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THE WORSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH:
A GRAMMATICAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS
OF FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIAN DEVOTION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Theology

by
James Christopher Holmes

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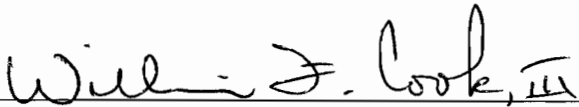
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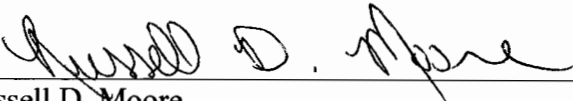
THE WORSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH:
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OF FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIAN DEVOTION

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To Beth,
my love, my joy,
and my friend

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>

PREFACE

This thesis is not simply the result of the efforts of a single individual, but it is the product of the guidance, assistance, and prayers of many others. Dr. Bill Cook, my supervising professor, has been such an encourager to me throughout the demands of this degree program. He has also challenged me to think critically and precisely, which has greatly benefited me as a student and as a worshiper. In addition, Professor Carl Stam and Dr. Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank have nurtured my interest in Christian worship, and I am grateful for their influence and friendship.

A host of others have provided their support during this task. I am especially grateful to my godly parents, James Albert and Betty Holmes, who have never failed to give their love and support to me. The members of New Salem Baptist Church have blessed me with their encouragement, interest, and prayers.

There is no means with which I can fully express my gratitude to my bride, Beth, for her unfailing support throughout this process. She has prayed for me, sacrificed for me, and set an example of faithfulness and diligence before me that has been truly exemplary. I am so very humbled by her love and attention.

Finally, I marvel at God's amazing grace toward me, and I pray that I will be faithful always to offer Him worship that is "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

James Christopher Holmes

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2003

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most fundamental engagement for a believer in Christ is worship. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, genuine worship is commanded and expected. Worship is not to be merely a segment of the Christian's existence, but it should transcend the entire lifestyle of the saved person.¹ The whole of the Bible contains examples of worship done well and worship performed in vain. Unfortunately, worship is possibly one of the most misunderstood elements in all of Scripture. According to White, the word, "worship," is "an exasperatingly difficult word to pin down."² Peterson has noted that "Nowhere in Scripture is worship actually defined."³ The present-day concept of worship is frequently equated with the corporate gatherings of Christians, certain musical styles, or particular times and places. Vast numbers of books and articles have been produced in an effort to revitalize worship, to create new worship services, to design new worship practices, and to offer instruction about worship based on select biblical texts. The concern for renewal and reality in worship is visible

¹C. E. B. Cranfield, "Divine and Human Action: The Biblical Concept of Worship," *Interpretation* 12 (1958): 395. Cranfield understands that "any divorce between worship in the sense of church services, private prayers, etc. and worship in the sense of the whole offering of our lives to God is intolerable" (ibid.).

²James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 17.

³David Peterson, "Worship," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 1.

virtually everywhere.⁴ It is significant that little scholarly inquiry has been performed on the subject of worship from a thoroughly scriptural perspective.⁵

Statement of the Problem

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “worship” in verb form means “to honour or revere as a supernatural being or power, or as a holy thing; to regard or approach with veneration, to adore with appropriate acts, or ceremonies.”⁶ Thus, the English sense of the word is an attitude of homage or devotion, or that expressed in specific actions. Much of the confusion about worship can be attributed to a misunderstanding of the biblical concept of worship. The contemporary perception of worship is assumed by many to be comparable (or even equivalent) to that of the first-century church, and that whenever the word “worship” is used in an English translation of the New Testament, it always refers to the same attitude or activity of the worshiper. However, the vocabulary of worship throughout the Bible, and particularly within the New Testament, cannot always be translated and interpreted in such a simple manner. Andrew McGowan has commented on this situation.

Modern English translations of the [New Testament] use ‘worship’ for a number of Greek words suggesting piety, service and obeisance, referring not only to cultic activities or to acts of homage or adoration, but also to general dispositions such as faith and religious allegiance. In this broad sense, ‘worship’ includes pagan (1 Cor 10:14) as well as Jewish (Heb 8:5) practices, and continuous heavenly praise (Rev 5:14) as well as specific personal actions (John 9:38).⁷

⁴John F. Jansen, “Worship: Some New Testament Reminders,” *Austin Seminary Bulletin* 85 (1969), 26.

⁵D. A. Carson, “Worship Under the Word,” in *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 17. Carson argues passionately for what he calls a “whole Bible” theology in seeking answers about worship. He says that “the ‘pick and choose’ method of constructing a theology of worship from the whole Bible lacks methodological rigor and therefore stability” (ibid.).

⁶*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933, 12: 320-21.

⁷Andrew McGowan, “New Testament Worship,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Paul Bradshaw, 3rd ed. (Louisville: WJK, 2002), 332-33.

Even a cursory glance at the variety of expressions that are normally translated “worship” provides ample illustration of the need for considerable re-evaluation in the perception and application of the scriptural directives about worship.⁸ Osborne has acknowledged that occasionally, “we encounter the view that every appearance of a Hebrew or Greek term should be translated by the same English word . . . [which is a] fallacy.”⁹

An article prepared nearly two decades ago by Marshall is indicative of the vast misconception that exists about modern worship.¹⁰ His article argues that first-century worshipers gathered *solely* for mutual edification rather than for the worship of God. Given the paramount importance of worship for the Christian, it is both appropriate and essential that scholarly inquiry be made into the true nature of worship from the foundation of sound biblical theology and instruction. It is imperative that Christian worship adhere to the moorings of biblical theology for the glory of God and for the edification of the church, or else worship will have an impact upon neither. Shedd acknowledges this fact when he states, “Christians are generally unconscious that their worship reflects the practical theology of their community.”¹¹

Although specific guidelines for personal and corporate worship occur very infrequently within the text of the New Testament, nevertheless, Christians are

⁸Ralph P. Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 11. Martin indicates that there are at least eight different words in the text of the New Testament that describe human attitudes and activities in worship. Each of these words refers to a different aspect of worship; they do not all convey the same idea.

⁹Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), 72.

¹⁰I. Howard Marshall, “How Far Did the Early Christians *Worship* God?” *Churchman* 99 (1985): 216-29. Marshall states, “It is my thesis that this use of language [about worship in the corporate setting] incorporates a fundamental misunderstanding of what ought to be at the centre of Christian meetings and that leads to a serious shift in practice from what ought to be happening when we gather together” (ibid.).

¹¹Russell Shedd, “Worship in the New Testament Church,” in *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study*, ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1987), 120.

specifically instructed to worship. The few references to such activity that do exist must be analyzed carefully in order to understand their instructions properly and to be obedient to the authorial intent of the passages. Biblical worship will exalt Christ, and as a result, He will be glorified, and men and women will be drawn to Him (John 12:32). According to Peterson, there is a “centrality of evangelism to an authentic New Testament theology of worship. Indeed, the aim of all Christian preaching should be to bring people to worship Christ in the sense of *yielding their allegiance to Him as Saviour and Lord.*”¹²

The objective of this thesis is to determine as clear an understanding as possible of the nature of worship within the context of the first-century church. This goal will be achieved through an analysis of the vocabulary of worship within the New Testament text and a contextual survey of its most specific references to worship. Accurately interpreting the meaning of the various words translated “worship” and correctly comprehending their contextual setting should enhance significantly the present perception of Christian devotion. Peterson has elaborated on the value of such an endeavor.

[There is] an increasing number of books attempting to investigate what people did when they went to church in New Testament times, with a view to revitalising congregational worship today. Although there is clearly a need for this sort of stimulation and for creative experimentation on the basis of biblical teaching, there is little attention in contemporary literature to the more fundamental question of a *biblical theology of worship*. . . . Biblical theology is the broad context in which detailed exegesis regarding any topic must take place.¹³

New Testament scholarship should benefit from this work because of the need for clarification regarding the mindset of Christian worshipers in the first century. Because the New Testament text does not provide a complete record of corporate worship details, and because each local church appears to have worshiped in ways that

¹²David Peterson, “Worship in the New Testament,” in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 65.

¹³*Ibid.*, 51.

were related to its particular culture and tradition, an overwhelming quantity of the extant research concerns early Christian worship *after* A.D. 100, when worship became more standardized.¹⁴ This investigation should also have an impact in the area of ecclesiology. Corporate worship is to be as primary when the church gathers today as it was in the first century. Determining a clearer concept of worship among the first Christian worshippers may provide significant insight for worship within the present-day church.

There are several pertinent questions that must be addressed in this thesis. Initially, it is essential to determine how the word “worship” is utilized in the New Testament. Nearly two millennia have transpired since true Christian worship began, and its original concept and practice have been vulnerable to distortion by various means such as doctrinal error, shifts in language, cultural changes, etc. The English word “worship” is not always an appropriate translation for the New Testament words that refer to worship, because the definition of the English word “worship” does not always reflect the context of specific biblical passages. Confusion about worship among Christians and churches is often the result of incorrect or incomplete biblical translations. Having an understanding of worship from the perspective of the early church is critical for Christians to worship rightly today.

Another matter that must be clarified is the nature of Christian gatherings in the first century. Numerous questions emerge from this subject. What motive did the believers have for coming together, and what was the goal or purpose of their assemblies? What, if any, specific components were characteristic of their gatherings? Did they consider their corporate activity to be “worship”? If so, did they believe that worship was limited to the gathered assembly, or did their worship extend beyond the boundary of the local church? Did these Christians follow any kind of regular pattern or

¹⁴For example, there is a great abundance of research that has been performed by Catholic scholars on early Christian liturgy. In addition, numerous academic programs are available which offer advanced study in primitive Christian liturgical history and practice.

prescribed order? Marshall has noted that, as a whole, the language of worship in the New Testament is somewhat uncommon, and it also very rarely concerns Christian meetings (Heb 13:15 and 1 Pet 2:5).¹⁵ The answers to these questions are particularly significant to an assessment of first-century worship.

This thesis will demonstrate that the worship of the church in the first century was somewhat different from the present-day concept embodied in the English word “worship.” Christian worship has become distorted through the centuries and does not always reflect accurately the actions and attitudes of the earliest Christians. Biblical worship is a balance of remorse over sin and celebration of reconciliation, and it is also a balance of human emotion and understanding. Such worship is focused upon God the Father, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 4:21-24). In addition, biblical worship touches every facet of a believer’s life and is a conduit for the upbuilding of believers and the growth of the church.

Background of the Proposal

The selection of the topic of New Testament worship for this thesis is a response to several different stimuli that I have encountered in the last several years. The earliest and most fundamental motive is a strong personal need to establish Christian practice upon clear biblical teaching. In the late 1980’s, while I was earning my undergraduate degree from David Lipscomb University, an institution in Nashville, Tennessee, affiliated with the churches of Christ, I was exposed to numerous doctrines (such as baptismal regeneration) that did not agree with the Baptist tradition that had been a central part of my upbringing. Having done relatively little in-depth biblical study and being significantly troubled by my inability to respond to the doctrines that I was being taught, I immersed myself in the Scriptures and investigated numerous books, articles,

¹⁵I. Howard Marshall, “New Testament Worship,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. by J. G. Davies, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

and debates which dealt with these matters. As I found the answers to the questions that had so deeply affected me, I began to enjoy the tremendous satisfaction that came from allowing the Bible to illumine specific aspects of my life. Since that time, I have observed a regular regimen of allowing God's word to inform and guide my actions and attitudes.

My interest in Christian worship has evolved from a variety of experiences. I have been involved in planning and leading the musical elements of the Sunday services at several churches throughout the past decade. The primary emphasis in my Master of Divinity program was worship, and one of the required classes for the degree was "Biblical Theology of Worship," taught by Daniel Block. This class, which I took in the spring semester of 2000, was particularly interesting and formative as I continued to develop a proper understanding of worship centered on the teachings of Scripture rather than solely upon the practices of my own Baptist tradition. Block, an accomplished Old Testament scholar, covered the theology of worship from the perspective of the Old Testament very thoroughly and lectured heavily on the significance of the Old Testament vocabulary (in both the Hebrew text and the LXX), but time constraints permitted him to offer only a brief survey of the New Testament teachings on worship. One of the papers that I prepared for the class was an exegesis of the phrase "in spirit and truth" from John 4. It was probably during the research for this paper that my own interest in New Testament worship was ignited. Since then, I have written two other papers on the subject of Christian worship: a Pauline theology of worship for Tom Schreiner and an historical survey of early Southern Baptist worship practices from 1845-1870 for Carl Stam.

Most recently, my interest in New Testament worship was piqued at a conference that I attended in January 2003, the Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The scheduled keynote speaker, David Peterson, a professor of theology from London, England who has written one of the very few whole

biblical theologies of worship, *Engaging with God*,¹⁶ was unable to attend because of last-minute problems with his visa. One of the professors who lectured in his absence was David Crump, an associate professor of New Testament at Calvin College. Crump had studied for his doctorate under Howard Marshall at the University of Aberdeen, and his lecture contained several distinctive elements that appeared to have been gleaned from Marshall's teachings. The most noteworthy of these topics was the common misconception among Christians that the New Testament speaks regularly of worship in the context of the corporate gathering of the church. Although I had seen occasional references to the difficulty of deciphering the true nature of corporate worship in the New Testament, my own failure to notice the stark absence of corporate worship language in the New Testament text surprised me and motivated me to dive more deeply into this matter. It was this stimulus that prompted me to investigate the concept and context of New Testament worship from a perspective that is both scholarly and biblical.

Remarkably, there appear to be relatively few sources that provide significant contributions for determining the nature of first-century Christian worship. While there is an abundance of recent books and articles on various facets of worship in general, only a small number of them address the subject from a position that encompasses biblical vocabulary, theology, and ethics. Even the few that do yield helpful data are often more concerned with what the early worshipers did in their corporate assemblies (the components of their worship services) rather than their motives (theology, tradition, and culture) for gathering together for worship.

