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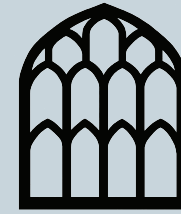
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BULLETIN OF ECCLESIAL THEOLOGY, Vol. 3.1, JUNE 2016

ESSAYS ON LITURGY, WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION



## BULLETIN OF ECCLESIAL THEOLOGY

### Essays on Liturgy, Worship and Spiritual Formation

VOLUME 3.1

JUNE 2016

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**Essays on Liturgy, Worship  
and Spiritual Formation**

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## EDITORIAL

Philosopher, theologian, cultural critic. Over the past dozen or so years, James K. A. Smith has emerged as one of the most interesting, provocative, and prolific voices in contemporary North American Christianity. The first two installments of his *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy have been widely admired and have already stimulated much conversation.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of the Center for Pastor Theologians, it is encouraging that, in these volumes and others, an academic philosopher has produced intellectually rigorous work that has captured the imagination not just of fellow academics, but also of many pastors.

In 2014/15, the Center was honored to have Jamie leading discussion at our Fellowship Symposia, and this edition of the *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* engages and builds on his work. Following the pattern of previous years, each article began life as a paper presented at one of the Symposia.

What follows is far from monochrome. The Fellows represent a variety of perspectives from within a broadly evangelical commitment. It is therefore no surprise to find a variegated response to Jamie's work. All are in some measure appreciative of the main thesis of the Cultural Liturgies project, and some reflect very positive appropriations of his insights. On the other hand, others lodge more significant reservations and sound greater cautions.

The issue begins with a review essay, in which David Morlan (First Fellowship) offers an appreciative but critical interaction with *Desiring the Kingdom* and *Imagining the Kingdom*, asking how biblically grounded Smith's proposal is. After summarizing Smith's thesis, Morlan engages his arguments from the perspectives of anthropology, evangelism, Jesus and religious forms, and mission. Daniel Brendsel (Second Fellowship) applies Smith's liturgical insights to the question of the liturgical year. He contrasts the church's traditional liturgical calendar with an insightful analysis of the modern American calendar, and considers how discerning use of the church's calendar might counter the ways the American calendar tends to "mal-form" us. Jeremy Mann (CPT's

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<sup>1</sup> *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

Managing Director) explores the importance of figural interpretation of Scripture for the formation of disciples, and argues that figural reading is both necessary for and enriching of the preaching of God's Word. Ryan Jackson (First Fellowship) engages the Corinthian correspondence to explore how Paul sought to form disciples in first century Corinth by challenging the reigning cultural imaginaries with an alternative Christian imaginary focused on Christ-like living. In a highly personal article, Joel Willitts (First Fellowship) traces the embodied patterns by which suffering Christians follow the Man of Sorrows, as we learn to lament in ways that connect us to God, and to others, as God connects to us in our griefs. Joseph Sherrard (Second Fellowship) engages one of Smith's interlocutors, Charles Taylor, challenging the criticisms of John Calvin in Taylor's account of the secular turn. Sherrard expounds Calvin's Eucharistic theology, connected as it is to his Christology and his theology of worship, to argue that Calvin offers a thorough and nuanced account of materiality, albeit one that challenges "sacramental" understandings of reality by fixing attention on God's covenant promises. These promises are mediated through material reality, but find their locus in the ascended Christ. Finally, Matthew Ward (Second Fellowship) brings Smith into conversation with Robert Webber and calls for Christians in free church traditions not to follow Webber on the road to Canterbury, but rather to use the resources of traditional free church theology to develop a robust free church form of worship.

It is our hope and prayer that these essays will be useful for the church and her mission.

Rev. Matthew Mason  
*Christchurch, Salisbury, UK*  
*Article Editor*

## A REVIEW OF JAMES K. A. SMITH'S CULTURAL LITURGIES SERIES

DAVID S. MORLAN\*

Perhaps, like me, you enjoy a challenging read. All too easily those of us in the trenches of ministry get stuck reaching for the latest, greatest, trendy publication in whatever field of ministry we happen to be in. After a while the repackaged, rebranded, re-cycled ideas become so familiar that it is not worth the time to read. And worse, you become skeptical that anything fresh might be published anytime soon. So, it was with pleasure and gratitude that I read James K. A. Smith's *Cultural Liturgies* series. His writing brims with insight and scratches just where many of us feel the itch—a first-class thinker who is concerned with the day-to-day realities of practical Christian ministry. While Smith's sights are set on reforming the Christian college, his proposal covers all of us who walk into church offices each morning.

Based on findings in the fields of anthropology, neurology and philosophy, Smith makes the case that the church misunderstands critical aspects of the human person. These misunderstandings then cause the church to miss the mark in discipleship, which leave Christians unformed and vulnerable to being unwittingly seduced by counterfeit kingdoms. The heart of *Cultural Liturgies* is to address these misunderstandings and prescribe a way forward with Smith's corrected vision of the human person.

