

Ancient Ways, Future Paths:
A History of Christian Worship

Part 1: The Word

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The Word: Scripture, Creeds and Sermons

The word “worship” means different things to different people. For followers of Jesus Christ, worship has spanned over two thousand years to include a long and diverse history of sacred practices. From the written and spoken word to baptism and the Eucharist, from prayer and contemplation to service and ministry, from art and music to drama and media, the faithful have preserved and celebrated God’s story in ways limited only by the human imagination. The fruit of their efforts, from ancient times to the present, is what we know today as the history of Christian worship.

Orthodox deacon proclaiming:

♪ *Extol the Word of God.*

Worship at His footstool.

Church members responding in singing:

♪ *Holy, Holy, Holy,*

Lord God Sabbaoth

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Narrator:

For Christians, from ancient times to the present, it is *the Word*, the story of Jesus, that is the very center of worship. For all Christians, scripture is a means to remember God’s story and to recall Christ’s words, deeds and promises. In this sense, Christian worship is unique.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

I like to think of what God is doing in the world as a story, a story that is told from Genesis to Revelation. The center of that story is the person of Jesus Christ. Everything that comes before leads to Him, everything that follows flows from who He is. God has a story, and He tells that story through Scripture. The primary means by which we are drawn into that story to become active participants, we call that salvation, is through worship.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

The importance of the word, its study and its praying, that form the backbone of the synagogue tradition remains invariable in Christian denominations today, where the proclamation of the word and the sharing around the word is so much an important part of our Christian prayer and worship experience.

Narrator:

It is, in fact, the spoken rather than written word that first defined Christian worship.

Lester Ruth, Ph.D. (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

Christians worshipped before they wrote. And I think, at a more substantial level that means that Christians properly have a little bit different relationship to our foundational documents than Jewish worship does to the Old Testament. Because the way the Old Testament approaches it is God gave these commandments ahead of time to Moses who

brought them and delivered them to the people and that established a pattern and way of worshipping. Whereas the Christian way of worshipping actually emerges out of the tomb of Christ when He comes walking out of there, and the writing occurs afterwards.

Narrator:

The general consensus among biblical scholars is that the New Testament book of Acts was written by Saint Luke, a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul, sometime in the second half of the first century, which makes it the oldest document on the history and practices of early Christians. The book of Acts tells us that shortly after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, followers of Christ gathered in Jewish synagogues for the purpose of hearing and reading scripture. When synagogues were not available, they gathered in homes and elsewhere. In the gatherings of their day, as well as today, the reading of scripture played a central part in the practice of public worship.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

What God's redemptive history is, is what worship is all about: about reenacting, about reliving, and anticipating the end, the culmination of God's whole redemptive history. That's really what our worship is about, and that's what we as Christians are gathering to relive, to encourage one another toward, but also to anticipate the final culmination of God's redemptive history.

Narrator:

In spite of difficult circumstances, early Christians gained a love for reading or hearing sacred texts read aloud as part of the worship service. Yet, first century Christians did

not have access to Bibles, and in fact, the New Testament was still being written. Producing written texts was a challenge in itself. There were no printing presses, so everything had to be written by hand. And paper, made from the papyrus plant, was not in abundance as it is today. Even when a text was produced, most worshippers were illiterate and could not read. Additionally, the act of being a Christian brought the possibility of persecution or even death from various Roman Emperors. Yet, even in the face of these obstacles, Christians faithfully gathered together in order to recall the story of Christ and worship him through the reading of scripture. In the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr, a defender of the Christian faith, wrote how early Christians used scripture as part of their weekly worship practice.

Female reading Justin Martyr:

And on the day called Sunday, all gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has finished . . . we all rise together and pray. – Justin Martyr, First Apology: 67.