Nevertheless, there are a few sources that provide substantial academic scholarship on the matter of Christian worship. Some of the more helpful information on this topic has been written by such well-known scholars as D. A. Carson and Ralph

¹⁶David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992).

Martin. Several articles from the Anglican journal, *Churchman*, offer spirited interaction with Marshall's early comments.¹⁷ There are also a few significant inquiries that investigate the particular vocabulary behind the concept of New Testament worship and offer grammatical and semantic analyses.¹⁸

Methodology of the Analysis

This study is founded upon a thorough survey of the available books, commentaries, dissertations, essays, dictionaries, and journal articles that pertain to Christian worship in the New Testament. Although only a portion of the materials that have been consulted deal wholly with the subject, the remaining sources address peripheral issues such as Jewish influences upon Christian devotion, the role of the synagogue in New Testament worship, and purposes of early church assembly.¹⁹ Virtually all of the available materials can be accessed at the James P. Boyce Centennial Library of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary or at another library within close proximity. Numerous searches for source materials have revealed a very small number that are written in German, but due to my lack of facility with German, these sources have not been consulted. All of the works utilized for this thesis are fewer than fifty

¹⁷The articles progress in the following order: John P. Richardson, "Is 'Worship' Biblical?" *Churchman* 109 (1995): 197-218; Alastair Campbell, "Once More: Is Worship 'Biblical'?" *Churchman* 110 (1996): 131-39; and John P. Richardson, "Neither 'Worship' nor 'Biblical': A Response to Alastair Campbell," *Churchman* 111 (1997): 6-18.

¹⁸These articles include the following examples: Karen H. Jobes, "Distinguishing the Meaning of Greek Verbs in the Semantic Domain for Worship," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 4 (1991): 183-91; A. Boyd Luter, "'Worship' as Service: The New Testament Usage of *Latreuō*," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (1988): 335-44; David Peterson, "Worship and Ethics in Romans 12," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 271-88; and Streeter S. Stuart, "A New Testament Perspective on Worship," *Evangelical Quarterly* 68 (1996): 209-21.

¹⁹McGowan notes that when considering the context of New Testament worship that "Careful attention to the various genres of the NT literature, the cultural background of Jewish and other Graeco-Roman settings, and to our own presuppositions, are all necessary." See McGowan, "New Testament Worship," 333.

years old. These sources have adequately provided appropriate length and scope for the thesis.

The thesis will examine the problem in two major sections. An analysis of the grammar and vocabulary of worship in the New Testament will comprise Chapter 2, which will include the Old Testament background and the specific Greek words and their meanings.²⁰ Chapter 3 will examine in detail the context of early Christian devotion by offering an exegesis of a few particularly important passages on worship that are found in the New Testament. As closely as possible, the exegesis will follow the guidelines prescribed by Fee.²¹ In Chapter 4, specific conclusions will be synthesized from the summary material at the ends of chapters 2 and 3 about the specific nature of Christian worship within the New Testament church.

²⁰There are eight Greek words that are translated “worship” in the New Testament. Very few scholars have examined all eight of these words in a single work. One example of research involving all eight words is found in Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 183. Other Greek words such as εὐλογέω (bless), δοξάζω (glorify), etc. that are associated with worship but are not actually translated “worship” do not fit the parameters of this thesis.

²¹Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: WJK, 2002).

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS OF NEW TESTAMENT GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

To establish the first-century understanding of Christian worship, it is appropriate initially to consider the significance of the Old Testament worship patterns and vocabulary upon those of the New Testament period. Following a brief survey of the characteristics of Old Testament worship and the pertinent vocabulary that correspond to specific words in the New Testament, a thorough examination of the eight Greek words (or word groups) that are used for worship in the New Testament text will be performed. Ultimately, conclusions will be drawn that will provide illumination for the concept of first-century Christian worship.

Old Testament Background

Although the precedents to an established Old Testament worship began during the period of the patriarchs, it was during the era of Moses that the worship of God solidified into an established pattern. According to Webber, the worship of the Old Testament was “grounded in the Exodus event, the event that shaped the entire religious life of Israel. . . . God entered into a covenantal relationship with [the children of Israel], making them the servants of God. Central to their service of God was worship.”¹ More specifically, Exodus 12 indicates that the Passover was particularly important, as it signified the covenantal arrangement just prior to the Exodus event.²

¹Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 33.

²Yoshiaki Hattori, “Theology of Worship in the Old Testament,” in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 25.

Herbert has said, “We must take account of Israel’s distinctive faith, if we are to do justice to Israel’s worship. . . . the peculiarities lie not so much in the practice as in the meaning associated with the practice.”³ Indeed, Israel’s faith was steeped in rituals and administrations that set them apart from all other cultures. God instructed His people to build the tabernacle, which contained not an image of God, but God’s own presence, associated with the ark of the covenant. Sacred space required a sacred place, and following Israel’s settlement in the land of promise, King David established Jerusalem as the center of the life and worship of the nation. Worship in the tabernacle was not unlike the worship of the New Testament church, in that God’s people came into His presence “with thanksgiving and offering their sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving night and day (Heb. 13:15).”⁴ The construction of the temple by King Solomon held particular significance for Israelite worship.⁵ Not only did it indicate a solidification of the sacrificial system, but it also initiated the dynamics necessary for the division of the kingdom and exile.

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the dispersion of the nation of Israel during the period of Babylonian exile, the synagogue became the religious, social, and educational center of Jewish life.⁶ It is possible that synagogue worship began in individual homes, where the people met “to keep their faith alive.”⁷ Diligent study of the Scriptures was understood to be necessary to avoid further divine

³A. S. Herbert, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), 6.

⁴Webber, *Worship*, 35.

⁵Solomon’s “theology of the temple” is apparent in 1 Kings 8. See Hattori, “Worship in the Old Testament,” 37-41.

⁶Webber, *Worship*, 36-37.

⁷Harold H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 224.

judgment.⁸ Thus, reading and understanding the sacred texts, especially the Torah, and periods of prayer became the primary elements of synagogue worship, which was significantly different from earlier temple worship.⁹

In the post-exilic period, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple was a primary goal for the Israelites, and the mention of any regional places of worship is scarce. Rowley has said that Ezra and Nehemiah “sought to build a wall round the garden of their faith to prevent it being trampled down by the feet of strangers.”¹⁰ When the rebuilding program was completed, it is likely that many were left disappointed. The rebuilt temple no longer served as the glorious center of Jewish worship, and devotion to pagan deities and rituals became commonplace. This period of disobedience culminated in the Roman occupation not long before the New Testament era began.¹¹ Post-exilic Israel provided the matrix from which Christianity emerged.¹²

The dilemma of worship in the Old Testament meant that for there to be an Israel at all, there had to be people who intentionally focused attention upon the presence of God in their midst. To obey God in cultic observance was to accompany obedience in all matters of everyday life.¹³ Failure to maintain the purity and sincerity of their worship would result in the dissolution of their nation. God had assured Israel that “I will be your God, and you will be my people” (Exod 6:7; Jer 7:23, 11:4, 30:22; Ezek 36:28), but

⁸Hattori, “Worship in the Old Testament,” 44.

⁹Webber, *Worship*, 37.

¹⁰Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 107-08.

¹¹David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992), 47-48.

¹²Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 108.

¹³Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 49.

Wharton has noted that such a promise held a future expectation rather than a present reality.¹⁴

Hebrew Grammar and Vocabulary

There are several words for worship in the vocabulary of the Old Testament that relate to such matters as the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the temple service. To comprehend better the nature of Israelite ritual and practice, a familiarity with these words is essential.¹⁵ As the New Testament writers conveyed their understanding of worship that had been transformed in Jesus Christ, the meanings of many of these Old Testament words became a significant part of the foundation for the New Testament worship vocabulary.¹⁶ Two are particularly important, *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה*¹⁷ and *עָבַד*.

הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה

The verb form *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה* appears 170 times in the Old Testament, particularly in the narrative books,¹⁸ and has the following meanings: “bow politely or respectfully,” “prostrate oneself,” “make obeisance,” or “bend low in worship or as a mark of respect.”¹⁹ Contextually, this word describes one falling before a superior to express

¹⁴James A. Wharton, “Obedience and Sacrifice: Some Reflections on Worship from the Old Testament Side,” *Austin Seminary Bulletin* 85 (1969): 19.

¹⁵Andrew E. Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise! Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 2.

¹⁶David Peterson, “Worship in the New Testament,” in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 52.

¹⁷Other sources such as Herbert and Hill refer to *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה* merely as a *hithpael* of *שָׁחָה*, which was a common explanation until recently, but this understanding is incorrect because of the problem of the intrusive *vav*.

¹⁸H. –P. Stähli, “חָוָה,” in *TLOT*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:398.

¹⁹H. D. Preuss, “הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:249.

extreme honor and homage. Examples include Moses before Jethro (Exod 18:7), Abigail before David (1 Sam 25:23, 41), and Bathsheba and Nathan before David (1 Kgs 1:16, 23). The word **הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה** also refers to worship in a cultic sense. Examples of this usage include the worship of heavenly bodies (Deut 4:19), before the holy mountain (Ps 99:9), in the temple (2 Kgs 5:18), and before Yahweh (Gen 24:26, 48, 52, etc.).²⁰ In the LXX, **הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה** is almost always translated by *προσκυεῖν*, which will be discussed later.²¹

The gesture that is associated with **הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה** is indicative of an inward attitude. “Prostration” is particularly representative. A “sense of disparity” is presupposed, an “overwhelming experience of the sacred . . . a gesture of absolute submission.”²² Hill describes the gesture as “groveling or even wallowing on the ground.”²³ Regardless of the use of **הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה**, whether a secular greeting, a mark of respect, an offering of homage to a king, or a cultic act, one would “drop gently upon his knees . . . and place his hands upon the ground, a little before his knees, and put his nose and forehead also upon the ground (the former first) between his two hands.”²⁴ Herbert has noted that the vocabulary of worship in the Old Testament “makes it clear that the worshipper thought of his God as locally present.”²⁵

עָבַד

The Hebrew verb **עָבַד** basically means “work” or “service,” but it can also mean “worship” in the sense of performing works of service to a false god or to Yahweh.

²⁰Stähli, “חודה,” 399.

²¹Preuss, “הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה,” 250.

²²Ibid., 250-51.

²³Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 6.

²⁴Stähli, “חודה,” 399.

²⁵Herbert, “Worship in Ancient Israel,” 10-11.

The word occurs nearly 300 times in the Old Testament in its various forms and is used in reference to both sacred and secular activities.²⁶ The central thrust of עֲבַד is “obedience to a set of divine commands, whether prescriptions for religious rites or rules governing behavior.”²⁷ According to Herbert, “the content of the word does not suggest servility but rather a relationship, especially in faithfully discharging the work given to [the worshiper].”²⁸ Thus, עֲבַד specifically refers to performing the cult in the sense of worship, honoring, serving in a purely religious sense, and caring for its physical preservation and maintenance.²⁹

In the Old Testament, the service rendered to God was understood to be worship inasmuch as it demonstrated loyalty and faithfulness that originated in the human will. Examples of this aspect of worship are found in Deuteronomy 10:12, 20 and 30:15-20. Throughout the history of Israel, their worship was corrupted by devotion offered to idols. Their divided loyalties were an abomination to the Lord (Deut 7:25; 27:15), since He expected them to observe His covenant with uncompromised fidelity.³⁰ The LXX uses λατρεύειν in place of עֲבַד in 75 instances (about one fourth of the total) and δουλεύειν in 114 instances (more than one third).³¹ In the New Testament, typically the verb λατρεύειν is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew עֲבַד.³²

²⁶Helmer Ringgren, “עֲבַד,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 10:381.

²⁷Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 4.

²⁸Herbert, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 11.

²⁹Eugene Carpenter, “עֲבַד,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:305.

³⁰Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise!*, 4-5.

³¹Ringgren, “עֲבַד,” 381.

³²Peterson, “Worship in the New Testament,” 53.

Greek Grammar and Vocabulary

To understand the full range of meaning embodied in the vocabulary of the words translated “worship” in the New Testament, it is necessary to examine each of the Greek words as much as possible in terms of their etymology, grammar, and semantic range. Herbert understands the value of this type of analysis.

While a study of language cannot by itself adequately convey all that is involved in worship, it can serve as a useful guide in understanding what is in the mind of a people that commonly uses these words. Thus, the English word “worship” clearly indicates an essential element in that approach to God; it is the recognition of the absolute worth of God, and it is thus an end in itself. . . . The English noun and verb indicate the response of the soul to the absolute worth of God, and that response will normally include outward, physical expression.³³

Peterson has observed that “the writers of the New Testament appear to have been influenced by the Greek translation of the Old Testament . . . and its use of worship terminology. . . . The biblical words for worship do not represent discrete concepts but are a part of a whole mosaic of thought about the way to relate to God.”³⁴ Also, Jansen has noted the link between Old Testament and New Testament worship language. He says, “However the language of worship in the New Testament may be colored by the language of Old Testament cultus, it is not a special language but the language of every day.”³⁵ Christian worship was an ongoing obedience and devotion to Jesus Christ, not an event regulated by time or place. The Old Testament forms of worship had found their fulfillment in the Son of God.

Karen Jobes has produced one of the few semantic analyses of all the Greek words translated “worship” in the New Testament. Seeking to understand the concept of first-century worship, Jobes outlines the following approach.

³³Herbert, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 10.

³⁴Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 56.

³⁵John Frederick Jansen, “Worship: Some New Testament Reminders,” in *Austin Seminary Bulletin* 85 (1969), 30.

