

BEYOND LITURGICAL ADAPTATION: REFRAMING CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP AS COMMUNICATIVE-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This paper contends that the contextual worship debate ought to go beyond issues of style adjustment and aesthetic appropriateness to a more stringent practical-theological description of how worship conveys faith, shapes ecclesial identity and is not subject to instrumental diminution. With an interpretive library research design, the article peruses the theory of communicative action by Jurgen Habermas and some of the most significant discussions in practical theology, liturgical studies, digital ecclesiology, and Indonesian contextual theology. It is revealed that the best way to understand worship is as communicative-theological praxis where the truth claims, normative claims, and expressive claims are united in the lifeworld of the church. In that regard, cultural proximity, technological sophistication, or numerical appeal cannot be considered as a judgment of contextualization. It has to be assessed on whether it maintains theological fidelity, enhances communicative intelligibility, nurtures participatory reciprocity and fosters ethical-transformative fruit in community life. One of the new aspects of the article is the suggestion of these four criteria as an evaluation tool to differentiate between contextualization and instrumentalization. The existence of such a framework enables the evaluation of digital, hybrid, and culture-based worship practices without either reduction to nostalgic traditionalism or market-driven innovationism. The conclusion of the study is that practical theology is a critical and constructive exercise: it assists churches to make the gospel relevant to them in specific cultural ways and to protect worship against being turned into a spectacle or a product, an efficient religious service.

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INTRODUCTION

Contextual worship is no longer an idiosyncratic liturgical issue. It is at the crossroads of theology, culture, media, ecclesial identity, and the life of the people. Livestreaming, platform logics, migration, the revival of local languages, intergenerational conflicts, and evolving expectations of participation are all factors that churches now design around to shape worship. The question that is used all the time in that atmosphere, whether worship must be traditional or contemporary, is too crude to be analytical. Whether the forms of adaptation, in fact, go to deeper levels of communication of faith, or simply change the packaging of religion, is the more serious question. Recent research ascertains that worship has turned into a central field where churches bargain over embodiment, mediation, belonging and authority (Chow and Kurlberg, 2020; Kgatle, 2020; Scott, 2020; O'Lynn, 2022; Ndereba, 2023).

The practical-theological meaning of this change is great. Worship is not merely one activity among others in the life of the congregation, but a shaping practice by which a church re-tells what it believes, what it imagines itself to be and how it is called to live. The ancient liturgical adage, *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* is enlightening in just the sense that worship is never purely a performance. It is doctrine practiced, community decreed, memory maintained, morality developed (Plaatjies-van Huffel, 2020). That is why, contextualization in worship cannot be confined to superficial accommodation. When the language, music, visuality, pacing and participatory structure of worship is altered, so is the social and theological grammar of the congregation.

Modern day research has produced abundant descriptions of these transitions. Digital ecclesiological studies have revealed that online and hybrid worship re-calibrates presence, participation, and accessibility (Amenyedzi, 2024; Pakpahan et al., 2024). The study of livestreaming and online liturgy has provided a focus on the missionary possibilities along with the losses that are caused by digitally mediated worship to the ecclesia (Beukes, 2020; Dwiraharjo, 2020; Mhandu and Ojong, 2021). Other literature has described the potential of local music, language, and oral traditions as theological assets instead of aesthetic peripherals, especially in situations where cultural memory and Christian religion have traditionally been seen as two distinct realms (Handoko et al., 2025; Juanda et al., 2025; Widyawati et al., 2025). One thing is thus clear in the literature: the negotiations of worship in the present-day world are mediated on many cultural and medial levels.

But there is a weakness which is also present in the literature. A good part of the modern writing is still descriptive or praising. It recognizes the new forms of worship, rationalizes innovation, or cautions against digital diminution but frequently falls short of providing a strong evaluative framework. Contextualization is considered to be successful, in most of the discourses, when worship seems to be more relevant, more local, more accessible, or more appealing. That is not enough. A congregation can be made more technologically competent and less participatory. Worship can be thin and aesthetically local. It can seem like it is inclusive and build up performative control behind the stage or the screen. In the absence of more definite theological standards, contextualization can often be confused with conformity to mainstream media practices or institutional expediency.