There is, however, a drawback: for all of his intellectual, theological and philosophical vigor, I am uncertain if his thesis can be supported biblically. I am principally concerned that he draws more from David Brooks,<sup>1</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty,<sup>2</sup> and Pierre Bourdieu<sup>3</sup> than from any discernible biblical framework, and I am left with the impression that even though his proposal has an Augustinian hue, and says many true things, it needs to be worked through a biblical grid *before* we take his grid and read Scripture through it. I believe this must happen if his thesis is to be received wholeheartedly as a solution to the church's ills. Indeed,

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<sup>1</sup> David Brooks, *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement* (New York: Random House, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, transl. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).



I have rarely read a series as simultaneously brilliant and exacerbating as Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom*<sup>4</sup> and *Imagining the Kingdom*.<sup>5</sup> I have read both volumes twice, interacted with Smith personally, and as I write this review I am still conflicted about his fundamental claim. I have had the impression that his thesis would lead the church astray and I have had the sense that his proposal is exactly what the church needs if it is to fulfill its fundamental mission. Such is the nature of his work, which has all the markings of coming from a mind of a luminary.<sup>6</sup>

To begin this review, I will start with a basic summary of Smith's overall project and reflect on some of the practical implications. Next, I will highlight two methodological concerns that emerged in reading this series. The remainder of the review will focus on four aspects of his thesis that I believe need to be challenged: anthropology, evangelism, Jesus and religious forms, and the *Missio Dei*.

## 1. OVERVIEW

In both *DTK* and *ITK* Smith makes a highly intellectual case that the church should quit aiming for the intellect in discipleship. Instead of focusing on precepts and concepts and ideas, the church must target the "guts" instead (*DTK*, 57). He argues that the center of gravity in the human person is much lower than the mind; it is in the bowels. He pleads that the church must reclaim the erotic and recover our sensual roots.<sup>7</sup> The individual is won or lost in the lower pre-cognitive emotional center of the person, and, more importantly, the world *already* knows this. If the church does not recover its ability to instill a pre-cognitive "know how" in its disciples, then the world's "liturgies" will be what forms a Christian.

<sup>4</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* [Volume 1 of Cultural Liturgies] (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). Henceforth cited as *DTK*.

<sup>5</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* [Volume 2 of Cultural Liturgies] (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013). Henceforth cited as *ITK*.

<sup>6</sup> I fully acknowledge that much of my caution comes of my lack of understanding. I have never been an early adopter and I'm a methodical (slow!) learner. However, I can say with a clear conscience that any pastor-theologian that hopes to do discipleship in the twenty-first century would benefit greatly from reading Smith and taking time to reflect on the implications of his thesis.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. his extensive sidebar "Why Victoria's in on the Secret: Picturing Discipleship at the Moulin Rouge" (*DTK*, 75-79). In it he makes the case that the marketing industry understands humans better than the church. He says, "I suggest that, on one level, Victoria's Secret is right just where the church has been wrong. More specifically, I think we should first recognize and admit that the marketing industry—which promises an erotically charged transcendence through media that connects to our heart and imagination—is operating with a better, more creational, more incarnational, more holistic anthropology than much of the (evangelical) church...What if we didn't see passion and desire as such as the problem, but rather sought to redirect it? What if we honored what the marketing industry has got right—that we are creatures primarily of love and desire—and then responded in kind with counter-measures that focus on our passions, not primarily on our thoughts or beliefs (*DTK*, 76-77). Cf. also his chapter "Erotic Comprehension" (*ITK*, 31-73).

When the battle for our love is fought between the mind and the body, the body gets to the heart faster. Hence, if the church continues with a vision of discipleship that focuses mostly on the mind it will produce unformed, top-heavy, and vulnerable Christians. Even if these disciples are taught all the “answers” and know all the pertinent “doctrines,” the common practices of going the mall, going to the coffee shop, attending university, and going to football games will be what actually shapes a person’s vision of the kingdom. Cultural forces like these function as a sort of liturgy and direct what we actually worship. The world offers embodied practices that shape our desires and provide a compelling vision of what the good life is. Furthermore, it shows us a clear path to attain it.

Perhaps Smith’s most powerful illustration of cultural liturgy is his description of the typical suburban shopping mall. He leads the reader through an experience of the mall and shows it to be a place *not* to buy things as much as it is a functional temple. The mall is not a place that offers us clothing to meet basic needs; rather it is a place that tells a story of what is wrong with us. It tells us that if we are fat, ugly, or uncool, we are unacceptable in the world and hence broken. It also offers a kind of redemption; if we buy the products they offer then we can become skinny, pretty, and hip. The mall offers—only to those willing to pay the price—a kind of Shalom. As Smith says, “I am broken therefore I shop” (*DTK*, 96).