Lester Ruth, Ph.D. (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

People would also be surprised, I think, by how much worshippers, the typical worshipper in the early church, loved the Bible. I did a review once, of a document describing worship in Jerusalem in the late fourth century. And I asked a real sort of Methodist question, “When were people really choked up, or moved in the worship service?” And it wasn’t the music that this fourth century source pointed to; it was when

reading the scriptures. In Jerusalem, for instance, they started every Sunday morning with the Bishop standing at the entrance of the tomb of Christ and he read the entire passion and resurrection narrative from the Gospel of John, and the people were just completely broke up by the reading of scripture. Often times we think, “Well those weren’t really Bible Christians in the fourth century.” But I tell you what; I would take their love for scripture any day of the week.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

An interesting thing when we go to a church and to worship in a congregation and the variety of ways that we hear the Bible. There’s no doubt that scripture is essential for the life of the church and the worship of God. But how scripture functions, how it’s used, is quite interesting. And across the centuries there are many ways in which scripture has been utilized in mediating the encounter that God has with His people. Obvious ones are reading, and we have to remember that in the early centuries of the church, it’s possible that the majority of Christians were not literate - they could not read. And so for them, scripture, which was at the heart of their life, the ways that they knew God through Jesus Christ, was extended to them and offered to them in ways that were accommodated to their capacity to understand. They heard it; they sung it; they heard it prayed, and they prayed it together; they heard it preached. As the church expanded and became more settled and church architecture came into being, they saw scripture. They saw scripture in stained glass; they saw it in carvings, they saw it in figures and statues; they saw it in icons. So they heard the word, they saw the word, they sang the word, they prayed the word, and then they enacted the word through the liturgy itself by offering praise to God.

Narrator:

Jay and Linda Moorman own the BeauVerre Riordan Studio, which is the oldest continually operating stained glass studio in the United States. They carry on a tradition that dates back to the 4th century, which is to use stained glass to help visualize the story of Scripture. As Linda Moorman explains:

Linda Moorman:

Back in earlier times when the peasants were in the country, they couldn't read, so when they came into town, it was a way to teach them their religion.

Narrator:

Even for today's widely literate church, stained glass, as a decorative element, still personally connects worshippers with the story of Scripture and with Christ.

Linda Moorman recalls her childhood memories of attending a church with stained glass:

Linda Moorman:

I know that I had to go to church every day before school and I found myself, instead of paying attention to what I should have been, looking at the windows and wondering, "You know, what is that?" Or just feeling inspired or relaxed or maybe just being comfortable in the space I was in."

A lot of times, we do make windows that are people's calling card to say, "This is our mission. This is what we want." A lot of the Good Shepherd, very traditional window, or Christ knocking at the door, and it doesn't have a handle. Those are traditional calling cards to please come in and be part of our flock.

Narrator

Old and New Testament stories frequently became the subject of stained glass, as in this rendering of the account in the book of Genesis of the high priest Melchizedek offering a blessing to Abraham. Examine the detail in the artist's rendering that tells the Biblical story.

Linda Moorman:

You can see his headdress, which tells you that he is somebody special. If you look at him, you can tell, even if you don't know he's Melchizedek, you know he's somebody special because he has his hand raised. You can tell he's offering a blessing. There's an altar there, so you can tell that there's some kind of ceremony going on. Abraham is kneeling, so you know that he is the one that is receiving the blessing.

Jay Moorman:

Melchizedek was the first that believed that instead of animal sacrifice, you would use bread and wine, and that's conveyed at the bottom here. And then the herds are in the background. This is actually true stained glass. This is actually where we take colored

glass and stain it with paints, but that's the traditional way for centuries of how stained glass was actually done.

Narrator:

Painting glass that has already been stained adds greater detail to the finished product, creating a masterful work of art that inspires viewers to reflect on the Biblical story.

The fourth century contributed more to church history than just the first uses of stained glass. With the legalization and expansion of Christianity, there was also a need for Bibles and Bible translations.

Lester Ruth, Ph.D. (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

The fourth century is one of the most important in the history of Christian worship. I don't think it was a downward slide, and I don't think the things that occurred in it were completely new but the legalization of Christianity and its ability to take worship into a public sphere, a public forum, created some important dynamics and aspects of worship that have stayed with us since that time.

Narrator:

In 382, a priest and Christian apologist named Jerome was commissioned to revise the old Latin translations of Scripture. His work, the Latin Vulgate, eventually became the official Bible of the Catholic Church. At the same time, monks in the Eastern Church continued to copy scripture by hand in Greek, the original language of the New

Testament. Also, the Bible continued to be translated into other languages and dialects of the known world so that local Christian communities could have scriptures to use in public worship.