This paper argues that practical theology must have a more concentrated conceptual tool to make contextual judgments of worship. It is not the validity of adaptation in itself that is the problem. The issue is the lack of the convincing means to make a distinction between translation and surrender, reform and commodification, and contextual intelligibility and instrumental efficiency. To resolve that issue, this article introduces a theory of communicative action by Juergen Habermas to a more explicit dialogue with practical theology. Habermas is not brought in as a philosophical window dressing, but as a theorist whose distinction between communicative and instrumental rationality assists in understanding what is on the line when a reorganization of worship is being conducted under the influences of culture, institutional or digital pressures (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

The main argument here, which is put forward is simple: contextual worship is to be interpreted and evaluated as communicative-theological praxis. In other words, the topic of worship should be studied as a practice whereby

faith is shared, co-created, embodied, challenged and revitalized in the lifeworld of the church. Worship in this reading is not a liturgical practice that is only addressed to God, but is also a social-theological practice where a congregation is learning to speak truth, act normatively and respond expressively before God and each other. The problem of contextualization is more stringent when worship is approached in this manner. It is no longer a matter of whether a liturgical form appears modern, native or hybrid, but of whether the communicative conditions in which faith can be meaningfully shared and inhabited communally.

Such a change of focus is the novelty of this article. The article suggests an evaluative framework based on communicative action and created with the purpose of practical theology, instead of a further elaboration on the definition of worship change. Specifically, it posits that there are four criteria that are interrelated and must be used to test contextual worship: theological fidelity, communicative intelligibility, participatory reciprocity and ethical-transformative fruitfulness. The following criteria are not to be taken as bureaucratic indicators or even a new liturgical orthodoxy. They serve as theological-critical questions according to which churches can determine whether a particular adaptation truly enhances worship as a mode of Christian communication or it only deepens the processes of consumption, spectacle, or institutional control.

The argument occurs in four phases. To begin with, the article explains the necessity of considering contextual worship as a practical-theological issue, as opposed to a stylistic or managerial issue. Second, it re-constructs the applicability of communicative action to worship by involving the Habermas explanation of validity claims, lifeworld and critique of system colonization. Third, it constructs the suggested assessing structure of contextual worship. Fourth, it reflects on how that framework applies to modern Indonesian churches, in which the issues of locality, digital mediation, and theological integrity merge more and more. In this way, the article will provide a more rigorous vocabulary to talk about change in worship and a more challenging description of what real contextualization ought to be.

METHOD

The research in this article is a qualitative interpretive library study. The approach is suitable as the issue that is studied is conceptual and evaluative, but not empirical in the former case. This is not to gauge the practice of one congregation but to establish a practical-theological argument that can help inform judgment in a variety of worship settings. The analysis is thus an amalgamation of close reading, thematic grouping, and constructive synthesis.

There are two types of sources in the corpus. The former includes a collection of theoretical literature, primarily the description of communicative action, lifeworld and instrumental rationality by Habermas alongside some of the most important practical-theological writings by Browning, Heitink, Osmer and Bevans. The second is modern scholarship that has been published until 2025 on worship, digital ecclesiology, liturgical participation, contextual theology, music, culture, and practices of the Indonesian church. Sources were chosen due to their direct shedding of light on one or more of the following issues: meaning of worship as formative practice; the theological interests of digital and hybrid mediation; the employment of local cultural forms in Christian worship; and the conflict between partaking and performing in the contemporary church.

The analysis was done in four steps. To begin with, the literature was mapped in regards to common issues: mediation, participation, contextualization, embodiment, local culture, theological integrity, and ecclesial formation. Second, such problems were re-read with the differentiation of communicative and instrumental rationality as by Habermas. Third, it was determined that there were convergences and tensions between practical theology and communicative theory, in particular, when it comes to validity claims, reciprocity, and the lifeworld of the church. Fourth, the argument was re-packaged as a positive practical-theological suggestion of how to assess contextual worship. The approach is not purported to be neutral; it is explicitly theological and critical. It has strength in

generating a consistent framework through which churches and scholars can evaluate the reform of worship more rigorously than descriptive accounts can allow.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Contextual Worship: A Practical-Theological Issue.

The initial outcome of the literature review is that the contextual worship has to be addressed as a practical-theological issue prior to it being addressed as a design issue. The most common discourse of domination in the popular deliberations about worship is style - hymns or bands, liturgy or spontaneity, local idioms or transnational repertoire, face-to-face or online presentation. Those oppositions are not insignificant, but they may blur the underlying problem. Worship is practical-theological in the sense that it is a locality in which doctrine is put to practice, where social standards are incarnated, and where habits of attention are established. By changing the form of worship, churches change the means of socially acquiring faith.

