

WORSHIP AS AN EFFECTIVE EVANGELISTIC TOOL IN SELECTED
FILIPINO DIASPORA CHURCHES OF THE GRACE
INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES
IN HONG KONG SAR, CHINA

A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY

BY

HONG KONG

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INTRODUCTION

This section sets forth three basic areas. They are as follows: the research problem and its setting, the importance of the study, and the research methodology.

The Research Problem and Its Setting

The research problem and its setting cover the following aspects: statement of the problem, sub-problems, limits of the problem, definition of terms, and basic assumptions.

Statement of the Problem

This dissertation attempts to investigate the following problem: What critical analysis can be made of worship as an effective evangelistic tool in selected Filipino diaspora churches of the Grace International Ministries Ltd. (GIM) in Hong Kong SAR, China?

The Sub-Problem

The first sub-problem is as follows: What is the significance of worship to evangelism in the book of Acts?

The second sub-problem is as follows: What is the common understanding of worship as an effective

evangelistic tool in the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches in Hong Kong SAR, China?

The third sub-problem is as follows: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches' practices of worship related to evangelism that can be analyzed in light of the book of Acts?

Limits of the Problem

GIM has twenty-one Filipino diaspora member churches and mission points. This study was limited to fourteen Filipino diaspora member churches, namely: Ally Christian Fellowship Church (ACFC), Christ Baptist Church (CBC), Filipino Baptist Church Tsuen Wan Chapel (FBCTWC), Filipino Baptist Missionary Church (FBMC), Faith Fellowship Baptist Church (FFBC), Grace Bridge Church (GBC), Grace Filipino Baptist Church (GFBC), Grace International Church (GIC), Harmony Christian Fellowship (HCF), International Filipino Church (IFC), River of Life Baptist Church (RFBC), Refuge Baptist Church (RBC), Sinai International Church (SIC), and Zion Christian Fellowship (ZCF). The churches included in this research were selected by the formula of the simple random sample.

To achieve a simple random of fourteen out of

twenty-one churches, the researcher listed each church in each separate paper, put the lists into a small box, and then took a random grab of fourteen out of twenty one churches. Also, this study was limited to worship as an effective evangelistic tool in the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches, Hong Kong SAR, China.

It covered the significance of worship to evangelism in the book of Acts, the common understanding of worship as an evangelistic tool, and the strengths and weaknesses of GIM churches' practices of worship related to evangelism in light of the book of Acts. This study was limited to identifying worship as an effective factor to the church evangelism program and to enhance worship as an effective tool for evangelism.

Definition of Terms

Worship refers to an encounter with God and His people, and the humble response of regenerate men to the self-disclosure of the God Most High or Lord Most High.¹ It is based upon the work of triune God. It is achieved through the activity of God. It is directed to God. It is expressed by the lips in praise and by the life in service.

¹ Psalm 57:2 (NIV) records, "I cry out to God Most High, to God, who vindicates me."

Evangelism refers to sharing with people how Christ can become their Lord and Savior and to extend an opportunity for them to respond.

GIM refers to The Grace International Ministries Ltd., an organization of Filipino diaspora Churches in Hong Kong SAR, China. It is an a non-denominational, evangelical, Bible-believing mission with the purpose of bringing the Filipino diaspora in Hong Kong to experience salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and incorporating them into strong, self-sustaining churches.²

Filipino diaspora refers to the dispersion of Filipinos from their original homeland, the Philippines. Most of them are overseas domestic workers while others have chosen to live permanently in the country other than their native home land, the Philippines.³

² The Grace International Ministries Ltd. is founded in 2000 and located in Lai Chi Kok in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Its founder and chairman is a Hong Kong minister, Rev. Dave Kwak Siu Nam. It's established for helping Filipino diaspora in Hong Kong see the grace of God and savor it, so that God's superior worth shines in their satisfaction and in the sacrifices that come from such a heart.

³ An overseas Filipino is a person of full or partial Filipino origin, i.e., people who trace back their ancestry to the Philippines but living or residing outside the country. This term generally applies to both people of Filipino ancestry and citizens abroad. As of 2019, there were over 12 million Filipinos overseas.

Basic Assumptions

The first basic assumption was as follows: The significance of worship to evangelism in the book of Acts can be identified.

The second basic assumption was as follows: The common understanding of worship as a factor of evangelism in the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches can be delineated.

The third basic assumption was as follows: The strengths and weaknesses of the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches' practices of worship related to evangelism in light of the book of Acts can be

The Importance of the Study

Worship is the most important activity of a church. Worship that offers only an outward experience and not an awareness of genuine experience is bound to fail in its support for the church in its mission, locally and globally.