In the Greek New Testament there are eight different Greek verbs which are all translated by the English word “worship.” They are προσκυνέω, εὐσεβέω, λειτουργέω, λατρεύω, σέβομαι, κάμπτω γόνυ, γονυπετέω, and σεβάζομαι. . . . The range of actions to which these eight verbs refer comprise the semantic domain for the verb “worship.” In order to understand the relationships of these words and consequently to understand the New Testament on the topic of worship, the senses of these eight verbs must be distinguished.³⁶

Thus, it is appropriate to study each of these eight verbs as much as possible with respect to etymology, grammar, and semantic range in order to determine the understanding of Christian worship held by first-century worshippers. The words προσκυνέω and λατρεύω occur more frequently in the New Testament and will receive a more detailed treatment.

Προσκυνέω

Etymology. The early history of the meaning of προσκυνέω is obscure and uncertain. The word is compound and, in the opinion of most scholars, basically means “to kiss.” The prefix προσ- (to, toward) may indicate a connection with cultic practices prior to Greek history. For example, certain Egyptian reliefs portray worshippers with outstretched hands throwing a kiss to the deity. Among the Greeks, προσκυνέω served as a technical term for the adoration of the gods, and it meant “to fall down,” “to prostrate oneself,” and “to adore on one’s knees.” It is likely that προσκυνέω acquired the meaning “to kiss” from the act of casting oneself on the ground to kiss the earth (deity).³⁷ At an early time, likely beginning with the Greek tragedians, the usage was transferred from the outward action to the inward attitude.³⁸ Later, προσκυνέω also referred to the deification of rulers and the Roman emperor cult.³⁹

³⁶Karen H. Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning of Greek Verbs in the Semantic Domain for Worship,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 4 (1991): 183.

³⁷Hans Schönweiss and Colin Brown, “Prayer,” in *NIDNTT*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 875-76.

³⁸Heinrich Greeven, “προσκυνέω,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:758-59.

³⁹Schönweiss and Brown, “Prayer,” 876.

In the LXX, the infinitive προσκυνεῖν is virtually the only rendering of the Hebrew כָּרַע (to bow down) and includes a pronounced element of kissing, even cultic kissing. Nearly seventy-five percent of the instances of προσκυνεῖν relate to the worship of Yahweh or to that of false gods.⁴⁰ The gesture is particularly significant.

As folding or crossing the hands and arms denotes the suppliant's mental concentration, and as the lifting up of outstretched hands expresses the fact that he is making a request, in the same way the physical act of bending indicates his readiness to bow to the will of the One whom he approaches in this manner.⁴¹

The remaining occurrences include a veneration of God's elect (e.g., Moses in Exod 11:8), angels (e.g., Balaam in Num 22:31), or other (usually foreign) superiors (e.g., Abraham in Gen 23:7, 12).⁴²

In the New Testament, forms of the verb προσκυνέω occur 60 times. Of these instances, Matthew contains 13, John's Gospel has 11, and 24 are in Revelation. These occurrences denote worship offered (or that should be offered) to God or Jesus Christ.

Matthew's use of προσκυνεῖν shows that those who fall down in obeisance already involuntarily and unconsciously declare their inmost attitude.⁴³

Hence, whenever obeisance is made before Jesus, the thought is either explicit or implicit that he is king (Matt. 2:2), Lord (Matt. 8:12), the Son of God (Matt. 14:33), . . . For that reason, obeisance is often linked with a request for help in sore need. On the one hand, it intensifies the request, while, on the other hand, it is a sign of faith in the divine helper and redeemer, a faith certain of being heard . . . Thus, obeisance is especially appropriate before the risen and exalted Lord (Matt. 28:9, 17; Lk. 24:52).⁴⁴

Matthew, perhaps the most Jewish of the Gospels, never uses προσκυνέω in relation to traditional places or practices of worship. Instead, προσκυνέω is nearly always

⁴⁰Greeven, "προσκυνέω," 760-61.

⁴¹Schönweiss and Brown, "Prayer," 877.

⁴²Greeven, "προσκυνέω," 760-61.

⁴³Ibid., 764.

⁴⁴Schönweiss and Brown, "Prayer," 877.

employed by Matthew in circumstances depicting an immediate and informal response to Jesus (the exception is the temptation account in 4:9-10). In this sense, rituals and rites of the temple are not and possibly cannot be observed.⁴⁵

It is significant that almost all Johannine references to worship utilize some form of προσκυνέω (the only exceptions are John's two uses of λατρεύω). In John's Gospel, the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in 4:20-24 is a significant discussion of worship (which will be analyzed later) and employs προσκυνέω no fewer than nine times; also the noun προσκυνητής, which means "worshiper," is found in the New Testament only here in 4:23.⁴⁶

In Revelation, the scene in heaven involves perpetual worship (Rev 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). The inward attitude of submission and respect for God is always present in the Apocalypse.⁴⁷ Falling down in each case is specifically mentioned.⁴⁸ For the writer of the Apocalypse, the highest form of spiritual worship necessarily includes physical activity.⁴⁹ David Peterson has commented on the significance of προσκυνέω in Revelation.

At the end of the book, when John seeks to pay homage to the *angelic messenger* (19:10; 22:8-9), he is told to worship God alone. . . . [T]he angel's rejection of worship functions to claim for the whole book the authority, not of an angel (the creaturely instrument of revelation), but of God himself (as the transcendent source of worship), to whom worship alone is due.⁵⁰

⁴⁵Streeter S. Stuart, "A New Testament Perspective on Worship," *Evangelical Quarterly* 68 (1996): 214.

⁴⁶Schönweiss and Brown, "Prayer," 877-78.

⁴⁷Mazie Nakhro, "The Meaning of Worship According to the Book of Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 80.

⁴⁸Greeven, "προσκυνέω," 765.

⁴⁹Thomas Allen Seel, "Toward a Theology of Worship for Music Derived from the Book of Revelation," (D.M.A. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990).

⁵⁰David Peterson, "Worship in the Revelation to John," *Reformed Theological Review* 47 (1988): 69.

From a Christological perspective, it is important to note that Jesus is clearly associated with God, while the angel belongs with John as an instrument of God. The monotheistic prohibition of angel worship does not prevent the worship of Jesus Christ.⁵¹

Interestingly, προσκυνέω is relatively common in the Gospels, Acts, and in Revelation, but it is completely absent from all of the Epistles except for two Old Testament quotations (1 Cor 14:25 and Heb 1:6; 11:21). Apart from Acts 24:11, where προσκυνέω functions as a technical term for the worship of God in the temple, the only occurrence in the context of the first-century Christian community is in 1 Corinthians 14:25.⁵² It must be noted that these two instances describe neither individual Christians engaged in personal worship nor a group of believers gathering for purposes that were specifically Christian.⁵³

Grammar. Robertson has made the following observations about the grammatical usage of transitive verbs like προσκυνέω.

Προσκυνέω in the ancient Greek uses the accusative regularly. In the Ptolemaic inscriptions, the accusative is still the more usual case, but the New Testament uses the dative twice as often as the accusative. In John 4:23, the accusative and dative occur with little difference in result. Cf. also Rev 13:4, 8. The dative is the regular usage in the LXX.⁵⁴

Whether προσκυνέω takes a dative or an accusative object, there is no variation in its meaning.⁵⁵ Thus, the case of the object does not have a bearing on the translation of προσκυνέω, and the attitude that is expressed is consistent.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Greeven, “προσκυνέω,” 765.

⁵³Stuart, “New Testament Perspective on Worship,” 213.

⁵⁴A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 476.

⁵⁵Schönweiss and Brown, “Prayer,” 877.

Semantic range. In the New Testament, the verb προσκυνέω has three senses: “worship,” “entreaty,” and “paying political homage.” Nevertheless, προσκυνέω is always translated “worship,” even when that meaning is not precisely reflected within the text. Such a hermeneutical practice would seem to have little substantiation, even though προσκυνέω is the word most commonly used as the foundation for the English word, “worship.”⁵⁶

In the Gospel narratives, προσκυνέω can carry the sense of entreaty or petition. In such instances, the subject typically petitions Jesus for assistance or healing (e.g., Matt 20:20; John 12:20). Jobes has made a very significant comment about this specific use of προσκυνέω.

When [προσκυνέω] is used in [the] sense of entreaty a religious connotation is not implied by the word. To understand προσκυνέω as referring to worship when used in [the] sense of entreaty, though perhaps theologically justifiable in reference to Jesus, is not lexically justifiable.⁵⁷

Similarly, προσκυνέω can also bear the sense of expressing or paying political homage (e.g., Matt 2:11). The writings of Josephus also provide substantial proof of this alternate meaning (e.g., *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.28; 20.65). Within this semantic sense, it was typical for a person of a lesser position to approach a nobleman, king, or queen and offer a gesture of allegiance, which was probably some form of genuflection exchanged from one person to another. As before, Jobes makes a significant observation.

Again, it would be misleading to translate προσκυνέω by the English word “worship” when used in this sense, for the divine element suggested by the English word “worship” is totally absent from the royal context. . . . It is an example of illegitimate totality transfer to understand by Matthew’s choice of προσκυνέω that the magi shared the theological understanding which the English word “worship” implies to Christians.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Stuart, “New Testament Perspective on Worship,” 212.

⁵⁷Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 186.

⁵⁸Ibid., 186-87.

Thus, it is especially misleading to translate προσκυνέω always as “worship” in the New Testament. The semantic range must be acknowledged in order to translate and understand properly the meaning in the passage.⁵⁹

Λατρεύω

Etymology. The primary meaning of the verb λατρεύω is “to serve,” and the word refers to the bodily services of slaves or workers, or to the service of the gods. It is derived from the word λατρον which means “wages.”⁶⁰ The noun λατρεία is more common than the verb form and usually means “service for reward.”⁶¹ The Hebrew עָבַד, when used in connection with God, always refers to cultic service and is equivalent in meaning to λατρεύω.⁶²

In the LXX, λατρεύω occurs 90 times, although distributed unevenly, and 70 of these instances occur in Exodus (17), Deuteronomy (25), Joshua (19), and Judges (9). The verb appears only once in the Prophets (Ezek 20:32), Samuel (2 Sam 15:8), and Chronicles (2 Chr 7:19). The meaning of λατρεύω is equivalent to δουλεύω when referring to human relations; thus, λατρεύω is always used in a religious sense. More precisely, then, λατρεύω means to serve or worship cultically, especially by sacrifice. By their choice of words, the translators of the LXX illustrated “that the relation of service in religion is something apart from other relations of service.”⁶³ Characteristically, it is not

⁵⁹An excellent guide to understanding the nature of semantic range, as well as most issues related to proper hermeneutical method, can be found in Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), 65-92.

⁶⁰Klaus Hess, “Serve,” in *NIDNTT*, vol. 3, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986): 549.

⁶¹Hermann Strathmann, “λατρεύω,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967): 4:58-59.

⁶²C. E. B. Cranfield, “Divine and Human Action,” *Interpretation* 12 (1958): 387.

⁶³Strathmann, “λατρεύω,” 59-60.

the meticulously performed cultic acts which are equivalent with true worship but fervent obedience to the voice of the Lord. *λατρεία* occurs nine times in the LXX, denoting cultic worship (e.g., Josh 22:27), specifically the Passover (e.g., Exod 12:25-26; 13:5).⁶⁴

In the New Testament, *λατρεύω* occurs a total of 21 times in Luke-Acts (8), Hebrews (6), Revelation (2), Matthew (1), and the Pauline epistles (4). Three of these occurrences are derived from Old Testament quotations (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8; Acts 7:7). As in the LXX, the New Testament never employs *λατρεύω* for any reason other than in reference to specific service offered to God or false gods; the word is not used for human relations or secular services. *λατρεύω* can also mean the ministry of prayer and praise (e.g., Luke 2:37; Acts 26:7) and can refer to the whole conduct of the righteous towards God (e.g., Phil 3:3).⁶⁵ The cultic connotation of *λατρεύω* subsided in favor of the inner worship of the heart through faith.⁶⁶ *λατρεία* occurs five times in the New Testament, and three of these instances refer to sacrificial ministry.⁶⁷ C. F. D. Moule has made the following observations about the New Testament use of *λατρεύω*.

Thus there is inherent in the Biblical conception of worship something active and strenuous; and although the Christian gospel of God's initiative and of His wholly unmerited and unearned graciousness has quite transformed the meaning of any "offering" of "service" which can be rendered by men to God, yet the terms still present a salutary bulwark against slovenly or supine conceptions. God is described in a famous prayer, as the God whose *service* (i.e. slavery) is perfect freedom (cf. Rom. 6:18).⁶⁸

Semantic range. Cranfield distinguishes three senses of the English word, "worship": (1) to denote a particular element of what is generally considered worship,

⁶⁴Hess, "Serve," 550.

⁶⁵Strathmann, "λατρεύω," 62-64.

⁶⁶Hess, "Serve," 550.

⁶⁷Strathmann, "λατρεύω," 65.

⁶⁸C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1961), 80-81.

such as adoration; (2) to denote generally the public worship of the religious community gathered together and also the private religious exercises of the family and the individual; and (3) in an even wider sense, to denote the whole life of the community or of the individual viewed as *service* of God. While Cranfield sees the first sense as being basically equivalent with προσκυνέω, he considers the third sense to be equal to λατρεύω (e.g., Luke 1:74, Rom 1:9, Phil 3:3, and particularly Rom 12:1).⁶⁹

In her semantic analysis of the New Testament vocabulary of worship, Jobes would seem to agree with Cranfield's view. Jobes understands λατρεύω to designate duties performed in a religious vocation such as Anna's temple service (Luke 2:37) and the altar tasks of the Old Testament priests (Heb 8:5). In the New Testament, λατρεύω refers to actions that are always evaluated positively when the grammatical object is God and negatively whenever the object is different (e.g., Matt 4:10; Luke 4:7-8).⁷⁰

Λειτουργέω

Etymology. Initially, the verb λειτουργέω and its related noun forms λειτουργός, λειτουργία, and λειτουργικός were wholly secular terms. The LXX provides the key to understanding the shifts in meaning that these terms experienced through its near-uniform cultic and priestly use of the words. In the primitive church, these Old Testament concepts underwent a transition into Christian cultic practices. The word λειτουργέω is formed from λῆϊτος (the people or national community, "laity") and the root ἐργ- (work) and came to mean "service for the people."⁷¹

In the LXX, λειτουργέω is used for the Hebrew לָוֶה and occurs about 100 times but only when the reference is cultic in nature. It became a technical term for

⁶⁹Cranfield, "Divine and Human Action," 387.