Fr. Ted Bobosh (St. Paul Orthodox Church):

I think that certainly what's true of scripture in general, scripture belongs to community. It doesn't belong to an individual, and it wasn't selected by one individual or written by one individual; it is God's revelation to the whole world.

Narrator:

Scripture has always been an important part of bringing people into the fold of the church. This is evident in the large number of copied and translated Biblical manuscripts that exist from the 4th century to the Middle Ages. By the middle of the 14th century, a movement began to put the word into the hands of the people. John Wycliffe and his followers first translated the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate. The invention of the printing press and the Protestant Reformation soon followed. As Bibles began to be translated into English, Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, provided for worshippers a means to read scripture for themselves in both public and private worship.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

But one of the things that Cranmer secured was that there would be a Bible in every parish church in England. It would be chained. There wasn't actually much danger of people walking away with it because the dimensions were about three feet by eighteen

inches, something like that. A great big thing it was. But the intention, Cranmer's attention, which it seems was fulfilled to a considerable degree, was that those who could read would go into church and would read the Bible to those who couldn't read who would come in with them, informally, you see, in parties, the church building being open all hours of every day for them to do this.

Narrator:

Some Protestant groups, such as the Puritans and later, the Quakers, used scripture as a basis to move from the ritualistic, liturgical worship found in the Anglican and Catholic forms of public worship, to a form of worship integrating the personal experience of the worshipper.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

The Puritans were deeply concerned about grounding worship in scripture. And they are known for what is often called the *Regulative Principle*. It might be translated most broadly that scripture regulates worship. But it is usually understood by its more narrow articulation that only those things that are explicitly warranted in scripture should be practiced in worship. So if something was not explicitly warranted in the biblical text it should not be practiced. The Puritans used this Principle to rule out, for example, the use of candles in worship, and many other expressions of ceremonial, that they found in Anglican practice, to go beyond the explicit mandates of scripture itself.

Narrator:

In the 17th century, Quakers, also known as The Religious Society of Friends, delved more deeply into experiential worship.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

Quakerism was very largely a reaction both against the Prayer Book, which was now out of service, and against the Puritan worship style that had replaced it. At Quaker meetings everybody sat silent, nobody even lead in prayer, until someone sensed that the Holy Spirit was giving them a word to speak. It might be a passage of scripture to read and comment on, or it might be what now-a-days would be called a prophecy, that is a message crystallizing in their minds and impressing them as being directly from God, then one and another would stand up and share these words as they felt God had given them.

Narrator:

As the Reformation progressed, some Protestant leaders such as John Calvin revived older worship practices. One of these was congregational psalmody. Among the hundreds of ways that the Psalms have been sung is this simple chant from Psalm 95.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

Come; let us sing to the Lord.

Let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,

And raise a loud shout to Him with Psalms.

For the Lord is a great God,

And a great King above all gods.

In His hands are the caverns of the earth,

And the heights of the hills are His also.

The sea is His for He made it.

And His hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee,

And kneel before the Lord, our Maker.

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand,

Oh, that today you would hearken to His voice . . .

Narrator:

Scripture, whether sung or spoken, has always had a strong presence in Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. However, its importance in public and private worship has evolved in the twentieth century and beyond.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

I would say there was a time when there was a shift from the authority of the Church to the authority of scripture. And the implication or the long-term effect of that shift has been to create a tension between those two authorities. And I think that in the twentieth century the best attempt to bring them back together and to reconcile them in their proper manner was the Second Vatican Council. And we've now had the benefited of over forty

years, of trying to see how Church and scripture together have been raised up by God, have their central focus in Jesus Christ, and how both are means by which God speaks to us, strengthens our faith and forms our lives.

Fr. Robert Reed (Network Director, Catholic TV):

What elements of worship invite us to actively participate in God's story? Well, my mind goes immediately to the scriptures. I've read, I've heard it said, that Catholics don't really read the Bible, that they don't know the Bible. And, that's really not all that true. If you think of it, much of our worship as Catholics is literally saturated with the words of sacred scripture. The Liturgy of the Hours that we as priests and religious are obligated to pray, that laypeople are encouraged to pray all through the day consists of Psalms, and canticles and readings from scripture. During any of the celebration of the sacraments there are at least one or two scripture readings. In the context of a three-year cycle in celebrating the liturgy a good portion of the Bible is proclaimed at Mass so that if one were to go to Mass every day for three years one would have heard much of God's word. In addition many of the hymns and the songs that we sing during our worship are in fact inspired by scripture. Even the words of the Church's rituals are drawn in part from scripture as well as the writings of the church fathers and other texts. And so, God's self-revelation as found in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, that story of salvation, is constantly being proclaimed and received in the context of the Church's public worship.