Seeing the mall as a liturgical and pedagogical institution helps us to see what is at stake in its practices; at the same time, and for just this reason, this phenomenology of the mall’s liturgy points out the limits of a worldview approach. It is hard to think of the mall in terms of worldview, as a place where ideas are proffered (quite the opposite!); but if we look at it from the perspective of love and practice, we become attentive to what’s at stake and begin to notice things we hadn’t seen before (*DTK*, 23).

After establishing that point, Smith then goes on to argue that humans cannot help experiencing the mall in this liturgical way. Part of his proposal is that the human person cannot just exist as a stationary being, but rather is confined to a future orientation in which it is always heading towards some ideal picture of the future (*DTK*, 47-48).

What does the human being aim at? We are pre-loaded with a “kingdom” orientation in which we have a picture of the “good life” that actually directs our decisions in life. Smith explains it this way, “Our ultimate love is oriented by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and that picture then governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions” (*DTK*, 53). He elaborates further:

It is important to emphasize that this is a *picture*. This is why I have emphasized that we are fundamentally noncognitive, affective creatures. The *telos* to which our love is aimed is not a list of ideas or propositions or doctrines; it is not a list of abstract, disembodied concepts or values. Rather, the reason that this vision of the good life moves us is because it is more affective, sensible, even aesthetic picture of what the good life looks like. A vision of the good life captures our hearts and imaginations not by providing a set of rules

or ideas, but by painting a picture of what it looks like for us to flourish and live well (*DTK*, 53).

If we are non-cognitive creatures, whose orientation in the world is always “aiming at” a vision of the good life, how is that vision of the good life shaped? Here, Smith introduces the importance of practice. “Good habits, for instance, are ‘virtues’, whereas bad habits are ‘vices’. These habits constitute a kind of ‘second nature’: while they are learned (and thus not simply biological instincts), they can become so intricately woven into the fiber of our being that they function as if they were natural or biological” (*DTK*, 56).

Once we have a number of these habits in place, they work together towards shaping the “end” of our human endeavors. “Our habits thus constitute the *fulcrum* of our desire: they are the hinge that ‘turns’ our heart, our love, such that it is predisposed to be aimed in certain directions. For the most part this takes place under the radar, so to speak” (*DTK*, 56). Hence, in order to shape the actual direction of one’s life one must have certain practices in place that will eventually teach the non-cognitive self to desire the right things. Therefore, “Our worldview is more a matter of the imagination than the intellect, and the imagination runs off the fuel of images that are channeled by the senses ... Hence, it should be no surprise that the way to our hearts is our stomach; or, if not specifically our stomachs, the way to our hearts is through our bodies” (*DTK*, 57–58).

What, then, is the church to do? How could the church match the visceral experience offered by the world? Can she provide an embodied experience that seeps into the bones? To these questions, Smith gives a resounding yes. The church needs only to look at her own worship practices and “double down” on these embodied exercises as a way to counteract secular rituals. The church does not need to look hard for innovative practices; she is filled with liturgies of the past that are jam-packed with embodied experiences. And here the church can offer an alternative way of being that is as visceral as the worldly alternates. It is time she begin to discharge her ancient “countermeasures” in response to the embedded cultural liturgies of today. The end of *DTK* (155–214) gives a beautiful description of what is really going on in the normal liturgy of a church service. Each step of the way, all aspects of the liturgy counteract the secular liturgies of the mall, the university, and other institutions.

Smith’s project reminds us that, like it or not, we are indeed shaped by what we do. We humans are *not* just thinkers. We are lovers and our habits have a formative impact on what we love. Of course our minds are important too (I will get to that below), but for Christians who desire to grow, the key is likely *not* to just read more books or only to refine their “worldview,” but rather to engage in regular embodied patterns of worship that will over time shape their intuitive know how in the world and will sharpen the picture of the kingdom of God to which their whole lives will be directed. In this way, we pastor-theologians are called to be not simply personal resources centers, but, rather, practitioners who summon disciples into a pattern of life so that the gospel bleeds into their whole selves—bodies and all.

At Fellowship Denver Church where I serve as teaching pastor, Smith's thesis has helped to refine our small groups ministry. In particular, it helped to galvanize our decision to move our small groups away from being merely "study-centered" meetings to being a more holistic experience in which eating together and "life together" is understood to be as vital for discipleship as is our formalized times of study. Of course, no change is possible without the Word; the Bible is the necessary starting point and the Holy Spirit's use of the Word is the only power strong enough for the transformation described in Romans 12:2. But even for this to have its full effect we have observed it must be done in the context of a communal liturgy of regular practices.

On a personal level, Smith's work has helped highlight the liturgical nature of my own humanity and led me to ask uncomfortable questions about how what I do on a regular basis shapes what I love. The need I feel to check my iPhone constantly or visit Facebook is not just something I do; with every regular visit my heart is being influenced by the powers of social media and drawn towards a counterfeit kingdom.<sup>8</sup> For that insight, I am profoundly thankful to Smith.