Worship is both an act and an experience. The believers offer themselves by various actions to experience God. Therefore, worship serves as the medium

enumerated according to Xinhua
(www.xinhuanet.com/English.news) on October 15, 2019.

through which creation and its creatures may have fellowship with one's creator. God teaches in the Bible that people have to participate regularly in worship.⁴ All worshipers are partners in the experience of encountering God; nevertheless, one who is not true to his or her worship does not encounter God.

Among the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches, it has been observed that there are two varied forms and styles of worship as follows: the free-flowing form which means informal, unstructured, and unrestrained worship and liturgical form which means formal, structural, and orderly worship. Based on the two different styles of worship, this dissertation attempted to find out what elements of the worship service program may influence the church to be involved in evangelism.

Research Methodology

This study has three chapters: (1) the significance of worship to evangelism in the book of Acts; (2) the common understanding of worship as an effective factor of evangelism in the selected GIM Filipino diaspora churches; and (3) the strengths and weaknesses of the selected GIM Filipino diaspora

⁴ Psalm 95:6; Luke 4:8

churches' practices of worship coherently related to evangelism in light of the book of Acts. This study employed descriptive and literary methods of research.

The first chapter discussed the significance of worship in the book of Acts in relation to evangelism. It dealt with the biblical practices for worship in relation to evangelism based on the book of Acts. To obtain the desired information, literary research was employed.

The second chapter dealt with the common understanding of worship as an effective factor of evangelism. The researcher enlisted fourteen churches in GIM by considering the number of members in the congregation, the churches' various contexts and styles, and the number of years of existence which is 5 years and more.

The third chapter dealt with the strengths and weaknesses of GIM practices of worship related to evangelism in light of the book of Acts. This chapter sought to establish how the practices of worship services as reflected in the book of Acts could influence the present forms of worship as a tool of evangelism. This section primarily integrated and analyzed the major ideas of chapter one and two.

To get substantial materials on worship and

evangelism and other related literature, the researcher utilized the libraries of Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong SAR, China.

CHAPTER I
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP TO EVANGELISM
IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Christianity, in recent history, has been experiencing tremendous changes, one wave of which is the Pentecostal movement that swept through the twentieth century. In line with this phenomenon, every religious group has been affected by its own interest in the present forms and practices of worship.¹

The prevailing trends of worship suggest that innovations have been taking place from the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement to the Protestant churches and other Christian denominations.² It is desirable,

¹ Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1984), s.v. "Pentecostalism."

² Ibid. Ralph P. Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 1. C Welton Gaddy notes that staggering changes have been undertaking a "rethinking and "reshaping" of worship practices (*The Gift of Worship* [Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992], xxiii). Daniel Benedict and Craig Kenneth Miller also observe thus: "Every mainline denomination has made some revision in its hymnals and other worship resources" (*Contemporary Worship for the 21st century: Worship or Evangelism?* [Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1994], 8). Timothy Wright concurs, "The face of worship is changing in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Across denominational lines, congregations are creating, developing, and experimenting with innovative styles of worship and music (*A Community of Joy: How to*

therefore, to know the beginnings of Christian worship and its significance to evangelism. This dissertation discusses this theme and aims to contribute more understanding to Christian believers about the relation of worship to evangelism.

This chapter deals with the significance of worship to evangelism based on the book of Acts. The discussions deal with the three following sections: (1) general information about the book of Acts; (2) worship in the book of Acts; and (3) the effects of worship on evangelism as found in the book of Acts.

General Information on the Book of Acts

The book of Acts begins with the ascension of Christ, the situation marking the end of Christ's earthly ministry (Acts 1:4-9). The ascension of Jesus

Create Contemporary Worship [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994], 16). Marva J. Dawn notes that worship experience changed at the turn of the century. She stresses that worship is unfavorably affected by culture that dumbs down all things (*Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn of the Century Culture* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995], 4). Sally Morgenthaler disagrees stressing that not so much alteration has been found in worship during the past twenty years. She notes that the proclamation of God's Word is still a major event in worship associated with the same songs and verses (*Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995], 18).

was inevitable so that the disciples might receive the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:31).³

The book of Acts, like the Gospel of Luke, is addressed to a man named *Theophilus* (Acts 1:1). Although the author is not named, the testimony of early Christians and corroborating internal evidence point to Luke as the author (Col 4:14).⁴

The major story in Acts concerns the spreading of the Gospel. It starts with the small group of Jesus' followers gathered in Jerusalem who became witnesses after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 38-39). From the Pentecost and onward, the book of Acts continues to narrate what Jesus' disciples, by the power of the Holy Spirit, did and taught after his

³ Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1955), 38. Roy L. Laurin states that the ascension of Jesus is an "assurance of ultimate redemption" (*Acts: Life in Action* [Findlay, OH: Dunham Publishing, 1962], 38). R. C. H. Lenski writes that the Holy Spirit is promised to convey Christ's redemption to all men (*The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961], 98).