⁷⁰Jobes, "Distinguishing the Meaning," 185.

⁷¹Hermann Strathmann, "λειτουργέω," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967): 4:215-16.

priestly service, as did the noun λειτουργία which appears about 40 times and is always used of the ministry of the priests and Levites in and at the sanctuary, and it particularly refers to the ministry of the priests at the altar.⁷²

In the New Testament, λειτουργέω occurs three times (as λειτουργεῖν in Acts 13:2, Rom 15:27, and Heb 10:11), and λειτουργία occurs six times (Luke 1:23; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 2:17,30; Heb 8:6; 9:21). The other noun forms, λειτουργικός (1) and λειτουργός (5), occur a total of six times, with three instances in Hebrews. Although this represents a minimum of occurrences, the frequency of these words in Hebrews is at once associated with the author's vocabulary that is deeply rooted in Old Testament cultic practice. These forms of λειτουργέω never refer to New Testament services or to the offices of the apostles, teachers, prophets, etc.⁷³ It is significant that in Acts 13:2, λειτουργέω is used rather differently from the way it is employed in the LXX; it has a derivative meaning. Kistemaker has noted that "in verse 2 Luke for the first time applies the word ["worship"] to Christian practice. . . . In the new form of worship, we see not the priests at the altar but every believer at church in prayer."⁷⁴ Thus, the original cultic meaning is transformed and spiritualized into a reference to Christian worship through prayer.⁷⁵ Marshall has made some additional observations about this use of λειτουργέω in reference to a church meeting.

In Acts 13:2 the members of the church at Antioch are said to have been serving the Lord and fasting when they heard the Spirit give the command that Barnabas and Paul were to be separated from the church for missionary work elsewhere. The context suggests that the service took the form of prayer or possibly of prophecy, but the implication is clearly that such a "service" was only one of the things that

⁷²Hess, "Serve," 551-52.

⁷³Strathmann, "λειτουργέω," 226-28.

⁷⁴Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 455.

⁷⁵Hess, "Serve," 552.

Christians might do in their meetings, and nothing suggests that “service” could be used to refer specifically to the character of a Christian meeting as a whole.⁷⁶

Semantic range. The verb λειτουργέω, from which the English word “liturgy” originates, has a more general sense of service than λατρεύω. Both can be used to refer to duties that are affiliated with a religious vocation, but λειτουργέω also refers to performing the duties of a civil office. For example, Paul uses it in reference to civil rulers as God’s servants in Romans 13:6. Because λειτουργέω possesses the more general sense, it includes the less specific sense held by λατρεύω.⁷⁷ Jobes concludes that the two words are *hyponymous*, a semantic relationship based on word similarity in which the meaning of one word is included within the sphere of meaning of another, general sense.⁷⁸

Εὐσεβέω, Σέβομαι, Σεβάζομαι

Of the eight Greek words translated “worship” in the New Testament, three of them contain the root σεβ-, which means “to fall back before” and generally refers to piety: εὐσεβέω, σέβομαι, and σεβάζομαι. This word group is composed of various verbal and noun forms (the nouns are much more numerous), but there are only 35 total occurrences in the New Testament, primarily in Acts and Timothy. Although these words are employed very regularly in the Greek language and convey the sense of personal commitment and devoutness, the object of their devotion and admiration is usually not the God of the Bible but temporal objects, such as one’s country, a landscape, dreams, parents, heroes, the dead, etc.⁷⁹

⁷⁶I. Howard Marshall, “How Far Did the Early Christians *Worship* God?” *Churchman* 99 (1985): 218.

⁷⁷Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 185-86.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁹Harder Günther, “Godliness, Piety” in *NIDNTT*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 92.

Εὐσεβέω. The word εὐσεβέω and its forms, as with most of the σεβ- words, occur very infrequently in the LXX.⁸⁰ When they do appear, they are primarily found in the Wisdom literature, Job, and the Apocrypha. The piety of the Old Testament is quite different from that of Hellenism. The true God demands active obedience in all areas of man's service, whether in thought, word, or deed. The Greeks sought to offer "devout trepidation to which lip-service [was] paid just on fixed occasions in cultic homage, or in the sphere of intellectual rhetoric."⁸¹

Εὐσεβέω only occurs twice in the New Testament (Acts 17:23, 1 Tim 5:4), and the noun, adjective, and adverb forms (εὐσέβεια, εὐσεβής, and εὐσεβως, respectively) occur 20 times, with fully half of them appearing in Timothy. This pattern is best explained by the supposition that the early church used these words, at least initially, for non-Christian piety, and the words were employed later to refer to Christian pursuits.⁸² Negative forms of these words occur as well, but they will not be examined here. Although εὐσεβέω is a commonly used word for worship in extra-biblical writings, its rare occurrence in the New Testament can be attributed to the possibility that "when used in the sense of devotion to deity, εὐσεβέω had become tainted by association with pagan religious ritual to the extent that New Testament writers preferred to use other verbs, except when using it in its second sense of devotion to another human being."⁸³

⁸⁰Werner Foerster, "σέβομαι," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:175-78.

⁸¹Günther, "Godliness, Piety," 92-93.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 93.

⁸³Jobes, "Distinguishing the Meaning," 188.

Σέβομαι. The active verb σεβω is post-Homeric and occurs very rarely in classical Greek; instead, the middle forms σέβομαι and σεβάζομαι (discussed later) are used. As with εὐσεβέω, σέβομαι refers to personal devoutness, and it ultimately assumes the meaning of “bless” or “congratulate.”⁸⁴ In the LXX, σέβομαι occurs only a few times and is used only once for עָבַד (Isa 66:14). The infinitive form, σέβεσθαι, is found in thirteen instances and is used on seven occasions to refer to the worship of pagan gods. Nevertheless, neither σέβομαι nor σέβεσθαι mean “to worship;” at most, they carry the meaning “to reverence.”⁸⁵

In the New Testament, apart from the quotation of Isaiah 29:13 (LXX) in Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7, σέβομαι occurs eight times in Acts. There, it assumes its adjectival form and functions primarily (six times) as a technical term for the Greek adherents of Judaism, not Christians. While a word such as λατρεύω (to serve) is a neutral word for cultic worship, σέβομαι holds the anthropological emphasis of Greek piety, which encompasses a “deference to that which is sublime and exalted.” To use such language in relation to God and Christ is not a simple matter because “the Christian is in personal union with them, a union in obedience and trust.”⁸⁶ The New Testament writers always employ σέβομαι in a negative context to describe the “inadequate attempts at worship by a spiritually distant people, such as pagans, God-fearing gentiles and wayward Jews.”⁸⁷

Σεβάζομαι. This word does not occur in the LXX and is rare in the extant first-century works, but σεβάζομαι refers to the worship of false gods in later extra-

⁸⁴Günther, “Godliness, Piety,” 92.

⁸⁵Foerster, “σέβομαι,” 171.

⁸⁶Günther, “Godliness, Piety,” 93-94.

⁸⁷Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 188.

biblical sources such as those of Clement of Alexandria and Origen.⁸⁸ It is found in the New Testament only in Romans 1:25 where it is paired with λατρεύω to mean “to worship cultically,” but it describes the worship of the created rather than the Creator.⁸⁹ The noun, σέβασμα, refers to objects of worship (Acts 17:23; 2 Thess 2:4).⁹⁰

Paul’s use of σεβάζομαι in Romans 1:25 is curious, since he had other words from which to choose. In his Roman history, Dio Cassius, a late second-century historian, discusses the origin of the title, “Caesar Augustus.” He notes that “Augustus” signified that Caesar was “more than human” and points out that he was addressed in Greek as σέβαστος, meaning “an august personage,” from the passive of the verb, σεβάζω, which meant, “to revere.” The passive of σεβάζω is σεβάζομαι, which is Paul’s specific usage in Romans 1:25. The Roman emperor, who claimed divinity and demanded acts of worship, personified the point of Paul’s statement in that “they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped [ἐσεβάσθησαν] and served [ἐλάτρευσαν] the creature rather than the Creator.” Jobes has concluded that the “Christians of Rome could not miss the allusion to the imperial cult made by Paul through his lexical choice of the particular verb σεβάζομαι.”⁹¹

The negative use in Romans 1:25 of the phrase σεβάζομαι and λατρεύω (worship and serve) with God’s creation as the object is in direct contrast to Jesus’ statement to προσκυνέω and λατρεύω (worship and serve) God alone during his temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8).⁹² Jobes states, “The two Greek

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Foerster, “σέβομαι,” 173.

⁹⁰Marshall, “How Far Did,” 218.

⁹¹Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 188-89.

⁹²Ronald Man has produced an excellent, non-technical discussion of this passage. See Ronald E. Man, “False and True Worship in Romans 1:18-25,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 26-34.

phrases are indistinguishable when translated into English, but a semantic distinction is clearly perceived in the original.”⁹³

ΓΟΝΥΠΕΤΕΩ, ΚΑΜΠΤΩ ΓΟΝΥ

The Greek world adopted the custom of kneeling from the Orient. Kneeling was practiced by a slave before his master and by a suppliant before the gods. Typically, neither γονυπετέω (kneel) nor κάμπτω γόνυ (bow the knee) were used to express this action; instead, προσκυνέω (kiss, worship) was usually employed for this purpose, even though the basic meaning is different.⁹⁴ No distinction is intended between bowing the knee and full prostration.⁹⁵

ΓΟΝΥΠΕΤΕΩ. In the LXX, kneeling appears only when the kings of Israel adopted the style of the oriental monarchs and demanded similar demonstrations of submission (1 Chr 29:20). There is also evidence that the oriental custom of kneeling before the gods was embraced, so that falling prostrate is an indication of homage, humility, and awe before God (Ps 95:6). Characteristically, the Old Testament anticipates that this practice of kneeling will be continued in the messianic age (Isa. 45:23).⁹⁶

In the New Testament, the gesture embodied in γονυπετέω expresses supplication, abasement, subjection, and worship.⁹⁷ The word occurs four times (Matt 17:14, 27:29; Mark 1:40, 10:17), particularly to intensify the urgency of a request or

⁹³Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 189.

⁹⁴Schönweiss and Brown, “Prayer,” 859.

⁹⁵Heinrich Schlier, “γονυπετέω,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:738.

⁹⁶Schönweiss and Brown, “Prayer,” 859.

⁹⁷Schlier, “γονυπετέω,” 738.

petition.⁹⁸ In these instances, in which the meaning is that of entreaty and not political homage, γονυπετέω is properly synonymous with προσκυνέω.⁹⁹

Κάμπτω γόνυ. In the New Testament, κάμπτω is only found in combination with γόνυ. There are four occurrences of κάμπτω γόνυ; in two instances, the expression is used transitively with γόνυ as the object (“bow the knee;” Rom 11:4; Eph 3:14), and in the other two cases, it is used intransitively with γόνυ as the subject (“every knee will bow;” Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10). The gesture represented by κάμπτω γόνυ demonstrates full inner submission in worship before whom the knee is bowed, and can also mean humble obedience.¹⁰⁰ Jobes believes that political homage can also be expressed by the intransitive use of κάμπτω γόνυ, and in such cases, it is properly synonymous with προσκυνέω.¹⁰¹

The word γόνυ does occur occasionally without κάμπτω, but in these instances, the expression means to kneel in prayer (Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40, 20:36, 21:5), to fall down on the knees (Mark 15:19; Luke 5:8; Acts 7:60), or simply “knees” (Heb 12:12). These uses of γόνυ do not imply worship or reverence.¹⁰²

Summary

The practice and vocabulary of worship in the New Testament is clearly influenced by that of the Old Testament era. The two most significant words for worship in the New Testament (προσκυνέω and λατρεύω) are basically equivalent to the two

⁹⁸Schönweiss and Brown, “Prayer,” 859-60.

⁹⁹Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 186.

¹⁰⁰Heinrich Schlier, “κάμπτω,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:594-95.

¹⁰¹Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning,” 187.

¹⁰²Schönweiss and Brown, “Prayer,” 859.

most important Hebrew words for worship in the Old Testament (הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה and עָבַד).

Not only does each of the eight words for worship in the Greek language have a range of meaning that is occasionally overlooked, but also there are several instances in which the translation of a Greek word into the (present day) English word “worship” has resulted in an unhelpful, less precise reading. Nevertheless, a study of language alone cannot adequately explain all that is involved in Christian worship—it is necessary that a contextual analysis be performed in the next chapter.

Προσκυνέω, the Greek worship vocabulary word most frequently used in the New Testament, is always translated “worship” and is found particularly in the Gospels of Matthew and John and in Revelation. The word προσκυνέω is used only once in the context of a Christian community, but in that instance it does not express the worship of believers. Rather, it is used to highlight an unbeliever’s reaction to the overwhelming presence of God among the assembly (1 Cor 14:25). Προσκυνέω is used regularly to describe personal devotion and the worship of heaven around the throne of God.

Λατρεύω, behind προσκυνέω, is the next most frequent Greek word for worship in the New Testament. The word λατρεύω refers to the service of God, not human service. Although employed by many of the New Testament authors, Paul, in particular, uses λατρεύω to show that true worship is an all-of-life service of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 12:1-2).