Narrator:

Scripture, as a means for remembering God's story, has proven itself as the most effective way for recalling what God has done and will do.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

Remembrance is one of the central acts of Christian worship. Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper, said, "This do in remembrance of me." But in giving us that command Jesus was referring to something already so central in Jewish piety and prayer. And the underlying reason for that is that time is significant in Jewish and Christian faith. In both cases worship is the acknowledgment, the remembrance, of very significant past events: the Exodus, God's message sent through the prophets, and especially the life and death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus Christ. These events are significant. Christianity, then, is not just an idea, or a set of experiences or emotions. It is the celebration of these decisive events in history . . . One thing needs to be added to that, is that the sense that in both Hebrew and to some extent in Greek the term remembrance is not limited to past events. It is perfectly coherent . . . to remember the future. That is to call to mind anticipated events that will define us. And so, the earliest Christians remembered the birth, and life, and teaching, and death, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus; but also His coming again, which completes the story.

Narrator:

For stained glass artists Jay and Linda Moorman, the idea of Jesus as the center of Christian worship emerged during their design of a window of the Lord's Supper for the Saint Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church.

Jay Moorman:

We conveyed six apostles on one side of the altar, and six apostles on the other side. The interesting thing was, there was no picture of Christ because he was in the center, which was the altar, and the celebration of Mass actually conveyed the Christ figure.

Narrator:

As part of creating the window, the Moormans learned that life does mirror art. Just as the faithful are called to be active participants in God's story, Jay Moorman also found himself becoming part of the retelling of the Lord's Supper through stained glass.

Jay Moorman:

We asked the church, "Could they provide live models that we could actually pose and do the painted figures from?" And when they declined, it turned out that it was all the employees and some relatives that actually are in the window. The first window is myself and my father-in-law.

Narrator:

Linda Moorman also became personally involved with the work at the Church of Maximilian Kolbe, as her likeness was used for the rendering of Our Lady of Consolation.

Linda Moorman:

We used the likeness that had been handed down through generations, and they thought that she was too stern looking, and they wanted a softer, more contemporary looking Mary so...being Italian...so they had used my high school picture. So I'm the Blessed Virgin who looks down on Jay, who is one of the apostles, and my father.

Narrator:

For Christians today, there are more opportunities than ever before to incorporate the scriptures into their everyday lives: they can hear it, read it, see it, speak it, and download it in a variety of formats and translations.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

Scripture, the primary means by which God extends Himself to the world, is at the heart of Christian worship and the ways that it functions is really only limited by our imagination.

Narrator:

The question facing Christians today is not how to access scripture, but how to *live* it by making worship a meaningful part of everyday life.

Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

Again and again in church history we get in trouble. We can tell, “Boy, we’ve become just sort of . . . we’re doing things by rote, we’ve lost the heart.” Or else we think, “Boy, we’re becoming all emotional but we’ve lost the depth.” Or we think, “You know, we just talk but we don’t do anything.” Or we realize that “Gosh, we’re out there doing but we’re losing the heart behind it.” You know, so there are a hundred different ways we can go astray. And then when we try to say, “Okay, what direction do we go in now?” We naturally look back; sometimes we look back in our own life, “where did I get off?” “When was there a period of balance and joy in my life?” Sometimes we look back in church history. But eventually we always go back to the scriptures, too. And that’s, we sense, that in the scriptures we get a kind of . . . the term for it in theology is “a rule.” But that doesn’t mean like a set of rules - it’s like a ruler or a plum line that sets for us a standard and there’s some healthy balance that we get there. So, when we know we’re in trouble we have to look forward and say, “Where are we going to go? What are we going to do about this?” But we don’t do that with amnesia. We do that with a sense of memory, and a looking back and learning from the past.