⁴ David John Williams, *Acts: A Good News Commentary* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1985), xvi-xvii. Robert L. Maddox, Jr. concurs, "The author of the gospel of Luke and the author of Acts are one and the same" (*Layman's Bible Book Commentary: Acts*, vol. 19 [Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1979], 12-13). See also John B. Polhill, "Introduction to the Study of Acts," *Review & Expositor* 87, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 385.

ascension. In effect, the book of Acts provides the framework for understanding more fully the Pauline letters and ministry.⁵ In this section, the following five items are discussed: (1) religious background; (2) political background; (3) cultural background; (4) socio-economic background; and (5) major features of the book of Acts.

Religious Background

An understanding of the book of Acts requires a knowledge of the religious activities of the Jews. The Jewish nation identified national loyalty with uncompromising devotion to her religion.⁶ Hence, in

⁵ F. F. Bruce, ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 24-27. Antony Edanad mentions that the book of Acts articulates the foundational pneumatic experience of the church. It is parallel to the action of the Spirits in and through the messiah which is now being realized in and through the church ("The Spirit and the Christian Community according to Acts of the Apostles," *Jeevadhara* 28, no. 163 [January 1998]: 98). See also Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 81-86.

⁶ Soon-Tae Kwon, *An Analysis of Contemporary models of Missions among the Selected Baptist Churches in Seoul Korea in the Light of Paul's Models of Missions* (Th.D. diss., Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, 2000), 16. Michael Green states, "The disciples of Jesus had spread far beyond the confines of Palestine long before the first century; and everywhere they went, they took their religion with the"

understanding the message of the book of Acts, the situation of the church is compounded by different religious worldviews.⁷

In the beginning, Christianity sprang from the early Jewish religion or what is known today as Judaism. Notably, Christianity remained closely related to Judaism during the time of Paul. However, as Christianity expanded, its disciples struggled to define its doctrines in the midst of pressures exerted by Jewish legalism and philosophical Gnosticism.⁸ Religious

(*Evangelism in the Early Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970], 22-23).

⁷ Ibid., 14-16. Laurin notes that the beginning of the church was simple in terms of faith, government, and worship after the Pentecost. Later on, the church became complex and her adulterated faith was expressed in many creeds. Worship became jumbled and corrupted with pagan symbolism and customs. Likewise, the church system was corrupted: worship was expressed by the different senses of the body (23-24).

⁸ Green concurs, "The Jewish faith was never monolithic. Great varieties of belief and practice were tolerated in worldwide Jewry" (33). Weldon Viertel explains that the disciples experienced peace and harmony at first, but later on, they were opposed by the threatening Jews who had not believed in Jesus as the messiah (*Early Church Growth* [Davao City, Philippines: Philbest, 1973], 37). D. Leslie Hill defines a Jewish legalist as a person who "becomes a Christian by obeying certain laws." He further states that Judaizers tried to mix legalism with Christian belief, others tried to mix philosophy (*Church History for Church Leaders*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. [Manila City, Philippines: Church Strengthening Ministry, 1997], 30-32).

life, then, became more complex and confusing. Although the Jews secured important privileges and exemptions from the Roman government and were treated with forbearance and tolerance, generally, they were perceived as adherents of a noisy oriental superstition.

The most noticeable mark of this time was the diversity of cults and religious practices around the Roman empire. Augustus, for example, invoked the revival of the ancient Roman religion with additional imperial cults.⁹ Even Paul had come across various worldviews like Judaistic, Romanistic, and Hellenistic beliefs (Acts 14:11-13; 17:16-18; 19:27-28).¹⁰ James L. Blevins observes that Paul had been aware of the different worldviews as he wandered the streets of the city of

⁹ David W. J. Gill and Bruce W. Winter, "Acts and Roman Religion," *In The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 80-81. Kwon notes, "Added to this is the presence of mystery religions, superstition, and philosophies, namely, cynicism, stoicism, epicureanism, and skepticism" (15). In Acts 17:16-34, Paul was greatly distressed at the sight of idolatry and moral corruption. Paul became indignant and grief-stricken, and his spirit stirred over people who were lost and in need of salvation. As Paul preached salvation, he encountered followers of the famous schools of Athens, in which the main ones were the Epicureans and the stoics of Zeno.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

Athens and beheld the monuments. The Greeks also had been devoted in their religious life. Multiple temples had been built in the city of Athens to the hundreds of Greek gods and goddesses. The Romans conquered Greece, took over the Greek religion, and renamed the gods with Roman names.