However, Smith's project is not without problems and some of them are serious enough that the remaining portion of this short essay is dedicated to highlight them. I do this not to be overly critical but because the overall power of Smith's project is likely to overshadow cracks in the foundation.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Much to my surprise, liturgy is now trendy. There is something of a liturgical movement in evangelicalism thanks, at least in part, to Smith's work. Church plants across the United States of both "high" and "low" traditions are weaving various forms of liturgy in creative expressions. And, in an ironic twist, the most uncool place to be is in a suburban mall. There is a broader social trend in which Christians and non-Christians alike are moving away from the suburban social experiment and looking elsewhere for meaning. It is precisely because Smith's argument—and his extensive reliance on secular thinkers—seems to be on the forefront of a broader societal movement that we must not be uncritical in our reception of it.

For all of his insight, in the course of reading, two methodological issues caught my attention. First, Smith's overall approach was to make something that is by nature extremely difficult to define—pre-cognition—

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<sup>8</sup> "Consider, for example, the pervasive role that certain technologies now play in everyday life of a middle-class North American. Every technology is attended by a mode of bodily practice. So even if the computer is primarily an information processor, it can never completely reduce us to just 'thinking things' because it requires some mode of bodily interface: whether we're hunched over a desk, glued to a screen; looking downward at a smartphone, our attention directed away from others at the table; or curled up on a couch touching a tablet screen, in every case there are bodily comportments that each sort of device invites and demands. Apple has long understood the nature of this interface...The technology affords and invites rituals of interaction" (*ITK*, 142).

and then to use conclusions from that to push the church to make decisions about some of its basic practices—including the role of and aim of teaching towards cognition itself—which I would argue are very clearly mandated in Scripture. Taking what is unclear and then using it to make decisions on what is clear is problematic. In John V. Taylor's *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*, Taylor makes the case that the realm of the Holy Spirit is actually in the pre-conscious and subconscious.<sup>9</sup> However the work of the Spirit is to move our minds and hearts from that which is utterly mysterious and unknown to that which is knowable. The Spirit directs us out of hazy and misty realms towards that which is known, namely the incarnate Word. The very notion of the incarnation of God, who up to that point was wrapped in profound mystery, was to make himself know. The Word is the direction to which the Spirit of God is always directing our pre-conscious/sub-conscious.

Second, Smith doesn't aim his argument at anyone in particular. There are no scholars or pastors or worldview advocates whose views are considered. He argues against a view that has no real representatives. This weakens the forces of his thesis because he doesn't have to interact with actual people who hold the view he opposes. Thus, he deals with generalities and stereotypes of churches, not actual people and actual churches. There are only broad descriptions of what worldviews advocates actually believe about the human person (*DTK*, 41-46), and while he mentions Alvin Plantinga and Christian Smith, he doesn't interact with them in any meaningful way. Hence, I got the sense that Smith ended up assuming the very thing he needed to prove. He takes it as fact that humans are what we love and that our willful intellectual aims are only secondary, our unseen pre-cognitive "imaginary."

With these methodological issues out of the way, I will now turn my attention to four aspects of Smith's thesis that I believe need to be closely evaluated through a biblical framework. I hope doing this will help the pastor-theologian receive Smith's work with appreciation and sobriety.

### 3. ANTHROPOLOGY

Smith suggests that the evangelical church has fallen prey to an intellectualized vision of the human person, which views humans as primarily thinkers. As such the church has overemphasized the role of the mind by placing too much weight on cognitive aspects of the person as if we were "brains on a stick." While I do not really know anyone in evangelicalism that actually has a "bobble-head" vision of the human person (*DTK*, 42), I see where his description of rationalism could be very problematic. Yet, in the crucible of ministry, this picture of humanity is quickly crushed. Anyone who has experience in pastoral counseling understands that people are not brains on a stick. Quick fix solutions do not exist and even when individuals agree that certain principles and propositions are true it takes a lot of time and holistic care to actually see lives redirected. People are complex and just "telling them the truth"

<sup>9</sup> John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1972).

and engaging in “knowledge” transfer doesn’t work to enact change. I also think that anyone who has taught for long also knows this to be true.

So, I agree totally with this basic understanding of the human person. However, Smith takes things too far—and, I’m afraid, out of the realm of a biblical framework—when he begins to call humans “animals” (*DTK*, 37). In personal dialogue with Smith, he assured me that the language of “human animal” is in step with the nomenclature common among philosophical writing. By it he simply means that we are “animated” living things in contrast with things that do not move on their own. However, even upon that explanation, I still was left with the feeling that using this term was giving away too much.

I have the impression that the common philosophical meaning of the human animal is different than the animated living creature made in God’s image. Nevertheless, Smith’s use of human animal terminology helps his thesis in many ways—we are largely controlled by pre-cognitive emotions like many other lower form animals. Indeed, his argument that many of our decisions and actions are the result of pre-cognitive automation, shaped by cultural-liturgical forces, is persuasive. However, in making that argument he downplays the part of our human experience that is not pre-cognitive. Even if we grant that part of us is only 5 percent (*DTK*, 81), that 5 percent separates us from animal kingdom. In fact, I am pretty sure we are not animals at all! According to the Genesis narrative, humans were created categorically different from animals. We named them, we were called on to govern them, and we were given God’s image and they were not. It is in that 5 percent that Adam and Eve had a choice and were held responsible for it.<sup>10</sup> If we grant that 5 percent of the human experience is not pre-cognitive, it must be said that in that percent we are moral agents with an ability to make choices *apart* from our desires.