Ancient Ways, Future Paths: A History of Christian Worship
The Word: Scripture, Creeds and Sermons

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

I think we're going to see in the next generation more and more good insights coming from the past in ways we read the Bible. And that we see ourselves, not just going to a book where we pull a little bit of information that can be useful and that we can apply in our lives. Maybe a set of beliefs that we have to learn or a set of things we need to do, but much more than that, much grander and glorious than that. We've been taken up in this grand story of God, from creation to the final consummation of all things, and that's how we read the Bible.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

The important thing is that people should read in private the whole Bible. Every Christian, I believe, should know their Bible and the whole of it.

Narrator:

Remembering God's story through the words of scripture, celebrating God's triumphs of old and victories yet to come, is essential for all Christians. We are challenged by the power of the word to remember the past, celebrate the present, and anticipate the future, knowing that God's story is rich and eternal.

Fade to black. Fade from black to middle credits: The Word: Creeds and Sermons. Fade to black and then to narrator.

Narrator:

As the written word is essential to Christian worship, so is the spoken word. Two common ways the word is spoken in worship is through sermons and the proclamation of creeds. Both have a basis in the New Testament. Christ provided the model for the preaching of the word in what is arguably the most famous sermon of all time, the Sermon on the Mount. Plus, the book of Acts tells us that when early Christians gathered for worship, a sermon was delivered. Likewise, creeds can also be found in the pages of the New Testament.

Female reading from 1 Timothy

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. -1 Timothy 2:16

Narrator:

In the early church, Christian teachings were passed from one generation to the next through the spoken word.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry)

The sources of theology, then, were not textbooks. The sources of theology were much simpler. They were the homilies that were preached, both within worship context and even as separate worship contexts themselves. They were the creeds that were composed and shared after the councils.

Narrator:

The word “creed” comes from the Latin word “credo” meaning, “I believe.” In this sense, all statements of faith or confessions of belief are types of creeds. They call to remembrance what Christians believe regarding Jesus Christ.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

The ideal, I think, is that we should all come together on the basis of the two ecumenical creeds, which from early days are being used in worship. Namely the Apostles’ Creed, which is a second century document that originally was a syllabus for the catechumenate, that is the basic instruction of inquirers into Christianity. And then the fourth century document called the Nicene Creed, which is essentially the Apostles’ Creed expanded at one or two key points, particularly expanded with reference to the full divinity of the Lord Jesus.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

In the early church there was a steady progression of statements of faith, of rule of life and faith that were developed and articulated. The most famous creed that is used today is arguably the Apostles’ Creed that was developed in the early church for use at baptism. It was a teaching tool. It was a way of teaching adult converts to the Christian faith the basic tenants of the faith. And when they came for baptism they were asked questions, and the creed was the answer to the questions. They were asked, “Do you believe in God the Father?” And they would reply, “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of

Heaven and Earth.” They were asked, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ?” And they responded. And so, these creeds became teaching tools and they were used in baptism services. And then additional creeds took on life in worship, sometimes eventually being translated into songs. Some early hymns sound a lot like creeds. And then the Nicene Creed eventually became a regular feature in weekly worship in the Medieval Period. Creeds, then, were a chance to teach new Christians, articulate the core of the Christian faith, and to celebrate that faith in the context of worship.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry)

The creeds are signposts for us to let our hearts express, especially communally, that in Jesus Christ we are truly one.

Narrator:

Though the exact date of the Apostles’ Creed is unknown, a dubious tradition states that on the Day of Pentecost each of the twelve apostles, while under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, produced it, thus supplying us its name. The creed exists in two forms, a shorter version known as the Old Roman Form that comes from the middle of the second century, and a slightly longer form that dates to the fifth century. The Apostles’ Creed is accepted among Orthodox, Catholic, and most Protestant churches as a public confession of the Christian faith.

Female reading The Apostles Creed (Common Worship)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus

Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Narrator:

An expansion of the Apostles' Creed is the Nicene Creed, dating to the 4th century. At a time when the written word was scarce, these two creeds provided basic instruction for early Christians. New believers would memorize and profess a creed as a summary of their Christian faith. This was a dangerous undertaking, since at certain places and times in the early church, publicly professing Christ quite literally meant risking one's life.