This assertion can already be found implicit in significant practical-theological traditions. Browning (1996) does not make a distinction between theological reflection and lived practice; practical theology in his description is not a subsequent event but a form of informed judgment concerning the action of the church. Heitink (1999) also conceived of practical theology as a theory of action that makes the movement between interpretation and intervention. The movement is particularly made clear by Osmer (2008) who poses the question of what is happening, why it is happening, what should be happening, and how the church should react to it. Those are questions that are pressing when it comes to worship because a change in liturgy is seldom neutral. Not only form is altered by a new technological medium, or changing the language, or a reorganizing of musical leadership, but also power, expectation, and ecclesial fantasy.

This is supported by recent studies. Digital worship studies tend to start with the question of whether churches continued to be online during the pandemic or afterwards; a better question is what sort of ecclesial object such practices give rise to. Chow and Kurlberg (2020) demonstrated that Asian and European reactions to digital church were determined by various theological and pastoral assumptions rather than by various technical abilities. Pakpahan et al. (2024) show that online fellowship and worship in Indonesia entails actual congregational responses, yet these responses are heavily contingent on the way of participation organization. It is not digitality that is the problem. The question is, does the medium help in a dense ecclesial communication or does it promote passive religious spectatorship?

Cultural contextualization is the same. Handoko et al. (2025) insist that the incorporation of Karungut music into church life in Central Kalimantan is not depleted by the musical inclination, but it involves the memory, local identity, and alternative cultural mode of theological resonance. Widyawati et al. (2025) demonstrate that mission and inculturation get intertwined with language preservation and cultural dignity. The importance of such studies is that they deny the historic distrust that locality must be potentially destructive of orthodoxy. Meanwhile, they do also reveal the necessity of a more evaluative grammar. Not all the appeals to culture are theologically fully developed. Local forms may serve to make light of the gospel, but may also be recruited in a shallow way, offered as exotic plausibility, or even instrumentalized to achieve relevance without urging to profound formation.

Practical theology ought, therefore, to go beyond commending adaptation. It should pose the question of what type of communicative event worship is when influenced by specific media and cultural forms. It is there that the dialogue with Habermas is particularly fruitful.

2. Worship, Validity Claims, and Communicative Rationality

The conceptual difference provided by Habermas in his theory of communicative action is singularly helpful to the analysis of worship. Communicative rationality is oriented to cognition; instrumental rationality is oriented to achievement. The disparity is no trifle. Instrumental action analyses practices based on efficiency, control, and the desired outcomes. Communicative action, in its turn, relies on the participants who aim at understanding each other by raising and proving validity claims (Habermas, 1984, 1987). After this distinction is put in place together with practical theology, it is open to inquiry whether worship is being arranged to communicate faith in the first place or to achieve institutional effects in the first place.

It is a more focussed question when one recalls the three validity claims of Habermas, namely, truth, normative rightness, and sincerity. Truth in worship cannot be brought down to factual correctness, but it has theological truthfulness: the wholeness of scriptural proclamation, the coherence of dogma, and the truthful naming of God, sin, grace, and hope. Normative rightness is the relational and ethical order that is practiced in worship: who is permitted to speak, who is permitted to respond, what is the extent of participation, how is power shared, and whether the liturgical event is just, hospitable, and responsible to one another. Sincerity deals with the expressive aspect of worship: prayer, lament, praise, testimony, silence and song as truthful revelations of experienced faith as opposed to a contrived emotional expressiveness.

The practical significance of this frame is that it is resistant to reduction. The churches tend to become polarized around the doctrinal content and emotional experience, or tradition versus innovation. The triadic framework of Habermas implies that healthy worship cannot be confined to any of these dimensions. Theologically poor worship is intellectual correctness without the warmth of feeling. It is affectively compelling yet normatively disordered and, thus, communally unstable. The expression when it is not genuine and performed in a staged way is spiritually manipulative. In a similar direction, but with liturgical speech-act view, Benjamins (2021) demonstrates that modern worship music does not just accompany worship but enacts formative action in worship. Music imparts the collective expression of faith; it may enhance involvement, or may concentrate performance.

In this case the communicative theory is of value to practical theology since it allows it to gain a more precise vocabulary to evaluate the types of worship. An orthodox sermon that is too technical in language can prove ineffective in communication. A digitally advanced service that attains a wide coverage but places worshippers in a rather passive position might be normatively unsuccessful. A very emotive music set which creates affective intensity without theological or communal profundity may not be sincere. On the other hand, contextual adaptation can be a success because it brings about clarity of meaning, makes participation more decentralized and enables the congregation to speak and respond more honestly in the presence of God.