In *Mere Christianity* C. S. Lewis reminded his readers that we all have a sense of what we ought to do which stands above our “herd instinct”.<sup>11</sup> Even when we do not do it we still have an ingrained “know how” that stands above our longings and is *distinct* from our cultural liturgies. This is what makes us humans extraordinary in the universe: we can resist the impulse and desires that control all of the other creatures with whom we share the earth. It may only be 5 percent of our experience, but it is disproportionately influential.

Since most of our human experience isn’t in this 5 percent, it is wise to broaden our vision of human shaping (discipleship) that accounts for

<sup>10</sup> There is a mediating concept between the humans-as-desirers and humans-as-thinkers that might be a pathway forward in understanding the human: humans are trusters. If we are thinkers and lovers, the bit of the human that mediates between the two is that we are trusters (this is slightly different from the “humans-as-believers” take that Smith attributes to the reformers, *DTK* 43-46). Going back to the story of Adam and Eve, if their desires led them astray and yet they “knew better”, why did they disobey? I think it was an issue of trust. “Is God’s word trustworthy or not? Did God really say this or not?” is what seems to have been streaming through Eve’s mind. And God’s expectation of Eve was not just that she would “know better” but that she would trust God even though her desires were telling her not to.

<sup>11</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan Publishers, 1952).



the 95 percent and I think Smith carves out a path to do that. However, to appeal to the 5 percent is to remind the human that he is not an animal; it is to summon the shared memory we humans have of the divine imprint that separates us from them.

There is a second aspect of Smith's anthropology that is cause for concern in regard to the relationship and relative importance of the "mind" compared to the "heart." Consider the block quote below in which Smith compares his "Augustinian" anthropology with other models:

This Augustinian model of human persons resists the rationalism and quasi-rationalism of the earlier models by shifting the center of gravity of human identity, as it were, down from the heady regions of the mind closer to the central regions of our bodies, in particular, our *kardia*—our gut or heart. The point is to emphasize that the way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around it. Like the blind men pictured in Rembrandt's sketches, for the most part we make our way in the world with hands outstretched, in an almost tactile groping with our bodies (*DTK*, 47).

Interestingly, Smith alludes to an image of "groping" in the dark. This is the same image that Paul provides for the Athenians in which they were looking for God but *without* the revelation of God. Then through Paul's description of Jesus, their groping in the dark changed. They were not meant to grope in the dark, they are meant to see clearly in the light (Acts 17:27-31).

So while it may be true that, "Discipleship and formation are less about erecting an edifice of Christian knowledge than they are a matter of developing a Christian know-how that intuitively 'understands' the world in the light of the fullness of the gospel" (*DTK*, 68), it is also true that understanding the gospel cannot be understood without clear "Christian knowledge."

Indeed, propositional truth to be first received through the mind is the way to anchor our "social imaginary" (*DTK*, 66). Conversely, the biblical witness points to the propensity of our hearts to be tainted. It is not that our minds cannot be corrupted—of course they can be—but it is in the heart that we are most easily deceived and corrupted. Eve's heart/desire led her to the forbidden fruit; "it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be *desired* to make one wise" (Gen 3:6). Jeremiah warned Israel that "The heart is deceitful *above all things*, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). Jesus reminded his disciples that our hearts corrupt our minds: "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person" (Mark 7:20-23). So while we should not ignore our desires in discipleship, it makes sense that many Christians would be cautious with elevating "desire" language over that of "heady" language. We have a long history of our desires leading us

away from God's desires. Additionally, the call for discernment among leaders in the early church was for them to *raise* their center of gravity because their desires were easily twisted. Note this dynamic in Jude 3-4: "I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into *sensuality* and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (cf. Rom 12).

Hence, it is not to be easily dismissed that the overwhelming concern in the New Testament is regarding the teaching and the role of the mind as a means of protecting the heart. For example, in Paul's personal letters to Timothy he was concerned with his teaching (2 Tim 3:10, 4:3) and warned him of the dangers of the heart. In James we see it is the heart that is easily deceived (James 1:26) and therefore he emphasizes the importance of teaching in the community (James 3:1). And it was in the very center of Jesus' instruction that his apostles were to make disciples by "teaching" them to obey all that he commanded. The word illuminates and shapes our hearts. The word protects our hearts. It has the power to redirect and reform the heart.<sup>12</sup>

It seems to me that it is not a matter of if we shift the center of gravity from the head to the heart but rather the expectation of scripture is that this shift happens whether we want it to or not. The call of the church is to utilize the unique ability of the mind to inform and enlighten the heart.