Nicene Creed Audio/Footage: (clips 136 and 201)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one being with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come

again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Narrator:

The creeds were not only tools that summarized core Christian beliefs. They also provided sound, or orthodox, teachings to combat the heresies that arose as the early church spread.

Dr. David W. Fagerberg (University of Notre Dame):

The word “orthodox” comes from “ortho,” which means straight or proper. Orthodontists straighten teeth. “Orthodoxa” is right or straight or upright worship. But the word “doxa” both means “glory,” like doxology, and also comes from “docane” meaning “opinion” or “proposition” or “teaching.” And here’s where they all come together: “orthodoxy,” orthodox worship, would be that which gives right glory to God because it is coming out of truth and out of goodness and out of beauty.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

Let me give an example of how the creeds functioned in the early church. There was a bishop in the second century, his name was Irenaeus. He’s considered to be one of the

great fathers from the early church, both in the Western Church and the Eastern Church. Irenaeus was a bishop in a region called Gaul, which is now southern France, and there Christianity was being challenged by a movement of people who we now call Gnostics. They had a set of beliefs that they held that they were convinced was the truth of Christianity. They claimed to take them from the Bible. And the truth is, we know now from the study of scholars that the churches that they started drew large numbers of people. Their preaching was very compelling and attractive and entertaining. What Irenaeus was concerned about was that the way that they took the Bible and rearranged its content so that the outcome was not true to the faith of the Apostles that had been handed down from its source, which was Jesus. And so Irenaeus wrote a little book, *The Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*. And in it he gives an outline of what became creedal Christianity. He called it “The Rule of Faith.” And this is the way he explained it: he said, “it’s really interesting, the Gnostics look at scripture and it’s like a beautiful mosaic, with many, many pieces. And they take the pieces and they use them, the same pieces we use in our churches, but they rearrange them.” Now he says, “when the pieces are arranged properly, appropriately, and faithfully, they depict a king in all of his majesty, a regal king.” And he said, “the Gnostics take the pieces and they rearrange them and the picture you end up with is a fox.” Now that’s how the creeds function; it’s not only that they contain the content of the Christian faith, but they teach us and show us how the faith is arranged properly so that they lead us to what is most important, and that is God, who makes Himself known as the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. That is what Irenaeus was most concerned about. We have continued to follow him in that across the

centuries and that is an essential reason why we continue to return to the creeds in our reading of the Bible, in our understanding of the faith, and in the way we live.

Narrator:

Today, creeds are still used in worship in many Christian churches to amplify the story of Jesus Christ and the Trinity.

David Neff (Editor, *Christianity Today*):

Christian faith centers around the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And so it's important for us to use something like the Apostles' Creed, which was developed as a summary of Christian belief to prepare converts for baptism. Or like the Nicene Creed, which is kind of a more extended summary of the faith. But to use one of those two regularly in public worship to remind ourselves of who we are, what we're about, why we're there. And it helps us to stay on track.

Narrator:

In addition to creeds, sermons and homilies have been used throughout the history of Christian worship to provide basic instruction for Christians. One pioneer of the art of preaching was 4th century church father John Chrysostom.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

Chrysostom was a remarkable preacher, known as "golden mouth" in his time. His sermons reveal a deep love of scripture, theological sophistication, and great eloquence.

Narrator:

During this same period other preachers of notoriety distinguished themselves as both great orators and persons of interest in Church history. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, was a gifted orator of the 4th century; even non-Christians often attended his services in order to hear him speak. One such person, who was converted and baptized under the ministry of Ambrose was Augustine, who himself became a great orator and minister and one of the most influential persons in the development of Western Christianity.

Gregory the Great, also known as Pope Gregory I in the Catholic Church and Gregory the Dialogist in the Eastern Church, was another prominent speaker and minister. Centuries later, Reformer John Calvin wrote very favorably of Gregory, calling him a great and good pope. Today, Gregory is noted for the style of chant that is named after him in which scripture is beautifully spoken and sung in praise and meditation of God.