That is why the question of style will never be separated of the question of rationality. The reforms of worship are usually justified with the help of the appeal to effectiveness: the attendance rates, broadcasting coverage, cultural acquaintance, visual presentation, or convenience. Those can be pertinent pastoral factors, but they cannot be theological determinants. When effectiveness becomes central, worship is coded in a subtle manner as a product to be optimised instead of a communicative practice through which faith is shared, tested and embodied. The difference made by Habermas is not that churches are anti-organizational, it is just that they should not allow the logic of success to dominate the logic of understanding.

3. Lifeworld, Digital Mediation, and Risk of Liturgical Instrumentalization.

The lifeworld concept enhances the analysis. To Habermas, the lifeworld is the common ground of meanings, memories, values and communicative competencies by which a community perceives itself. The lifeworld of the church is perpetuated in ecclesial terms by reading Scripture, preaching, praying, singing, sacrament, witnessing, and embodied practices of fellowship and service. Worship can thus be considered as one of the main sites where a congregation recreates and remakes its lifeworld. It informs believers about what is faithful speech, what are the

attention worthy, what are the allowable emotions, how is authority worth listening to, and how do we feel belongingness to a group.

As soon as worship is perceived as the reproduction of a lifeworld, the threat of colonization by system can be named more easily. Habermas employs a colonization language to outline the process that occurs when the spheres that are influenced by communicative meaning are conquered by the need to administer, market logic, or instrumental control. Also used in the context of worship, colonization is the shift to branding, speed, platform measures, visual performance, or managerial efficiency as the governing criteria of the liturgical practice. A congregation might continue to sing, pray, and hear the Scripture but the occasion is more and more ordered by the needs of the visibility, optimization, and affective management than by the dialogical needs of faith.

The digital turn has made this risk more acute without necessarily making the answer clear. On the one hand, the literature is correct in demanding that digital mediation has the ability to make accessibility, particularly to disabled worshippers, geographically separated members, and others, who are not otherwise able to participate in the fullness (Amenyedzi, 2024; O'Lynn, 2022). Online liturgies and livestreaming have served to keep churches connected despite crisis conditions and beyond (Kgatle, 2020; Mhandu & Ojong, 2021). Similar to the Indonesian scholarship, online worship has resulted in new theological considerations of presence, intersubjectivity, and fellowship (Dwiraharjo, 2020; Pakpahan, 2021, 2022; Sopacoly and Lattu, 2020).

Conversely, a digital space is never neutral. Platforms are rewarding in speed, visibility, repetition, retention, and affective stimulation. Their design is inclined toward spectatorship, orchestrated attendance, and quantifiable interaction. Ding et al. (2025) show, in a deeper way, that religious experience is restructured by media forms and is not just carried by them. According to Schlag et al., (2025), the digital innovation impacts the leadership as it is, changing the ways religious authority is exercised and negotiated. The issue, in that regard, is not, is it a real worship in digital form. What types of communicative possibilities and distortions digital mediation presents to worship is a more precise question.

Two opposite simplifications are to be avoided with a Habermasian lens. The former is nostalgic anti-digitalism, and mediated worship is assumed to be inherently inauthentic. The second is technological zeal, which presupposes the fact that accessibility and innovation are the theological developments automatically. The practical-theological issue is absent in both positions. It is possible that worship can be mediated and not instrumentalized, but it must be subordinated to communicative and theological purposes. It is not about the camera, the screen, the projection system, the chat feature, or even algorithmic support. The issue is that the said tools restructure worship as passive consumption, centralized performance, or measured achievement.

Cultural adaptation can be diagnosed the same way. The revival of Indigenous music, oral tradition, and language could serve as the authentic translation of the gospel to the historical and symbolic space of a people. But it can also be a kind of strategic aesthetic, an identity performance, or an ecclesial branding. According to Myrick (2025), the problems of authenticity in worship music cannot be discussed outside the broader social and ecclesial issues. What seems natural can be artificialized. Practical theology then needs not just a positive vocabulary of contextualization. It involves vigilant critical care towards the social logics that make their way in the so-called contextual forms.

The argument in the article is more constructive at this point. To defend contextual worship against inflexible traditionalism, and thoughtless innovationism, churches must have criteria of evaluation which can name that which is communicatively and theologically sound reform.