#### 4. EVANGELISM

If it is true that we are primarily liturgical creatures and that Christians and non-Christians alike are entrenched in them (for better or for worse), we need to ask how to appeal to someone to switch liturgies.

Mere invitation into the church's liturgy is not effective for many non-Christians. Relying on the centripetal force of church practice to woo in non-Christians just doesn't work because Christianity is metaphysically impossible for many outside of the church (*DTK*, 207). A space is needed for them to understand its plausibility *before* they would ever trust it with their hearts. Of course this can (and should!) happen at the same time as being welcomed into the life and rhythms of the church. But the issues of the mind have to be addressed for many non-Christians to trust their hearts with it. I believe this is the reality on the ground for many Christians; it is certainly my experience in ministry. For many non-Christians to switch liturgies they need to have a big picture of why a different liturgy is better than the one they are currently in. Switching liturgies is not automated.

In the body of Christ, helping people switch liturgies is precisely what the evangelist does and this is where the intellectualist worldview, which is a target of Smith's criticism, is most important. Worldview apologetics was never meant to be the home of the Christian life. Rather, it is a map

<sup>12</sup> Smith argues that Scripture is the primary way our desire gets "aimed" at the kingdom of God (*DTK*, 196). However Scripture itself is concerned with true and false teaching not just a re-narration of our lives.



to show why this destination is a better place to go than wherever the unbeliever currently stands.<sup>13</sup>

In biblical accounts of individuals switching liturgies we see this tension at play. The interaction between Paul and King Agrippa illustrates this. Paul assured the king that, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words” (Acts 26:25). And after Paul’s articulation of the gospel, Agrippa responded, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian? (Acts 26:28).” In this attempt to get Agrippa to switch liturgies the heady words “true,” “rational,” and “persuasion” are employed. Similarly, after Paul preached in Athens, a group of listeners neither mocked him nor did they believe him, rather they said, “we will hear you again about this” (Acts 17:32). There was more persuading to be done and it evidently worked, because “some men joined him and believed” (17:34).

The most famous story of liturgy switching is seen in Jesus’ telling of the prodigal son. First we see that the younger brother’s bodily desires guide him away from his father and to the point of utter ruin. Second, we see that he “came to his senses” and it is at this point that the narrative changed (Luke 15:17). It was when he thought through his situation in his mind (“came to his senses” is a way of saying just that) that he changed his course of action. To be sure when he was welcomed back to the father it was *not* just a mental exercise; it was a full-bodied experience filled with great clothes, delicious food, and dancing. Yet, on the whole, it was that little part of the story—“coming to his senses”—that was the transition that led to repentance and reconciliation. Coming to his senses was when the center of gravity was raised, not lowered.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. JESUS AND LITURGICAL FORMS

What would Jesus think about Smith’s thesis? How would he respond to the trend of the church towards repetition and habitual practices? I

<sup>13</sup> In Smith’s criticism of worldview/intellectualist evangelicalism, I get the impression that what we have here is a new manifestation of an age-old tension in the church: the natural conflict between a gifted teacher and a gifted evangelist. Worldview/intellectualism was not meant to be the heart of the gospel but a road map for those who have settled for another gospel. Smith’s criticism is a necessary reminder that discipleship must not remain in the mind but must seep into the bones. Smith (and deep discipleship advocates) needs worldview apologists and worldview apologists need Smith (and deep discipleship advocates). We must recall that Augustine was persuaded *first* by the logic of Ambrose’s sermons long before he could articulate insights to the human heart. We need logic/apologetics/worldview and a pathway to deep discipleship that gets at our affections. Remember the words of Paul in 1 Cor 12:21, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”

<sup>14</sup> This process is a key part of conversion and serves as a reference point to which Christians can look back as an encouragement for whatever present struggles they are going through. Paul rejoiced that the gospel, “has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, *since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth*” (Col 1:16). Also in Eph 1:13, “In him you also, *when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.*”

think answering these questions honestly is vital in our assessment. “I recognize that some might be uncomfortable with this claim, since it seems to suggest that there can be some sort of virtue in ‘going through the motions’. On this point I’m afraid I have to confess that I do indeed think this is true” (*DTK*, 167, n. 29).

I believe Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well in John 4 shows his take on forms in worship. The woman said that her people worship at Gerizim, which referred to the site and practices of their worship to God. But to her surprise Jesus refused to prescribe for her an improved *form* of worship. Jesus said, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when *neither* on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father” (John 4:21). This statement is shocking in that it is subversive to both Jewish and Samaritan forms of worship. Instead, what Jesus gives her is the non-formulaic statement, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

Instead of a form, Jesus says that worship is done in spirit—meaning that it is *not* tied to a particular place or action. But that worship is to be done in truth (that is, Jesus needs to be at the center of it, John 1:14). When Jesus talks about worship he downplays form and location and instead points us to the opposite of physical form—spirit.