As Christianity spread geographically across the globe and chronologically toward the Medieval Period, the spoken word remained crucial in Christian worship.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

Sermons were very important. In fact, some of the greatest preachers in the history of the church are from the time of the first century through the Medieval period. There was a preaching movement in the thirteenth century, the Franciscans and Dominicans, called “the preaching friars” that to this day is the greatest preaching movement in the history of the church.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

Many Protestants today and in recent decades have the idea that there were not strong preaching practices in the Medieval Period and that preaching was invented, or reinvented, in a significant way by the Protestant Reformers. That's not fair to history, however. There were rich and diverse preaching practices throughout the Medieval Period, not always in every location during every time period. But nevertheless there are records of wonderful sermons that explore basic truths of the Christian faith that were preached in very formal services on Christmas and Easter and Pentecost; these festival, festal liturgical sermons. We also know that there were street preachers in the Medieval Period. Several of the orders of clergy in the Roman Catholic Church had particular missions to preach the central message of the gospel in the streets, and towns, and villages. And they would in some cases move from towns to villages anticipating what Wesley did, for example, centuries later. And then, in addition to that, there was a practice, a devotional service of preaching, in the vernacular, the language of the people, often preceding the celebration of Mass. And so while Mass would have been celebrated in Latin, prior to Mass in some places, toward the late Middle Ages, devotional preaching of services in the vernacular would have happened. What all that means is that the Protestant Reformers were drawing on practices that were already existing, energizing them, making them more central to the life and piety of Protestant Christians. But there were certainly vital preaching practices in several different places, and throughout several different decades, throughout the Medieval Period.

Narrator:

The Medieval Period also made use of lectionaries in both public and private worship. Lectionaries were books that contained liturgy and large sections of scripture and were used in both the Eastern and Western Church.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

We receive a lectionary, which offers us key passages, you see, spread out over one, two, or three years. And we make it our business to preach sermons based on those passages, explaining them so that the congregation will understand what it is that makes this a key passage in each case.

Narrator:

Although the use of lectionaries date back to Jewish synagogues at the time of Christ, most of the existing Christian lectionaries date from the 9th century onward. By the time of the Reformation, lectionaries were in common use, as illustrated in this 1630 painting by Rembrandt of his mother reading from a lectionary.

With the Reformation came change. However, Reformers such as Martin Luther encouraged worshippers to change by embracing the past.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

Luther was really riding a wave that had been breaking for a long time, and the crest of that wave broke in the 16th century, and of course the impact of that and implications

extend all the way into our time. Now, it's interesting when we think about the Reformation that the road to the future, for the Reformers, lead through the past; the road to the future lead through the past. And if there is one thing they all had in common, and this would be Protestant Reformers, and Reformers who were Catholic, Reformers who called themselves "Anabaptist," they all reached back to the early church to learn from the fathers, because the fathers were the closest to scripture. And they saw the wisdom and the spirit of the fathers as being the most true and faithful to the heart of what the gospel is, and the kind of life it produces and the kind of church that we are to be.

Narrator:

The Reformation that spread in Germany also influenced Christian worship in England. One of the most influential English Reformers was Thomas Cranmer, who was responsible for the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship):

Thomas Cranmer is one of the most significant Reformers of the 16th century. He became Archbishop of Canterbury, he lived a very complex life; helped Henry VIII build his case for a legitimate divorce, worked in what became the significant move of the English Church away from the Roman Catholic Church that resulted from that case, but he is known in the area of worship most especially for his work on the Book of Common Prayer. He was significant in developing the first two editions of the Book of Common Prayer, and this book represents the first significant vernacular liturgy in England, draws heavily on earlier Medieval sources in England, but it also reflects Cranmer's own

facility with language and theology. It's a remarkable book of beautiful language. The theology it expresses is representative of the center of the Christian faith. It includes not too many idiosyncrasies reflecting one particular branch of Protestantism, which is one reason for its success, you might say, the influence its had over many generations. And it is generally acknowledged today to be, not only significant to the study of worship, but of English culture in general because of the powerful and poetic way it expressed the Christian faith.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

Cranmer's intention, or at least his hope, was that every person that worshipped would have his own, or her own, copy of the Prayer Book, would use it in private devotions, and would bring it to church to follow along, you see, with the reading of the prayers.

Narrator:

The proclamation of God's story – in prayer books, lectionaries, art, bible translations, and sermons – flooded the Reformation. It sparked a renewal in worship that continues to this day in Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

Michael Pasquarello III, Ph.D. (Asbury Theological Seminary):

So the Reformation was a reformation of preaching and a reformation by preaching. All churches today, all denominations and traditions, in some way have a strong commitment to the ministry of the word.