4. A Constructive Proposal: Four Criteria for Evaluating Contextual Worship

The synthesis developed in this study yields four criteria for evaluating contextual worship as communicative-theological praxis. These criteria are not external measurements imposed on liturgy from the outside.

They arise from the intersection of practical theology and communicative action and function as disciplined questions for ecclesial discernment.

Tabel Four Criteria for Evaluating Contextual Worship

Criterion	Core Question	Practical-Theological Significance
Theological fidelity	Does the adaptation preserve the gospel's doctrinal and scriptural integrity?	Contextual forms may vary, but worship cannot lose its theological centre.
Communicative intelligibility	Does the form make faith more understandable within a concrete community?	Language, music, symbol, and media must clarify meaning rather than merely decorate it.
Participatory reciprocity	Does the worship event create genuine space for congregational response and mutual involvement?	Worshippers are subjects of worship, not spiritual consumers or passive viewers.
Ethical-transformative fruitfulness	Does worship shape dispositions, relationships, and practices consistent with Christian life?	The test of worship includes its formative effects on communal life, justice, care, and discipleship.

The first criterion is theological fidelity. Contextualization is not justified by novelty alone. Worship remains Christian worship only insofar as it continues to bear the weight of the gospel's theological claims. This means that local language, digital mediation, indigenous musical idioms, and liturgical flexibility must remain accountable to Scripture, the church's confessional memory, and the basic grammar of Christian faith. Bevans (2005) is right that theology is always contextual, but contextuality does not imply doctrinal indifference. Theological fidelity is not rigidity; it is the condition that prevents contextual worship from becoming merely religious expression detached from the theological identity of the church.

The second criterion is communicative intelligibility. Contextualization starts in this regard. When a worship form renders the content of faith comprehensible in the symbolic world of a given people, then this is communicatively intelligent. That can include local musical forms, vernacular language, metaphors that are culturally resonant, digitally available forms, or liturgical pacing that takes into account the abilities of a congregation. It is precisely due to the fact that culture can be used in theological knowledge that Handoko et al. (2025) and Juanda et al. (2025) are valuable. But the intelligibility should not be confused with mere familiarity. A form can be familiar and yet theologically ambiguous. Communicative intelligibility thus does not pose the question of whether or not worship is easy to consume, but it is whether or not it actually assists a congregation to know what it is hearing, saying, singing and performing.

The third is participatory reciprocity. This can be the least addressed aspect of modern day worship reforms. Much of the innovation in worship, which is particularly abundant in hugely mediated contexts, enhances production value at the expense of congregational agency. Songs are sung very well but are more difficult to possess in a group. Sermons are more one-sided and more speech-like. The digital services expand access and reduce most congregational response to the invisible or weakly interactive. Pakpahan (2022) is correct when emphasizing that active-participation in online worship is a sign of communion, not a secondary technical aspect. Habermas makes this point even more precise by reminding us that communicative practices require a mutual participation. Worship where voice

systematically is concentrated in a small group of visible persons and the congregation is made spectators may appear to be successful but is communicatively thin.

The fourth is ethical-transformative fruitfulness. The liturgical hour is not the end of worship. It relies to some extent on the nature of the people and relationships it establishes to give it practical-theological credibility. Here, what counts is the connection between believing, worshipping, and living, which is decisive in the opinion of Plaatjes-van Huffel (2020). When worship habitually trains a congregation to be passive and self-enclosed, aesthetic consumerism and/or emotionally dependent, it is in a fundamental way a failure of a well-produced contextual form. In opposition, worship that fosters solidarity, repentance, hospitality, concern to the vulnerable, ecological care, and sustainable discipleship demonstrates that contextualization is no longer adaptation but more. It has changed into formation. Research that links worship and harmony, care, or ecological responsibility is important as it restores this formative horizon (Santo et al., 2021; Dames, 2024; Medley, 2025).

These four criteria, when combined, represent a breakthrough in the discussion. They divert us off the old versus new dichotomy and into what has become more challenging the quality of theology in the context of cultural and technological transformation. They also give a practical-theological foundation of criticism. A reform in worship can be creative and theologically insufficient; culturally appealing and not participatory; digital and digitally aware but morally shallow; emotionally evocative and communicatively misguided. It is not intended to generate a strict checklist. The idea is to restore to theology the discipline with which it has so often been lost in a sphere where taste or anxiety or market rivalry too frequently reign.