The remaining six words for worship that are examined in this chapter are used less frequently and often do not mean “worship” in their specific contexts. Instead, they refer to other similar concepts, such as godliness, piety, etc. Many of these instances occur in Acts or can be found sporadically throughout the Epistles.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONTEXT OF FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

In order to understand the nature of Christian worship in the first century, not only must the particular grammar and vocabulary of the New Testament be examined, but it is also critical to examine the biblical passages that describe specific contextual settings for worship. As already noted, there are not many such instances in the New Testament, but the few occurrences that are present enable a richer, fuller comprehension of what the early church perceived proper worship to be. Osborne has rightly stated that the “context and the current semantic range of a word are the two aspects of the synchronic dimension. The failure to note context may be the most frequently occurring error [in interpretation.]”¹

An exegesis of some of these worship passages will be performed using the basic guidelines found in Fee’s standard work, *New Testament Exegesis*.² In the passages, the words for worship are utilized within particular contexts that provide the boundaries for determining their individual meanings and understanding the author’s intentions for them. As Fee notes, word studies are only beneficial in the environment of a single biblical text.³ As much as possible, the exegeses will include these steps: (1) contextual analysis, (2) grammatical analysis, (3) word analysis, and (4) historical-

¹Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), 75.

²Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville: WJK, 2002).

³*Ibid.*, 79.

cultural analysis. The primary goal will be to understand the nature and first-century concept of worship within each of the passages rather than to explore other details; thus, all four exegetical steps may not be necessary or relevant for every passage.

The criteria for the selection of these passages include the following characteristics: textual components that particularly discuss the practice of worship; specific adoration of God or Jesus Christ; ethical aspects of the early Christians engaged in personal or corporate worship; and intentional (and often frequent) use of worship vocabulary. The mere mention of worship is not a sufficient criterion, but texts that clearly possess implications for understanding the nature of first-century worship are desirable.

The following texts will be analyzed within the scope of this chapter: Matthew 2:1-12 (the adoration of the Christ child by the Magi); John 4:20-24 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman); Romans 12:1-2 (Paul's understanding of worship); 1 Corinthians 14 (Paul's instructions about corporate worship); Hebrews 9:1-14 (superiority of Christ); and Revelation 7:9-17 (worship in heaven).

Matthew 2:1-12

Immediately following Matthew's account of the conception and birth of Jesus, the second chapter of his Gospel details the arrival of the Magi, the "wise men" (AV) from the East who desired to understand the strange astronomical phenomena they had recently observed. Possibly because of the Old Testament prophecy that "a star shall come forth from Jacob; a scepter shall rise from Israel" (Num 24:17), the Magi journeyed into the heart of Judea seeking a satisfactory explanation.⁴ Although it is very likely that they did not fear the true God, when the Magi found the Christ, their response was to bow and worship him.

⁴D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Regency Reference Library, 1984), 86.

Contextual Analysis

It is immediately apparent that the second chapter of Matthew is different from the first chapter. Not only are geographical names present to detail the location of the events, but also visible is Matthew's stress upon the "*opposite reactions* to the Christ from his earliest days, as exhibited in the magi and Herod."⁵ Craig Keener has elaborated on this important disparity.

The pagan astrologers worship Jesus; Israel's ruler seeks his death, acting like a pagan king; Jerusalem's religious elite—forerunners of Matthew's readers' opponents—take Jesus for granted. Matthew forces his audience to identify with the pagan Magi rather than with Herod or Jerusalem's religious elite, and hence to recognize God's interest in the Gentile mission.⁶

Some see the structure of chapter two as an orientation around at least four Old Testament quotations that contain the names of four different places. In verses 1-12, one citation and two allusions are present, but only the citation contains the name of a place. Verse six quotes the reference in Micah 5:2, which mentions Bethlehem, and verse eleven recalls the kingly gifts from Sheba given to King Solomon in Psalm 72:10 and Isaiah 60:6.⁷ It is possible that Matthew is attempting to portray Jesus as King Solomon's greatest son.⁸ However, the quotations appear to serve as an addition to an established story line rather than the foundation of it.

Probably the most interesting structural feature is found in verses 11-12, in which Matthew illustrates the climax of the story by the use of three aorist verbs: προσεκύνησαν (they worshiped), προσήνεγκαν (they offered), and ἀνεχώρησαν (they departed). Each of these aorist verbs is accompanied by an adverbial participle:

⁵Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33a (Dallas: Word, 1993), 23.

⁶Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 97-98.

⁷Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 24.

⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 105.

πεσόντες (having fallen to the ground), ἀνοίξαντες (having opened), and χρηματισθέντες (having been warned). Thus, with emphatic concision, Matthew relates the fulfillment of the Magi's mission.⁹

The threefold repetition of worship (vv. 2, 8, 11) underscores the point of this narrative: if Israel will not honor Jesus, the Gentiles will. Homage to Jesus is indicative of his identity, and the Magi “would have a greater tendency to see obeisance as more than mortal respect more fully than Palestinian Jews would.”¹⁰ Of course, Herod's desire (2:8) to learn of Jesus' whereabouts “that I may . . . worship him” (προσκυνήσω αὐτῷ) was insincere and hypocritical. Offering genuine homage was not on Herod's mind.¹¹

Word Analysis

In 2:2, the most natural meaning of προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ in its historical setting (referring to a king) is “to pay homage to him.” In a looser sense, “to worship him” may also be used. Hagner has noted that “Matthew's readers know the meaning of what the Magi [came] to do better than the Magi themselves knew, namely, to ‘worship’ in its proper sense. That is, Jesus is the manifestation of God's presence (1:23), the son of God (2:15) in a unique sense, and thus one to be worshiped.”¹²

Powell discerns three distinct types of worship in Matthew's Gospel: (1) supplicatory, in which worship is accompanied by a request or need; (2) responsive, in which a response of gratitude is attributed to the object of worship; and (3) epiphanic, in which the revelation of the divine presence prompts and clarifies worship. In Powell's terms, the worship of 2:2, 11 is epiphanic, because “the focus is on Jesus himself, on who

⁹Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 24.

¹⁰Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 105.

¹¹Carson, *Matthew*, 88.

¹²Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 28.

he is revealed to be.” The Magi worship Jesus because they have come to recognize and believe that he is born “king of the Jews.”¹³ Carson cautions that although the Magi were able to perceive Jesus’ royalty, it cannot be proven whether they were aware of his divinity.¹⁴

John 4:20-24

The word προσκυνέω is clearly John’s favorite means of expressing worship. Of the eight Greek words/word groups used for worship, John uses only two, λατρεύω and προσκυνέω. John uses λατρεία once in his Gospel (16:2) and λατρεύω twice in Revelation (7:15, which is exegeted later, and 22:3). His use of προσκυνέω is substantial in that of its 60 instances in the New Testament, 35 of them are Johannine. In the New Testament, there is no passage containing a greater concentration of worship vocabulary than John 4:20-24. Of John’s 35 uses of προσκυνέω, nine of them occur in 4:20-24, and this passage also contains the singular use of προσκυνητής (4:23, “worshiper”). Two other instances of προσκυνέω occur elsewhere in his Gospel (9:38, 12:20); and there are 24 occurrences in Revelation. There is no use of προσκυνέω (or any other worship vocabulary) in John’s epistles.

Contextual Analysis

This well-known passage in 4:20-24 relates the conversation that Jesus had with a Samaritan woman about true worship. When the woman becomes uncomfortable with Jesus’ reference to her “husband” (vv. 16-18), she abruptly changes the topic of their discussion to worship, a long-standing point of contention between Samaritans and Jews (v. 20). Carson observes that Jesus’ response to the woman’s statement in verse 21 is

¹³Mark Allan Powell, “A Typology of Worship in the Gospel of Matthew,” *JSOT* 57 (1995): 6-14.

¹⁴Carson, *Matthew*, 86.

three-fold. First, Jesus announces that both the Jerusalem temple and the worship site on Mount Gerizim¹⁵ were soon to be obsolete as definitive places of worship. Jesus then indicates that salvation originates with the Jews, not the Samaritans (v. 22). Finally, Jesus explains that genuine worship is not oriented around a specific place or time (vv. 23-24), but around Him, the Messiah (vv. 25-26).¹⁶

Grammatical Analysis

Like all Samaritans, the woman's whole concept of worship was centered on Mount Gerizim, which in Samaritan belief was the only holy place, the center (or "navel") of the world.¹⁷ For many generations, the Samaritans had worshiped on Gerizim in clear separation from Jewish worship in Jerusalem. The certainty that their worship alone was acceptable to God had solidified within the Samaritan culture and is evident in the woman's statement, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem" (v. 20 NIV). To worship in any other way—and in any other place—was simply inconceivable to the woman. Within the short span of John 4:21-24, there are three repeating elements that punctuate the flow of Jesus' response to the Samaritan woman: "an hour is coming" (vv. 21, 23), "worship the Father" (vv. 21, 23), and "in spirit and truth" (vv. 23, 24).

¹⁵Contrary to the belief of many scholars, at present there is no clear evidence of a *Samaritan* temple on Mount Gerizim. Archaeological evidence has shown that there was a Roman temple on the Gerizim peak of Tel er-Ras in the second century A.D. and other subsequent religious structures elsewhere on the mountain. Yitzhak Magen, an eminent archaeologist in Israel, has shown that there was a Hellenistic city on the main peak of Mount Gerizim that may have contained a temple or altar of sacrifice. By the time of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, only the ruins of a temple would have remained, because of the persecution of John Hyrcanus around the turn of the first century, B.C. See Yitzhak Magen, "Mount Gerizim," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, vol. 2, ed. Ephraim Stern (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

¹⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 222.

¹⁷Robert T. Anderson, "Mount Gerizim: Navel of the World," *Biblical Archaeologist* 43 (1980): 217.

“An hour is coming.” In John’s Gospel, ἔρχεται ὥρα refers to a time in the future, a period following the crucifixion and resurrection. In verse 21, the expression is used to indicate that true worship will be possible when Jesus’ mission of redemption is complete. In verse 23, ἔρχεται ὥρα is joined with καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, which is a somewhat curious and apparently contradictory expression. This clause is also employed in John 5:25, and both instances refer to events which seem to belong to a future time. Barrett believes that ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν has the following double meaning.

John does not mean to deny that [true worship and the resurrection] do truly belong to a later time, but he emphasizes by means of his oxymoron that in the ministry, and above all in the person, of Jesus they were proleptically present. True worship takes place in and through him (cf. 2:19-22), just as he is himself the resurrection (11:25).¹⁸

“Worship the Father.” In John’s Gospel, “the Father” is used frequently to refer to God; in fact, it can be found several times in almost every chapter, and it usually means “the Father of Jesus Christ.” In Jesus’ reply to the Samaritan woman, it seems to mean “the Father of all.” The woman appealed to the Samaritan “fathers” who worshiped on Mount Gerizim, but Jesus’ response to her pointed to the one Father.¹⁹

In verse 21, προσκυνήσετε τῷ πατρὶ is referring to all of the Samaritans who worship the Father. The ὑμεῖς (v. 22) is second person plural and cannot refer only to the Samaritan woman. The verb takes a dative direct object (as it does in v. 23), but there it has no difference in meaning from its use with an accusative (προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν). Verse 23, προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ is third person plural and refers to those who engage in true worship of the Father.²⁰

¹⁸C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 198-99.

¹⁹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 269.

²⁰Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 198.

“In spirit and truth.” This prepositional phrase in verses 23, 24 has been the subject of considerable investigation. The difficulty in discerning the meaning of these individual words and the expression “in spirit and truth” has stemmed from the ambiguity of the words πνεῦμα and ἀλήθεια. What does πνεῦμα mean—the human “spirit” (emotions, feelings, attitudes) or the Holy “Spirit”? What does ἀλήθεια mean—the “truth” understood by human beings (intellectual, cognitive, rational) or the “Truth,” who is Jesus Christ (John 14:6)? Although a variety of opinions exist about the meaning of the phrase ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, nearly all agree that this expression is vital to comprehending the nature of the true worship that Jesus describes in 4:20-24.

The nature of God, πνεῦμα ὁ θεός (God is spirit), is the focus of both uses of ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. According to Burge, this statement is “not so much a Greek philosophical definition of who God is as it is a description of his dynamic attributes in relation to human beings. . . . Because God is Spirit, human beings must possess the Spirit.”²¹ For a human being to worship God, the Holy Spirit, who is discussed heavily in John’s Gospel, must be at work within that person. The question remains—how does this relate to ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ?

Brown believes that worshiping ἐν πνεύματι “has nothing to do with worshiping God in the inner recesses of one’s own spirit; for the Spirit is the Spirit of God, not the spirit of man . . . one could almost regard [it] as a hendiadys equivalent to ‘Spirit of truth’.”²² However, while most scholars do not deny that the Holy Spirit is essential for true worship (cf. Rom 8:26), many agree instead that ἐν πνεύματι is referring to the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit. Morris has said, “A man must worship,

²¹Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 192.

²²Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1966), 180. Oscar Cullmann is in basic agreement with Brown’s position. See Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 80-82.

not simply outwardly by being in the right place and taking up the right attitude, but in his spirit.”²³

A third alternative in this debate seems more fitting—ἐν πνεύματι refers to worship from the human spirit enabled by the Holy Spirit. Those who offer true worship to the Father do so in the power of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is not the person who is doing the worshipping. The worship emanates from a human attitude of obedience and humility, and this desire is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who makes it possible for human beings to cry, “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:15). The Holy Spirit works in concert with the human spirit to worship and give glory to God the Father.

The meaning of the latter portion of ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ is nearly as debated as the first half. Burge summarizes the situation well when he says, “[Truth] can mean worship that is genuine and grounded in reality (ἀληθῶς), or it can draw in the christological stress as with πνεῦμα.”²⁴ In other words, ἀλήθεια must refer to worship in terms of the authenticity of a person’s understanding of the Father, or it is an allusion to Jesus Christ, the “Truth” (John 14:6).

In seeking to understand the New Testament use of “truth,” Morris has made the following observations.