Narrator:

Following the Reformation, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a new movement rose from within the Anglican Church that strongly affected worship style for numerous Christians. Under the leadership of John Wesley and his younger brother, Charles, the Methodist movement changed how many Christians celebrated worship. Liturgy and formal worship was now combined with frontier style homilies and hymns.

David Neff (Editor, *Christianity Today*):

I read a recent biography of Charles Wesley which talked about the way he took his hymn texts and recreated the steps of the conversion experience so that even as he and his brother, and his friends George Whitefield and the company of lay preachers that they created were out in the fields, the coal fields preaching to the miners, in England, in rural England. The songs that they would sing would lead people through the steps of the Christian life, or through the steps of the conversion experience, so that what they sang and what they preached were all harmoniously coordinated.

Narrator:

This period saw several religious movements, such as two Great Awakenings, which were set into motion through the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, and the establishment of numerous denominations that are still prevalent today. Throngs gathered to hear the word proclaimed by renowned preachers such as Alexander Campbell, Francis Asbury, and Charles G. Finney. In the late eighteenth century, Congregationalist Dwight Moody preached to countless multitudes in the United States and Great Britain. Presbyterian

Billy Sunday helped shaped social movements in the early nineteen hundreds. By the end of the 20th century, the preaching and teaching of Pope John Paul II and Baptist minister Billy Graham influenced millions of worshippers worldwide.

The use of the word – written, spoken, or seen – is a tool that causes Christians to focus on Jesus Christ as the center of worship. However, as with all tools, it must be used thoughtfully.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

I think worship is not pleasing to God when it becomes about us, when we have an overly narcissistic orientation to our worship. “God aren’t you glad, aren’t you pleased to have me here worshipping you.” I think also its not pleasing to God when it’s overly discursive. When it’s proof-texting. When we, when there’s not a sense that we’re living into God’s story, when instead we have to prove something to somebody. What pleases God is seeing His acts celebrated in history.

Narrator:

One of the challenges for those proclaiming the word today is how to balance scriptural teaching with practical application.

David Neff (Editor, *Christianity Today*):

I think many churches are realizing that they have gotten away from scriptural teaching, which is centered on the Gospel, and they have for so long catered to felt needs, so that you, as a worshipper, are more like a consumer of a product rather than someone who is

worshipping the God of the universe. The way you approach preaching is very different if you're seeing the people in the pews as consumers. Then, you're going to be preaching sermons that help them be a better husband or be a better wife, have a better marriage, manage their money better. All of those things, there are helps for in Scripture. There are helps for in the Christian tradition, but that's not why we worship. That's not why we come to church.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry)

A preacher can turn the Word onto him or herself, or onto hearing what he or she thinks the assembly would like to hear. Often, the preaching could be a stringing together of stories. I've heard preaching that just involves telling jokes. The preacher would say, "Well, I'm trying to catch the people. I'm trying to engage the people." And while that might be a worthy enterprise, it is God's Word proclaimed before the preaching that really should catch us and involve us and engage us and call forth from us a giving ourselves over so we can hear the power in God's Word as preached, not only a Word that challenges us, and sometimes even makes us uncomfortable, but also a Word that comforts us, and truly does bring to us a warmth and a joy because we know in the very proclamation of God's Word, is God's Word present.

Narrator:

Dr. Denis McNamara, author, architectural historian, and assistant director at The Liturgical Institute in Mundelein, Illinois, embraces the connection between the truths of scripture and the world outside the church doors:

Denis R. McNamara, Ph.D. (The Liturgical Institute, Mundelein, IL.):

Over our door it says, “Eyntes Ego Docete” which means, “Go therefore and teach.” And here would be the chapel where our priests would be ordained. And they would actually go through that door on the way out and go out to parishes to teach. And so it’s a reminder that the job of a priest is to be like Christ was, a Teacher, go therefore and bring the message to all nations.

Narrator:

This challenge echoes the words of Christ, who told his followers to go throughout the world preaching and teaching the things that he taught. It is a challenge that still exists in the hearts of worshippers today, who must not only treasure the written and spoken word, but also must transmit its truths, and those of God’s eternal story, to present and future generations.

Roll Credits, fade to black.