5. Implications on the Contemporary Indonesian Churches.

These questions are particularly urgent in the context of Indonesia. Negotiated by churches is worship, characterized by the presence of linguistic plurality, local cultures that are dense, denominational variety, growing digital mediation, and the ever-present pressure to be relevant and theologically credible. Contextual worship in such an environment cannot be either imported into contemporary forms or selectively traditionalized. It demands theological judgment on practice.

First, the Indonesian churches must learn to consider the local language, music and oral tradition as theological assets and not as cultural fringe benefits. The thing is not an incorporation of folklore as a ritual. The argument is to question whether local forms allow the gospel to be heard more deeply in terms of semantics and communal ownership. Research on the Karungut music, oral tradition, and inculturation indicates that local expression may enhance theological accessibility when critically processed instead of being sentimentally embraced (Handoko et al., 2025; Juanda et al., 2025; Widyawati et al., 2025).

Second, churches need to repackage digital and hybrid worship as reciprocity and not broadcast logic. It is not through Livestreaming that communion is created. When online worship is organized as a one-way transmission, it habituates the congregation to observe instead of responding, intercede, confess, and to carry each other burdens of one another. The responding elements of the congregation, the pastoral follow-up, the liturgical prompts, the integration into the small groups, and the digitally mediated testimony become essential in case online worship is not to lose ecclesial thickness (Pakpahan et al., 2024; O'Lynn, 2022). Accessibility is important, but not complete without participation.

Third, the church leaders should have a clearer theology of media and performance. The fact that technology is simply a tool cannot be restated any more. Media construct authority, pacing, emotion rhythm and excellence expectations in most situations. Visual technologies, artificial intelligence, algorithmic promotion, or highly staged musical performance should be judged by theological and not just technical criterion (Phillips, 2023; Peters, 2024; Schlag et al., 2025; Niemandt and Niemandt, 2025). Whether these tools are used as a form of worship as communicative praxis or turn it into spectacle, optimization, and self-presentation is the key question.

Fourth, practical theology must be more of a culture of congregational reflection, rather than just a scholarly discipline which is not a part of life in the church. The questions should be strong enough that they challenge the assumptions of the worship planning teams, musicians, pastors, and lay leaders: Does this change make the congregation understand and inhabit the gospel? Is it more widely or narrowly distributed in participation? Does it practice honest prayer and accountable communal existence? Does it enhance discipleship more than the event itself? They are practical-theological questions in the best sense.

Should this article drive the point home more than some of the descriptive accounts, that is intentional. The current situation demands a stricter criterion. Churches are not only confronted with the issue of making worship contextually recognizable, but also the issue of safeguarding the process of worship that is being taken up by the logics of consumer choice, brand management, and technological acceleration. The contextualization which deserves the name must be, then, both translational and resistant: translational with reference to culture, resistant with reference to reduction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has contended that the debate on contextual worship ought to be recontextualized. The question whether churches adjust worship is already settled, since all worship is already culturally and historically mediated. The question of how such adaptation is to be judged is the decisive one. Using the theory of communicative action by Habermas, the article has suggested that the worship is to be interpreted as communicative-theological praxis - a type of ecclesial action where the truth, normative order, and expressive sincerity can be negotiated in the lifeworld of the church. Based on that, contextual worship is not a cosmetic activity of relevancy but a theological activity of translation that is critically disciplined.

The four evaluative criteria proposed in the article are theological fidelity, communicative intelligibility, participatory reciprocity, and ethical-transformative fruitfulness, which is the main contribution of the article. These standards will not resolve all liturgical disputes, but they elevate the discourse. They allow them to tell the difference between adaptation that enhances worship and the one that enhances its commercial viability, technical efficiency, or cultural quality. They also offer a more convincing method of assessing digital, hybrid and culture-based church worship in churches that are undergoing rapid social and technological transformation.

The research is constrained by the nature of library research. It does not experiment with the framework in a single congregational situation, and does not empirically compare denominations. The latter is a limitation to future research, not weakness. Ethnographic observations of Indonesian congregations, cross-cases between internet and face-to-face liturgical attendance, and action-research designs involving worship groups would aid in improving the framework suggested herein. Additional research might also explore the emergence of communicative distortions within particular economies of worship - such as the leadership of celebrity leaders, platform metrics, or the commodification of local culture.

The practical suggestion is evident. The question that churches should not pose is, is worship contemporary, local or effective. They need to query whether it conveys faith in an authentic manner, orders community life fairly, welcomes genuine involvement, and creates a people that is able to live the gospel beyond the service itself. It is there that practical theology is indispensable. It upholds the liberty to innovate, but it will not allow an innovation to be the ultimate measure of worship.

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