist in the world mission movement has been well documented.<sup>38</sup> The Global Ethnodoxology Network serves as a major resource of information and network for the Christian artist seeking to serve God throughout the world.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, no longer is the mission field “across the ocean.” Representatives of the nations of the world have come to the west. As ethnic and cultural diversity increases in the United States, local churches seeking to reach the nations with the Christian gospel should consider the principles of ethnodoxology, with ministry applications for worship, discipleship, and evangelism.

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<sup>38</sup>Charles Edward Dauterman, *The Growth of Music in Missions as Demonstrated in Urbana Student Mission Conventions from 1993–2006* (MA thesis, Bethel University, 2009).

<sup>39</sup>See Global Ethnodoxology Network, accessed December 8, 2023, <https://www.worldofworship.org/>.