There was no lack of meaningful religious forms in Jesus’ day; there was no lack of powerful stories that were woven into daily rituals and yearly rhythms in Jesus day, and yet they proved to be inadequate in helping people understand Jesus. The reason is that the human heart is more comfortable with the familiar patterns of religion than with the invasive nature of the gospel. That is, whenever the heart can put it on autopilot in a ritual it will, and, after a while, hearts drift far from the message to which the form being practiced actually points. Human hearts prefer to rely on practices instead of on God. Jesus warned against prayers that are *battologia* (vain repetitions) because our bodies can engage in an automation that causes us to drift from God.

At a certain level, I agree that the patterns of Christians worship are vital for formation so that “I ‘get’ worship in ways that will exceed what I’m ‘thinking’ about *when* I worship” (*ITK*, 173). I agree that there is a story in worship that is caught more than it is taught and that repeating it is key to doing this.<sup>15</sup> I also see how repeating the logic of the story via various religious forms can help transfer the meaning of the gospel in ways that simply explaining it cannot. However, too much reliance on religious forms to communicate the message of the gospel leads to trouble. We need not look any further than the relationship Jesus had with the religious forms of his day to discover why. Indeed, I think Smith’s chapter on the church liturgy, “Practicing (for) the Kingdom” (*DTK*, 155-214),

<sup>15</sup> In particular, the importance of re-narration of the body is a profound insight Smith makes. He highlights this principle by telling the story of the film *The Kings Speech*, which shows the physical and psychological interconnections in a person, and that a “break-through” is possible when one “re-narrates” the body (*ITK*, 66-69).

was powerful precisely because he explained it so well! It is his testimony and description that resonated with me. It was the spoken word that created a picture in my heart that touched on my desires.

## 6. *MISSIO DEI*

Smith understands the *Missio Dei* as a call to the church to provide a faithful witness for the sake of the world (*ITK*, 151-191). But that is not what the *Missio Dei* is about. Rather, the *Missio Dei* refers to the work of the Holy Spirit *outside* of the normative patterns of the church. It refers to the work of the Spirit to *break* old forms of worship and to create new ones that are inclusive to different types of people. Karl Barth, whose writings the phrase *Missio Dei* was coined to describe, explains it like this:

The continuance and victory of the cause of God, which the Christian Church is to serve with her witness, is not unconditionally linked with the forms of existence which it has had until now. Yes, the hour may strike and perhaps has already struck, when God, to our discomfiture, but to his glory and for the salvation of mankind, will put an end to this mode of existence because it lacks integrity.<sup>16</sup>

Consider the story of Cornelius in Acts 10. The Spirit comes to Peter and tells him that his form of connecting with God through his dietary restrictions is going to have to change (even though this form was in the Bible). And this change was for the purpose of including the gentile Cornelius and his household into the people of God. It was the Spirit of God who initiated the entire mission encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10:19) and the key was Peter's willingness to break an old form in order to welcome in this outsider. This is the *Missio Dei* at work.

There is a scandal of the *Missio Dei* that works against the foundations of Smith's argument. For the *Missio Dei* says that the Spirit of God is actually already at work in the institutions and movements of the secular liturgies. It says that the Spirit works ahead of the church in secular cultures and then leads the church to the people in whom the Spirit is working in those cultures (cf. Acts 9:10-19). Thus, as it relates to modern innovations of worship, I do not think Smith gives us the full account of the "mall" church and the "coffee shop" church. Perhaps these churches are mirroring cultural liturgical forms to the detriment of the church. But perhaps many of these churches are being sensitive to the Spirit's work outside of the church. Perhaps these forms are not attempts to be cool but attempts to explain the gospel in ways people can understand.<sup>17</sup>

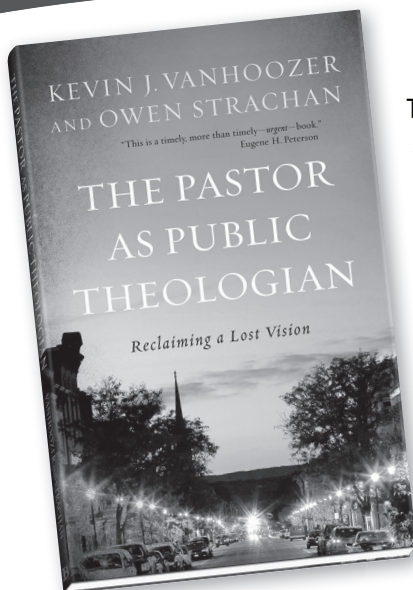
<sup>16</sup> Karl Barth, "Letter to a Pastor in the German Democratic Republic," in *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land* (New York: Association Press, 1959).

<sup>17</sup> Ironically, in the final section of *ITK*, "Redeeming Reflection," Smith describes the critical importance of *explaining* the forms of worship. This is ironic because I think this is at the heart of much of what these other low-church models are actually trying to do.