In Greek writings generally the basic idea of truth is much like our own. It is truth as opposed to falsehood, reality as opposed to mere appearance. But in the New Testament the use of the term is complicated by the fact that it has imported some features from the Old Testament as well. . . . Truth is characteristic of God, and it is only as we know God that we know truth. But men may know truth, for God has revealed it to them. . . . [Believers] “do” the truth (3:21; contrast 1 John 1:6). Truth is a quality of action, and not simply an abstract concept. Believers worship “in spirit and truth” (4:23f.). . . . Worship must be in conformity with the divine reality as revealed in Jesus.²⁵

²³Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 270-71.

²⁴Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 193.

²⁵Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 293-96.

Jesus Christ is the Truth, and he is the revelation of God's character and purposes. Those who are true worshipers approach God on the basis of truth, the work of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to come to the Father but through Jesus (14:6).

Thus, it would appear that, as with πνεῦμα, ἀλήθεια carries a double meaning. True worship is impossible apart from the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the Truth, the genuine revelation of God the Father. Jesus alone provides a conduit for human beings to worship the Father rightly. Nevertheless, while Jesus makes the worship of believers possible, He does not do the work of worship. As Christians worship, they practice the truth that they know, because it has been revealed to them in Jesus Christ. It is also important to remember that for human beings the sole source of objective truth about Jesus Christ is the Scriptures. To know God's Word is to know the truth because God's Word is truth (John 17:17).

In summary, ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ describes true worship as that which is offered to God the Father from a human spirit that has been enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, such worship is offered to God the Father from a human being who is conscious of God's nature and attributes because he knows God's complete revelation, Jesus Christ (the Truth), from the Scriptures. Those who worship in spirit and truth are those who have found life in Christ.²⁶ All of this is necessary because πνεῦμα ὁ θεός (God is spirit). The two aspects of true worship cannot be segregated; they naturally go together to form a single aspect.²⁷ Carson is in basic agreement with this position.

Both in v. 23 and v. 24, the one preposition 'in' governs both nouns (a point obscured by the NIV of v. 24). There are not two separable characteristics of the

²⁶John B. Polhill, "John 1-4: The Revelation of True Life," *Review & Expositor* 85 (1988): 455-56.

²⁷Edwin D. Freed, "The Manner of Worship in John 4:23f," in *Search the Scriptures: New Testament Studies in Honor of Raymond T. Stamm*, ed. J. M. Myers, O. Reimherr, and H. N. Bream (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 33.

worship that must be offered: it must be ‘in spirit and truth,’ *i.e.* essentially God-centered, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God’s Word-made-flesh, the one who is God’s ‘truth,’ the faithful exposition and fulfillment of God and his saving purposes. . . . The worshippers whom God seeks worship him out of the fullness of the supernatural life they enjoy (‘in spirit’), and on the basis of God’s incarnate Self-Expression, Christ Jesus himself, through whom God’s person and will are finally and ultimately disclosed (‘in truth’), and these two characteristics form one matrix, indivisible.²⁸

John MacArthur is also in agreement with this interpretation and has made the following observations about the incomplete nature of both Jewish and Samaritan worship.

The Samaritan style of worship was done in ignorance. The Samaritans’ spiritual knowledge was limited because they rejected all of the Old Testament except the Pentateuch. Their religion was characterized by enthusiastic worship without proper information. They worshiped in spirit, but not in truth. That is why Jesus said, “You worship that which you do not know” (v. 22). The Jews had the opposite situation. They accepted all the books of the Old Testament. They had the truth but lacked the spirit. When the Pharisees prayed or gave alms or fasted, their hearts weren’t in it. . . . The worship offered at Jerusalem was barren, lifeless orthodoxy. Jerusalem had the truth but not the spirit. Gerizim had the spirit but not the truth. Jesus rebuked both styles of worship . . . [because the] Father seeks both enthusiasm and orthodoxy, spirit and truth.²⁹

The concluding words of verse 23 indicate that the Father is seeking “the true προσκυνητῆρᾱὶ προσκυνήσουσιν (worshippers who will worship) Him in spirit and truth.” According to Morris, the rendering of the clause ὁ πατήρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνῶντας αὐτόν is somewhat difficult because of the ambiguity with τοιούτους. The meaning could be “the Father seeks such to worship him” or “the Father seeks that his worshippers be such.”³⁰ Either translation implies that those who would worship the Father must do so in spirit and truth, the only acceptable worship of God.

Romans 12:1-2

Although this passage contains only two verses, it has been scrutinized by many scholars seeking Paul’s understanding of Christian worship. Unlike John, who

²⁸Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 225-26.

²⁹John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 115-16.

³⁰Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 271.

primarily employed the word προσκυνέω (35 times) in his Gospel and Revelation to refer to worship, Paul uses worship vocabulary with greater variety. In his 12 references to worship, Paul employs six of the eight verbs examined in the second chapter of this thesis.³¹ Paul also uses six different noun forms of these words in 21 occurrences (11 in his letters to Timothy), but many of these words refer to things other than worship proper (e.g., piety, godliness, service, ministry, etc.). In Romans 12:1-2, Paul uses only one word to refer to worship, the noun λατρεία. Thus, it may initially appear frivolous to examine this brief passage. However, these two verses are saturated with significant instructions for Christian worship.

As a Jew, Paul understood well the Old Testament pattern of worship. The animal sacrifices that had been offered to purge personal sin were quite familiar to him. In Christ, Paul knew that such sacrifices were completely ineffective in removing sin. He had alluded to them in Romans 9:4 (and again used the noun, λατρεία) in his discussion of the nation of Israel. With the obvious transition in 12:1-2, many have believed that Paul was rejecting Jewish worship in favor of Christian worship. However, such a contrast was not Paul's intention; instead, his argument was that those who are in Christ must offer every facet of their lives as true worship to God. Thompson believes that Paul was alluding back to 1:18-32, which described the false worship of those who “worshiped [ἐσεβάσθησαν] and served [ἐλάτρευσαν] the creature rather than the Creator.”³² In 12:1-2, Paul was establishing the ethical parameters for appropriate worship: a “whole-person commitment to God.”³³

³¹Paul's sole use of προσκυνέω (in contrast to John's 35 uses of the word) in 1 Cor 14:25 will be examined later in detail.

³²Michael B. Thompson, “Romans 12:1-2 and Paul's Vision for Worship,” in *Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology in Honour of J. P. M. Sweet*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 127.

³³David Peterson, “Worship and Ethics in Romans 12,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 287.

Grammatical Analysis

As he begins his instructions about proper worship, Paul exhorts the believers in Rome to present their bodies as sacrifices to God. Paul uses three adjectives to modify *θυσίαν* (sacrifice): *ζῶσαν* (living), *άγιαν* (holy), and *εὐάρεστον* (acceptable or pleasing). Each of the adjectives follows *θυσίαν*, which means that they should modify the word equally, and the phrase should be translated, “a sacrifice, living, holy, and acceptable.”³⁴ However, this phrase is often translated, “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable” (AV, RSV, NIV) or “a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable” (NASV). Some scholars affirm the priority of joining “living” with “sacrifice” in contrast to the (dead) animal sacrifices offered in Old Testament worship, but that interpretation cannot be supported exegetically. Thus, Paul exhorts the Christians to present their whole lives as an offering to God, and Paul makes it clear that each Christian’s life is to be living (alive in Christ), holy (set apart for God), and acceptable (pleasing to God).

Paul sets the phrase *τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν* in apposition to such sacrifices. This is Paul’s second and final use of *λατρεία* (the first was Rom 9:4), and both times he uses the word to refer to the “service” (of cultic worship) described in the Old Testament.³⁵ Cranfield has made the following comments about Paul’s remarkable use of *λατρεία*.

[T]o give to *λατρεία* its proper significance, [it must be defined here as] worship in the sense of worshipping, i.e., the *action* of worshipping. The continuous offering of our whole selves in all our concrete living is our ‘logical’ action of worshipping. . . . Paul’s use here of the word *λατρεία* (the LXX equivalent of *עֲבֹדָה*, which, when used in connexion with God, almost always in the OT denotes cultic service) implies that the true worship which God desires embraces the whole of the Christian’s life from day to day. It implies that any cultic worship which is not accompanied by obedience in the ordinary affairs of life must be regarded as false worship, unacceptable to God . . . [b]ut it would be quite unjustifiable to argue that the logical implication of Paul’s use of *λατρεία* here is that no room is left for a

³⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 644.

³⁵A. Boyd Luter, “‘Worship’ as Service: The New Testament Usage of *Latreuō*,” *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (1988): 342.

Christian cultic worship carried out at particular times and in particular places. . . . [T]here is nothing here to deny it its place in the life of the faithful.³⁶

The adjective λογικὴν has long been a source of difficulty for interpreters. The word λογικός is used only one other time in the New Testament, 1 Peter 2:2, where it apparently means, “spiritual” or “suprasensual.”³⁷ Λογικός is derived from λόγος (word, reason), hence its occasional sense of “reasonable” or “rational.” Thus, the phrase τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν has been translated in a variety of ways: “reasonable service” (AV), “spiritual worship” (RSV), “spiritual act of worship” (NIV), and “spiritual service of worship” (NASV). Comparing the two instances of λογικός, Jobes has made the following observations.

λογικός milk [in 1 Pet 2:2] does not mean word-milk, but the milk that is true to the nature of the new eschatological reality established by the resurrection of Jesus Christ . . . [t]his understanding of λογικός also works well in Rom 12:1, where Paul instructs Christians to λογικός worship; that is, worship that corresponds to the new eschatological reality in which they are living in Christ (as opposed to their former ways of worship) by ethical and moral transformation.³⁸

Peterson is particularly fond of Cranfield’s interpretation of τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν, “understanding worship, the worship that is consonant with the truth of the gospel,”³⁹ because he believes that most translations fail to encompass the full meaning of the phrase.

If Paul’s expression is translated “spiritual worship,” there is a danger of accenting the inwardness of Christian worship and not taking sufficient account of the fact that we are to yield our bodies to God’s service. On the other hand, the translation “rational worship” may only suggest a contrast between the offering of rational beings and the sacrifice of irrational animals. The mind is certainly central to Paul’s perspective here, but the focus is not simply on rationality. The service he

³⁶C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans IX-XVI: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, vol. 2, ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 601-02.

³⁷Gerhard Kittel, “λογικός,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:142.

³⁸Karen H. Jobes, “Got Milk? Septuagint Psalm 33 and the Interpretation of 1 Peter 2:1-3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2002): 13.

³⁹Cranfield, *Romans IX-XVI*, 605.

calls for is . . . the service rendered by those who truly understand the gospel and its implications.⁴⁰

It is critical that Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:1-2 not be understood as only ethical in nature. Thompson states, "All of life may be 'worship,' but all of worship is not simply everyday obedience."⁴¹ Nevertheless, in light of this passage, Banks concludes, "Not once in all his writings does [Paul] suggest . . . that a person went to church primarily to 'worship'."⁴² Richardson, following Marshall's lead, believes that "the emphasis on 'worship' as a unique and fundamental part of the Christian life means that we are blind to [biblical] teaching. . . . The church is ultimately not a 'God-worshipping' community but a 'God-serving community'."⁴³ While genuine worship is inseparably connected with Christian behavior, Thompson realizes that "it is a logical fallacy to conclude from [Rom 12:1-2] that [Paul] redefines worship as, or reduces worship to, Christian ethics . . . [t]he concept of worship is larger than the specific vocabulary that Paul may or may not use in his occasional letters."⁴⁴

The remainder of Romans 12 illustrates that the worship that is pleasing to God in the eschatological era (following Rom 9-11) is that which is offered by believers who have submitted to a thorough, ongoing transformation by the renewing of their minds. Such worshipers are exercising their spiritual gifts regularly in the service (cf. 1 Pet 2:5) of the Christian fellowship, and they are demonstrating sacrificial love in all of their

⁴⁰David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992), 176.

⁴¹Thompson, "Romans 12:1-2," 127.

⁴²Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 88.

⁴³John P. Richardson, "Is 'Worship' Biblical?" *Churchman* 109 (95): 216.

⁴⁴Thompson, "Romans 12:1-2," 127.

relationships. This worship is the day-to-day devotion that God finds acceptable and pleasing.⁴⁵

1 Corinthians 14

Eduard Schweizer has said that no New Testament passage deals with the nature of Christian assembly—a “service of worship”—as clearly as 1 Corinthians 14.⁴⁶ In particular, several portions of this chapter offer helpful insight into the character of first-century worship. Paul employs more uses of ἐκκλησία (7) and οἰκοδομέω (7) here than in any of his other writings, and especially in verses 3-5, 12. As with the other Pauline epistles, 1 Corinthians is nearly void of specific worship terminology, but 14:25 is significant in that it contains Paul’s sole use of προσκυνέω. Following that, one of the few descriptions of an early corporate gathering for worship is found in verse 26 and is accompanied by another use of οἰκοδομέω. Verses 26 and 40 both contain the words, πάντα . . . γινέσθω (let all things be done), which Paul apparently believes are important qualifiers for corporate worship.

Verses 3-5, 12

Paul’s uses of οἰκοδομέω (edification) and ἐκκλησία (church) occur more often in 1 Corinthians 14 than in any other single chapter in the New Testament. In particular, verses 3-5, 12 contain an especially rich concentration of these specific words. Thus, it is immediately apparent that for Paul, corporate worship necessarily was associated with the upbuilding of the church. The selfish motives of many of the Corinthian Christians were actually tearing down and discouraging fellow believers;

⁴⁵David Peterson, “Further Reflections on Worship in the New Testament,” *Reformed Theological Review* 44 (1985): 35.

⁴⁶Eduard Schweizer, “The Service of Worship: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 14,” *Interpretation* 13 (1959): 400.

hence Paul's corrective here, containing frequent incidences of οἰκοδομέω. Burkhart has commented on the importance of this passage.