Greek religious life was a very basic part of the life in the city, and its roots went very deep. One could read accounts of the Greek gods and all of their intrigues and involvements in human affairs from Athena to Zeus. Paul was well acquainted with the stoic philosophers since they were well-known in his hometown of Tarsus. The religious life of the people was precarious enough in the midst of diverse belief systems. Added to this was an environment that created excessive disturbances affecting people's religious experience.¹¹

In the course of time, a new dimension in religious life is reached when Christianity crosses the borders of Judaism as its career of conquest among the Gentiles began (Acts 9:32-12:25). Before the end of the

¹¹ James L. Blevins, "The Tale of the Three Cities," *Review & Expositor* 87, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 444.

first century, the church as a whole was on her way to becoming what is now generally recognized as the most highly organized society the world has ever known.¹²

Political Background

Since Christianity developed in the Roman empire, the book of Acts was affected by Roman political conditions.¹³ The Romans were the ones who put together the divided empires left by Alexander the Great into one political whole. They shaped the divergent peoples into a heterogeneous unit under one emperor with a common set of laws. The death of Caesar brought another struggle in the political arena until Octavian took political

¹² Hill notes that in the first 70 years after the resurrection, a change had taken place in the composition of the early Christian church. The Gentile converts increased more than the Jewish converts. Many Christians were converted Jews, but by A.D. 100, THE MAJORITY WHO HAD BECOME Christians were Gentiles. Churches had grown in number and had also spread into different places throughout the Roman empire such as North Africa, Asia Minor, Rome, Spain, and England (16).

¹³ David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: Graco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), ix. Further expansion of the church in the Eastern part of the Roman empire forms the general setting of the book of Acts. Hill notes that Roman law and military power ruled the world in New Testament times (6). In effect, the Romans' greatest contribution was governance which opened the channels for the expansion of the Christian faith.

power.¹⁴ After the reign of Octavian, his successor, Tiberius, continued Octavian's governing principles. Later on, Gaius Caligula became emperor in A.D. 37 which caused a conflict between the Jews and all other inhabitants of the empire.¹⁵ When Claudius became emperor, a more severe political situation arose which cruelly suppressed the Jewish movement. Later, under emperor Nero, the Jewish people suffered deterioration.¹⁶ The Jewish hatred of the Romans brought open rebellion and civil war which led to the destruction of the nation. Under Nero, Peter and Paul became victims of persecution in which church growth could not be understood apart from the Roman political background.¹⁷

¹⁴ Kwon, 16-17. Paul Trebilco notes that Octavian otherwise known as Augustus from 27 B.C., Defeated Anthony at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Faced with the general economic distress of the province caused in particular by the exactions of Pompey, Brutus, Cassius, and Antony, Octavian took an interest in the cities' welfare ("Asia," in *The Book of Acts in Its Century Settings: Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 297).

¹⁵ Ibid., 17. See also Trebilco, 298-99.

¹⁶ Derek Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 68. Hill mentions that during the last quarter of the century, the Jews rebelled against the Roman empire and lost in civil war. Nero crushed the rebellion by setting fire to the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (16).

¹⁷ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing

Cultural Background

The Roman empire was affected by the Greek culture, even though it ruled the world militarily and politically.¹⁸ While the Roman empire was powerful, Hellenistic culture was the controlling philosophy in the world. The Greek language was spoken everywhere in the empire.¹⁹ In the period known as the Hellenistic age, science, philosophy, and literature continued to influence the lifestyle of the people in the Roman empire including the Christians.²⁰ The political superiority of the Roman empire caused the Hellenistic culture to spread in different parts of the world.

Company, 1993), 33-34. Robert A. Baker notes that "the death of Paul was occasioned more by the caprice of the emperor Nero" which engineered the pagan persecution of Christians (*A Summary of Christian History* [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 15). See also Kwon, 17.

¹⁸ Kwon, 18. Williston Walker mentions that the "Hellenistic culture", which was started by Alexander the Great, diffused throughout the Roman empire. Greek traditions enriched the cultural values of the Romans (*A History of the Christian Church* [Edinburgh: T & T. Clark LTD., 1985], 6).

¹⁹ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin, 1964), 24.

²⁰ Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 15-19. See also Donald J. Selby, *Introduction to the New Testament: The Word Became Flesh* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1971), 2-4.