Worship changes humans. It honors God and helps humans; and, because God's character is to share, the two are somehow interrelated. Note, for example, the intricate relation between the glory of God, worship, and hospitality in 1 Peter 4:7-11! As Paul reminded the Corinthians, who seemed dedicated to severing worship from neighborliness, worship is to be conducted "so that the church may be edified" (1 Cor 14:5).⁴⁷

Unlike others who believe that Paul sought edification above all else in worship, Burkhart is able to perceive the value of οἰκοδομέω for the church while acknowledging that giving glory to God is truly the most important aspect of worship.

In verses 3-5, Paul draws a distinction between the person who employs a spiritual gift (tongues in this instance) for personal edification and the believer who uses his gift for the benefit of the gathered assembly (ἐκκλησία). Peterson believes that "Paul does not rebuke the tongues-speaker for self-edification as such, but indicates that this falls short of the primary goal [of worship]. . . . [Paul] challenges the common assumption that church services should simply be designed to facilitate a private communion with God."⁴⁸

Verse 12, closely related in theme to verses 3-5, reiterates Paul's conviction that those who are desirous of spiritual gifts should seek those gifts that are most able to edify the body of believers (such as prophecy). As Fee has commented, "The building up of the community [was] the basic reason for corporate settings of worship; they should probably not be turned into a corporate gathering for a thousand individual experiences of worship."⁴⁹

⁴⁷John E. Burkhart, *Worship: A Searching Examination of the Liturgical Experience* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982): 32.

⁴⁸Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 212.

⁴⁹Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 667.

Verse 25

The ongoing instructions regarding spiritual gifts (primarily about tongues and prophecy) lead into verse 25, which contains Paul's unique usage of προσκυνέω. In verse 23, Paul suggests the image of a corporate gathering that is entirely devoted to speaking in tongues. He states that if an unbeliever (ἄπιστος) or someone who is uninstructed (ἰδιώτης) enters such an environment, that person will believe that the whole assembly is insane. However, in verse 24, Paul says that if the congregation is prophesying and that, as before, an unbeliever (ἄπιστος) or someone who is uninstructed (ἰδιώτης) enters, he will be "convicted by all" and "called to account by all" (NASV). As with verses 3-5, believers who use their spiritual gifts for personal edification benefit only themselves and have a very limited and introverted testimony. Those who employ their gifts for corporate upbuilding touch many more lives and possess a much more powerful and obvious witness.

Verse 25 continues the thought of verse 24 and adds, "[T]he secrets of [the unbeliever's] heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" Paul's selection of προσκυνέω is intriguing. Peterson has noted, "Although the Apostle applies such language to the conversion of an unbeliever, he does not use it in connection with the regular gathering of God's people for prayer, praise, and mutual encouragement. This may seem a little strange in view of the fact that he speaks of the ministry of prophecy in particular as a manifestation of God's presence amongst his people."⁵⁰ Paul appears to use προσκυνέω as a forceful expression for the dramatic experience of the unbeliever. In so doing, he is deliberately adopting an Old Testament usage.⁵¹ Exposed to the truth of the gospel, the unbeliever experiences a

⁵⁰Peterson, "Further Reflections on Worship," 37.

⁵¹Heinrich Greeven, "προσκυνέω," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:765.

“profound sense of unworthiness, as well as of the immediate presence of God”⁵² and falls on his face (πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον) and worships (προσκυνέω) Him. The unbeliever has been justified. Προσκυνέω normally encompasses the meaning of falling down on one’s face and prostrating oneself, so its use here in conjunction with πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον is significant. None of the other instances of προσκυνέω in the New Testament includes πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον. However, Revelation contains several uses of πίπτω (fall) in combination with προσκυνέω.

The new believer exclaims, “God is really among you!” This is a reflection from Isaiah 45:14 (cf. Zech 8:23). Speaking through the prophet, God says that “the Egyptians will come over to you and will worship before you and say, ‘Surely God is with you.’” Paul changes the singular reference for Israel (“with you”) into a plural reference to the gathered community (“among you”).⁵³ God was glorified as the faith of the former unbeliever resulted in salvation. There is no indication that the new believer was to be excluded from any part of the assembly.⁵⁴

Verses 26, 40

The dual ministry of corporate worship was to glorify God and to edify (οἰκοδομέω) the body of the saints. Verse 26 indicates that several verbally-oriented ministries were typical of first-century worship. These ministries included singing (ψαλμὸν), teaching (διδασχῆν), revelations (ἀποκάλυψιν), and tongues (γλῶσσαν) with interpretations (ἐρμηνείαν). Clearly, this passage refers to the importance and value of the spontaneous, verbal gifts of exhortation, comfort, and admonition that were

⁵²C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968): 326-27.

⁵³Fee, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 687.

⁵⁴Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 327.

exchanged by members of the congregation.⁵⁵ Martin, contrary to some scholars,⁵⁶ sees verse 26 as the “order of service” for the assembly at Corinth, noting that the psalm was anticipated in verse 15 (ψαλῶ, “I will sing”). If the music/singing portion occurred at the beginning of the corporate gathering, Martin believes that “it would link up with the synagogue order, which also commences with a note of praise.”⁵⁷

Having considered Paul’s convictions regarding the edification (οἰκοδομέω, mutual upbuilding) of the church, it is appropriate at this point to acknowledge briefly the role of music/singing in the early church. Patzia concludes, “The worship setting in Corinth allows for the probability of fresh spontaneous hymns of praise by the congregation or even a ‘solo’ on the analogy of glossolalia, where one person would speak in tongues or prophesy.”⁵⁸ Psalms (ψαλμοῖς), hymns (ᾠμοὶς), and spiritual songs (ᾠδαὶς πνευματικαῖς) are listed as components of first-century church music in the parallel passages of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. It is significant that in both verses, the music was addressed “to the Lord” (τῷ κυρίῳ) and to fellow believers (ἑαυτοῖς, “to yourselves”).⁵⁹ Martin has offered suggestions regarding these three musical genres.

Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19-20 go together, and tell us of the existence of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” It is hard to draw any hard-and-fast distinction between these terms, and modern scholars are agreed that the various terms are used loosely to cover the various forms of musical composition. “Psalms”

⁵⁵Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 196-97.

⁵⁶Fee, for example, does not see the list in v. 26 as an “order of service” or as exhaustive of what took place in the Corinthian corporate gathering. See Fee, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 690.

⁵⁷Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 46-47.

⁵⁸Arthur G. Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church: Context, Growth, Leadership, and Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 200.

⁵⁹These are the words found in Eph 5:19. The terms in Col 3:16 indicate that the music was sung “to God” (τῷ θεῷ) and “to yourselves” (ἑαυτοῖς). Interestingly, in both passages, “to yourselves” is translated “one another” (NASV, NIV).

may refer to Christian odes patterned on the Old Testament psalter. “Hymns” would be longer compositions and there is evidence that some actual specimens of these hymns may be found in the New Testament itself. “Spiritual songs” refer to snatches of spontaneous praise which the inspiring Spirit placed on the lips of the enraptured worshipper, as 1 Corinthians 14:15 implies. These “inspired odes” would no doubt be of little value, and their contents would be quickly forgotten.⁶⁰

Verses 26 and 40 both contain the phrase πάντα . . . γινέσθω. Among the older, formal equivalent translations, the phrase reads, “Let all things be done” (AV, ASV, RSV) for both verses. Γινέσθω is a third person, singular, imperative of γίνομαι (be, become); thus, it would be better translated, “Everything must be done.” This alteration removes “Let,” a common second person rendering, changes “all things” to “Everything,” so that it will be singular in form, and strengthens the imperatival thrust by inserting “must.” As in the formal equivalent translations of 14:26, 40, other Pauline uses of γινέσθω are translated to appear in second person (Rom 3:4; 1 Cor 16:14; etc.).

While verse 26 instructs that “everything must be done” for οἰκοδομέω (edification), verse 40 repeats that sentiment (by implication) and establishes boundaries for the expression of ministry gifts in the corporate gathering. It must be understood that Paul is trying to eliminate the focus on individuals and to promote unity; he is not attempting to diminish the worship or the glory of God. Each of the elements in the assembly is to be “proper” or “fitting” (εὐσχημόνως) and “according to order” or “in an orderly way” (κατὰ τάξιν).⁶¹ Such an orderly progression suggests, but is not absolute, that members of the church should do things “one at a time, not all at once” and would seem to refer to verse 33 (“God is not a God of confusion,” NASB).⁶² Throughout the argument, Paul implies that the use of tongues in the Corinthian church was causing considerable disarray and turning the corporate focus off God.⁶³

⁶⁰Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 47.

⁶¹Fee, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 713.

⁶²Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 334.

⁶³Fee, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 713.

Hebrews 9:1-14

Peterson has observed that “Hebrews presents the most complete and fully integrated theology of worship in the New Testament . . . [and] makes it clear that the inauguration of the new covenant by Jesus means the fulfillment and replacement of the whole pattern of approach to God established under the Mosaic covenant.”⁶⁴ Hebrews 9 contains a systematic explanation of the work of Christ in terms of Old Testament worship, and the author illustrates the superiority of the new covenant by highlighting the importance of the way of worship in the old covenant.⁶⁵ Hebrews 9 is structured as follows: the old covenant sanctuary (1-5), a temporary ritual (6-10), Christ’s eternal redemption (11-14), the Mediator of a new covenant (15-22), and the perfect sacrifice (23-28). Of particular interest here are verses 1-14, which relate the transition from Old Testament worship to the era of New Testament worship.

Grammatical Analysis

The first segment of chapter 9 initiates the description of the sanctuary present within the old covenant and the sacrificial rituals associated with that sanctuary. It is significant that the author is not describing the Jerusalem temple, but the Mosaic tabernacle. Bruce has noted, “[T]he sanctuary of the old covenant, in its very furnishings and sacrificial arrangements, proclaimed its own temporary character.”⁶⁶ It is true that the mobile tabernacle would have had a greater appeal to the (dispersed) Jews than the temple, which was positionally fixed. Also, the synagogue, not the temple, had been the preferred location for most Jewish worship.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 228.

⁶⁵Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Regency Reference Library, 1981), 80.

⁶⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 198.

⁶⁷Morris, *Hebrews*, 80.

The sacrificial rituals that were associated with the old covenant sanctuary are of interest to this present thesis. The expression used for these rituals is δικαιώματα λατρείας, which is translated, “ordinances of service” (AV, ASV) or (more frequently) “regulations for worship” (NASV, NIV, NLT, RSV). As with other New Testament occurrences of λατρεία, its use in verse 1 describes “the imagery of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple service/worship in contrast to the present ministry of Christ.”⁶⁸ The method of worship was not left to chance but was divinely prescribed. It is important to observe that the δικαιώματα λατρείας (regulations for worship) were initiated by God and that the new covenant was not intended as a contradiction to the former but as its fulfillment.⁶⁹

Following the summary description of the tabernacle in verses 2-5, the author of Hebrews indicates in verse 6 that the priests entered the “first tabernacle” (the holy place) and were ἐπιτελοῦντες τὰς λατρείας, meaning, “performing the divine worship” (NASV), “to carry on their ministry” (NIV), “accomplishing the service of God” (AV, ASV), or “performed their religious duties” (NLT, RSV). The last rendering may be the most accurate. According to Bruce, who translates ἐπιτελοῦντες τὰς λατρείας as “in the discharge of their sacred offices,” in this instance, τὰς λατρείας (plural) does not mean the same thing as λατρεία (singular, “worship”). Bruce has described the activities of the priests in the holy place.

Day by day, morning and evening, the appointed priests entered [the holy place] to trim the lamps on the lampstand (Ex. 27:20f.) and at the same time to burn incense on the incense-altar (Ex. 30:7f.). . . . [The priests] put fresh loaves on the table of showbread (Lev. 24:8f.). These were the principal services which were discharged in “the first tent,” and any member of the priesthood could discharge them.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Luter, “New Testament Usage of *Latreuō*,” 340.

⁶⁹Morris, *Hebrews*, 80.

⁷⁰Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 206.

This sacrificial system allowed the people to approach God but only through the administrations of the priests. The inferiority of the whole Levitical system is very apparent. Peterson believes, “The very existence of such a sanctuary, with its two divisions and rigid regulations, witnessed constantly to the possibility of drawing near to God, but *only on his terms*.”⁷¹ On only one occasion every year (the Day of Atonement) did any person actually enter the most holy place in the tabernacle, and then only the high priest himself was given permission to penetrate the veil and stand in the immediate presence of God.

Prior to Jesus Christ, access to God was all but forbidden, which had been God’s own command. Jesus’ work of reconciliation made it possible for human beings to enter God’s holy presence at any time by cleansing their consciences from sin. Verse 9 specifically indicates that the old covenant sacrifices were external and could not actually clear a person’s conscience (cf. Ps 51:16). Therefore, a barrier was always present to impede fellowship with God.⁷² Peterson has said, “Hebrews is fundamentally concerned with conscience as a register of our guilt before God. The writer insists that the Jewish cult left the participants with ‘a consciousness of sins’ (10:2) . . . because it does not provide a definitive cleansing from sin.”⁷³ The τὸν λατρεύοντα, a participial form of λατρεύω meaning “the one worshiping” or “the worshiper,” must have a pure conscience in order to approach holy God and to worship him rightly.

The thrust of verse 14 “stresses the incomparable greatness of Christ and his work for us. . . . Christ offered himself in sacrifice to God.”⁷⁴ Christ’s unblemished sacrifice was able to purge the human conscience of sin as no animal offering could do.

⁷¹Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 232-33.

⁷²Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 209.

⁷³Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 233.

⁷⁴Morris, *Hebrews*, 86.

Thus, human beings were able to approach God. Bruce has said, “[Christ’s] sacrifice was rational and voluntary, an intelligent and loving response to the holy and gracious will of God, and to the terrible situation of man.”⁷⁵ In verse 14, the author uses λατρεύειν (“to serve” or “to worship”), the infinitive form of λατρεύω, to express the manner of response. Luter describes this instance as “significant because it refers to having [people’s] consciences cleansed ‘from dead works to *serve* the living God’ . . . similar to Phil 3:2-6.”⁷⁶ Peterson states, “It is particularly clear from 9:14 and 12:28 that *the writer pictures the Christian’s response to the work of Christ in terms of right worship*. . . . The essence of Christian worship is . . . a manner of life which is pleasing to God and which is sustained both by gratitude and by a serious sense of responsibility.”⁷⁷

Revelation 7:9-17

Nowhere in the New Testament is the subject of worship any more important than in the book of Revelation.⁷⁸ John’s Apocalypse concentrates on the adoration of the worshipers in heaven as well as those of the earthly landscape. Revelation 7 serves as “a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals . . . [and] also serves as a dramatic interlude.”⁷⁹ Verses 9-12 portray the worship of God in the form of a song performed with great reverence. Thompson has noticed, “Although they appear at different points throughout the book, and sometimes as key junctures, the reader is left with the unmistakable impression that these are not sporadic offerings of praise, but rather the

⁷⁵Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 218.

⁷⁶Luter, “New Testament Usage of *Latreuō*,” 340-41.

⁷⁷David Peterson, “Towards a New Testament Theology of Worship,” *Reformed Theological Review* 43 (1984): 68.

⁷⁸Donald Guthrie, “Aspects of Worship in the Book of Revelation,” in *Worship, Theology, and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 70.

⁷⁹Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 164.

unbroken melodies of heaven . . . the heaven of John's vision is the center and scene of the praise and worship of God."⁸⁰

As already noted, John's use of προσκυνέω is significant, and 24 of the 35 Johannine uses of the word are found in Revelation. According to Peterson, "In most passages [of Revelation, προσκυνέω] describes some form of homage to the living and true God by heavenly beings or by those redeemed from earth . . . [which] is offered by gesture and by words of acclamation and praise."⁸¹ The apostle John only uses λατρεύω twice in his writings, and both instances appear in Revelation. Chapter 7 contains the first of these two uses of λατρεύω (v. 15), and the second appearance occurs in 22:3. Προσκυνέω is also found in chapter 7 (v. 11).

In the heavenly realm, John pictures the worship of God by the regular coupling of προσκυνέω and πίπτω (fall down or bow down) on several occasions (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; and 19:4). John also uses this pair of words to describe the worship offered to angels (19:10 and 22:8). Peterson observes that "the worship envisaged is not simply an act of physical obeisance but an acknowledgement of God's character and purposes revealed in his righteous acts."⁸² The coupling of προσκυνέω and πίπτω suggests "that the former emphasizes the inner attitude, whereas the latter emphasizes the outward expression. Thus, [this combination] reinforces the idea of submission in worship."⁸³

In verse 11, the throne of heaven had been surrounded by a multitude of the redeemed, who were speaking words of praise, and a vast number of angels joined them.

⁸⁰Marianne Meye Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," *Ex Auditu* 8 (1992), 49.

⁸¹Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 261.

⁸²David Peterson, "Worship in the Revelation to John," *Reformed Theological Review* 47 (1988), 73.

⁸³Mazie Nakhro, "The Meaning of Worship according to the Book of Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 81.

In the immediate presence of God and the Lamb (who is not specifically mentioned here but is clearly present, vv. 9, 17), all of the redeemed and all of the angels, who apparently had been standing, ἔπεσαν (fell down) before the throne and προσεκύνησαν (worshiped). The gathered multitude was not silent but offered verbal praise to God and the Lamb in the form of what could be called a “liturgical doxology” (v. 12) that began and concluded with ἀμήν (amen).⁸⁴ Peterson has said, “Here it is significant to notice that *verbs of saying and singing are regularly coupled with the verb ‘to worship’* . . . [and] that no great stress should be placed on differences of posture.”⁸⁵ While bodily position is demonstrative, ultimately, it is the attitude of the heart that offers true worship to God.

In verse 15, the redeemed, specifically those who had come forth from the tribulation, are present before the throne of God. Having washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (v. 14), and thus made righteous, they are fit for God’s presence. Using substantial old covenant cultic imagery, John says, “[T]hey serve [λατρεύουσιν] Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them” (NASV). Mounce has observed the following about this image.

In John’s vision heaven itself is the sanctuary: within, all God’s children are worshipping priests (1:6; 5:10). Their service is not the ritual performance of Levitical priests but a spiritual worship of adoration and praise (cf. 22:3-5). The same verb is used of Anna the prophetess, who “did not depart from the temple, *worshipping* with fasting and prayer.”⁸⁶

The image of God’s tabernacle spread over his people not only symbolizes their protection but is also a promise of God’s presence before those who worship him. As Delling has profoundly stated, “[F]rom the heavenly service portrayed in the Revelation we can attain clarity about some things connected with the fundamental conception of

⁸⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 172.

⁸⁵Peterson, “Worship in the Revelation to John,” 74.

⁸⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 174.

Worship in the last decades of the first century. For in its innermost meaning primitive Christian Worship was intended to be parallel to the Worship in heaven.”⁸⁷

Summary

The contextual analysis of these New Testament passages has permitted a fuller understanding of first-century worship than what could be obtained from only a grammatical and etymological survey of the worship vocabulary. Although these passages were primarily concerned with προσκυνέω and λατρεύω, the use of these words in context allows a clearer perception of their true meanings.

In Matthew 2, the worship of the Magi was “epiphanic”: the revelation of the divine presence of Christ prompted and clarified their worship. John 4 instructs Christians that worship is to be done “in spirit and truth.” This prepositional phrase is filled with meaning: the worshiper’s own (human) spirit and intellectual awareness of God’s truth combines with the enabling work of the Holy Spirit and the mediation of the Truth, who is Jesus Christ, to offer true worship to God the Father. In Romans 12, worship is understood to be the whole of one’s life lived in full devotion to God. Each believer is to offer a “living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice” to God. Cranfield calls this “understanding worship,” and according to Jobes, it is worship that is true to the nature of the new eschatological reality established by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 14 is one of the few passages that discusses an early corporate assembly in detail. Edification is very important to Paul, but his imperative “let all things be done for edification” does not mean that mutual upbuilding surpasses the primacy of devotion expressed to God in the corporate setting as some have thought (Marshall). Clearly God’s presence may be evident within a gathering of believers, possibly leading to the conversion of souls (14:25). The author of Hebrews 9 makes it quite clear that the work

⁸⁷Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the New Testament*, trans. Percy Scott (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 45.

of Christ is superior to any and all of the duties or rituals from the old covenant tabernacle or temple. Worship must be offered on God's terms—through Jesus Christ who has cleansed the consciences of believers and made true worship possible. Finally, Revelation 7 offers a glimpse of the worship in heaven. There, angels and saints stand and bow before the throne, offering an attitude of total surrender and complete reverence. The present worship of Christians on earth should reflect the future worship of heaven that is to come.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

According to the New Testament, true worship ultimately begins with the work of Almighty God. Genuine Christian worship is made possible through the work of Jesus Christ who bridged the gap between sinful man and holy God, and this same worship is enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit who indwells each believer and continually points toward God. Worship is the proper attitude of the regenerate human heart, is expressed in the whole of a Christian's life, ascribes absolute worthiness to God, and simultaneously declares the utter unworthiness of the worshiper. Kleinig has said, "[Worship] is more a matter of receiving than doing; it is first and foremost what God does for us, not what we do for God. The activity of God lies at the heart of Christian worship. Human activity is secondary and dependent on God's initiative with us in it."¹

Marshall has asserted that New Testament corporate worship is at least as much about mutual edification as it is about the adoration of God.

We are thus compelled to the conclusion that the early Christians did not think of their meetings as being specifically or exclusively for the purpose of worshipping God or Jesus, even though activities that we would associate with worship took place in them; only in the broad sense that all of the Christian's actions should be regarded as worshipful can we categorize Christian meetings thus.²

Describing present-day worship in terms of his understanding of first-century devotion, Richardson goes even further and denies that early corporate gatherings were for the purpose of worship.

¹John W. Kleinig, "The Biblical View of Worship," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 58 (1994): 248.

²1. Howard Marshall, "New Testament Worship," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

We do not meet as Christians to focus on God, as if he were more “present” in church than anywhere else, but to encourage and be encouraged by one another, using the multiplicity of gifts in the body of Christ to supplement those which others lack. In many situations, this will mean that the meeting needs to spend less time addressing God and more time addressing one another. . . . We need to act on the recognition that the focus of the Christian life is the service of God expressed in righteousness of life, particularly in relation to others. However, we will only serve one another, and thus express our proper service of God, when we truly “assemble and *meet* together.”³

However, while it is surely true that worship involves the encouragement of fellow believers and the meeting of individual needs within the congregation, the teaching of the New Testament is that corporate (and individual) worship has a singular focus—God. Campbell has rightly corrected Marshall and Richardson.

Rather than say then that the early Christians did not meet for [corporate worship], it would seem better to say that while there was Godward activity in the early meetings which qualifies for the description [corporate worship], everything that went on in such meetings is consistently *evaluated* by the New Testament writers in terms of its manward benefits (or lack of them). . . . The lesson is plain; worship is offered to God, but it can be evaluated only by reference to men and women.⁴

If Delling is correct (and it seems evident that he is) that earthly devotion should mirror heavenly worship,⁵ then corporate gatherings cannot be primarily for the purpose of edification and ministry in the congregation, but they must exist for expressing sincere homage to God. This principle is the foundation of first-century Christian worship.

The New Testament vocabulary of worship contains eight words that can be translated into the English word, “worship.” There are occasions in which a specific rendering would have been better served by using a word other than “worship,” because semantic range varies considerably depending upon the particular Greek word. In their various forms, the two words, προσκυνέω and λατρεύω, occur much more frequently than the other six words combined (87 instances of προσκυνέω (61) and λατρεύω (26),

³John P. Richardson, “Is ‘Worship’ Biblical?” *Churchman* 109 (1995): 217-18.

⁴Alistair Campbell, “Once More: Is ‘Worship’ Biblical?” *Churchman* 110 (1996): 139.

⁵Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 45.

compared to 58 appearances of all of the other vocabulary words for worship). Jobes has commented on the significance of this disparity.

In comparison to other words in the same semantic domain, the prevalence in the New Testament of προσκυνέω and λατρεύω to refer to Christian worship indicates that Christian worship centers on submission to God's authority and performing the duties associated with the general office of the priesthood of believers.⁶

Interestingly, προσκυνέω and λατρεύω also parallel the two most commonly used Old Testament vocabulary words for worship, הִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת and עָבַד, respectively, which further illustrates the determinant nature of these words for worship. Thus, genuine worship is not primarily concerned with the interrelationships of the assembly. The whole-of-life orientation should characterize personal devotion to God, and corporate gatherings should focus on the glory of God, seeking to exalt Him. Certainly, mutual upbuilding has an important place within the totality of the believer's life and ministry, but the worship of God is paramount.

Although first-century Christian assemblies were focused on worshipping God, they did not ignore ministry to one another. As particularly evidenced in the book of Acts (initially in 2:42-47), gathering together included a number of meaningful activities: the centrality of teaching, the expression of Christian fellowship, eating together, prayer and praise.⁷ This description should not be considered an explicit "order of service." The early Christians were far more interested in the worship of God than in a meticulous observance of their "liturgy." Bradshaw understands this fact.

The New Testament . . . often assumes or alludes to basic practices rather than fully prescribing or describing orders of proceedings. . . . We should probably assume a basic diversity of practice regarding prayer and ritual, similar to the obvious theological diversity of the documents. Hence, there is no single picture to be reconstructed from behind the texts, beyond the common assertion of the early

⁶Karen H. Jobes, "Distinguishing the Meaning of Greek Verbs in the Semantic Domain for Worship," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 4 (1991): 191.

⁷David Peterson, "The Worship of the New Community," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 389-94.

Christians and their literature that worship (in the broadest sense) belongs to Jesus Christ.⁸

Early Christian worship was a new beginning. The worship of the early church was built on the same foundation as Jewish worship, but the practices and rituals of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ and rendered unnecessary in the New Testament era. Hahn has summarized this transition.

The situation outlined here is not always sufficiently appreciated. The terminological evidence means not only that any cultic understanding of Christian worship is out of the question, but also that there is no longer any distinction in principle between assembly for worship and the service of Christians in the world. Here we find an echo of Jesus' transgression of the boundary between the sacred and the profane. . . . Worship in the sense of devotion to God is by no means abolished; but this devotion does not take place in a special defined area, but belongs in the midst of the life lived by Christians. Only thus can Christian worship preserve its essential uniqueness and take its proper form.⁹

For the first-century Christians, worship was a way of life that exalted Jesus Christ, edified other believers, evangelized the world, and expected the glory of heaven.

⁸Paul Bradshaw, "New Testament Worship," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Paul Bradshaw, 3rd ed. (Louisville: WJK, 2002).

⁹Ferdinand Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church*, ed. John Reumann, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 38-39.

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ABSTRACT

THE WORSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH: A GRAMMATICAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIAN DEVOTION

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This thesis examines the nature of New Testament church worship and seeks to understand the concept of worship among first-century Christians. Chapter 1 describes the misconceptions held by present-day worshipers and presents unusual scholarly positions.

Chapter 2 analyzes the eight Greek words that are translated “worship” in the New Testament. Two words, προσκυνέω and λατρεύω, stand out in both frequency of use and importance of meaning.

Chapter 3 examines six passages that deal specifically with worship. Portions of Matthew 2, John 4, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 14, Hebrews 9, and Revelation 7 are analyzed in order to understand the contextual setting of worship.

Chapter 4 offers conclusions based on chapters 2 and 3. First-century worship is understood to focus on God primarily, with congregational ministries being of subsequent importance.

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