## CONCLUSION

Even though I have expressed concern in this review regarding Smith's work, I am profoundly thankful for him and his contribution to the church. I think he gets many things right, some of which are critical if the church is going to be serious about discipleship in the twenty-first century. Like many luminaries, he perhaps overplays his fundamental insight, but that ought not take away from the insight itself. We are more than minds trapped in bodies; we are whole people who engage the world as whole bodily selves. It will weaken the church if we do not lead people in discipleship with that reality in mind.

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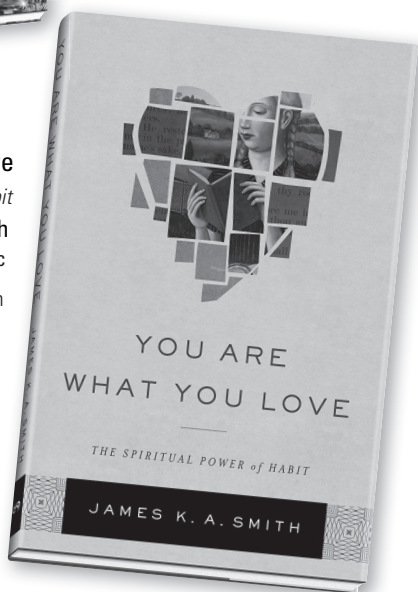
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A TALE OF TWO CALENDARS: CALENDARS,  
COMPASSION, LITURGICAL FORMATION,  
AND THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT

DANIEL J. BRENDSEL\*

The end-time judgment described by Jesus in Matthew 25 is at once memorable, troubling, and full of surprises. Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of the scene is the confusion of the righteous at the bestowal of their inheritance of the kingdom on account of their acts of compassion to the hungry, thirsty, alien, naked, sick, and imprisoned. The King identifies himself with “these brothers of mine, even the least” (v. 40), with the result that feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty is a doing unto the King. But the righteous are surprised at this. When Jesus tells them of their service to him, they ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink?” (v. 37). The righteous invite Jesus into their presence without even knowing it.

Coming to this point in the text, Martin Luther asked a crucial question: “How does it happen that the righteous do not recognize and know that they have done their works unto Christ?” According to Luther, the righteous evidently considered caring for the needy “as a matter altogether of too small significance to be so precious in the sight of God.”<sup>1</sup> But then why do it? Clearly, as their surprise at the King’s reason for bestowing their inheritance proves, they are not compassionate in the hopes of impressing God and currying his favor. Their compassion (like all true compassion) is less calculating and deliberate than that. The righteous “unconsciously serve Christ.”<sup>2</sup> We need not think that such service is a wholly unintentional accident (the righteous certainly intend to care for the needy). It is not a mere physiological reflex that responds unthinkingly to stimuli. Nevertheless, we might be justified in calling their service reflexive in another sense: their service is a kind of spiritual (i.e., Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered) reflex, a holy instinct that leans lovingly and wisely into areas of need. Authentic and mature compassion that meets others’ needs and serves Christ himself is like a virtuosic violin player who, we might say, quite intentionally improvises: she intentionally

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, “Sermon for the Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity, Matthew 25:31–46,” in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. J. N. Lenker (trans. J. N. Lenker et al.; Minneapolis: Luther Press, 1909; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 8:393.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew 13–28* (EBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 522.

makes beautifully meaningful music but *precisely because* she is not (thank God!) deliberately thinking through each successive note. Her playing is beautiful and virtuosic because it is “second nature” to her—she “plays without thinking” (though of course she has not gotten there without a great deal of “thinking” and practice). In the same way, it seems that a life of compassion poured out to meet the needs of the helpless is second nature to the righteous brothers and sisters of Matthew 25.

Bringing honor to Jesus and loving our neighbors in a way that is instinctual and reflexive, doing so less by conscious deliberation and more by “second nature,” as it were—this should be a central desire and prayer for all Christians and for the Christian church. In light of such a desire and prayer, a crucial set of questions arises: Whence comes this “second nature”? How might we pursue it? What obstacles, if any, stand in the way of our living into it? As I hope to show in what follows, these are questions that are best answered with attentiveness to the realities of cultural formation and liturgical practice. Drawing upon and interacting with the thought of James K. A. Smith (whose *Cultural Liturgies* project, in particular, has proven to be for me a major source of insight and challenge in these matters<sup>3</sup>), I would like to consider the role that the church’s liturgical practice might play in helping us become a people with compassionate and Christ-honoring reflexes and instincts. Specifically, I want to zero in on what might be one of the more foreign elements of the church’s liturgical practice—namely, observance of the church calendar<sup>4</sup>—and in so doing also offer something of an argument for the intentional appropriation of this aspect of liturgical practice in our local churches.

## I. THE CHURCH CALENDAR

Since the calendar of the Christian church is likely a bit alien in many wings of evangelicalism, it will be helpful to map out its basic shape and rhythm.<sup>5</sup> The church calendar is a rhythmic pattern of celebrations

<sup>3</sup> Two of three planned volumes have been published: *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); and *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> At least, the church calendar is more foreign to (and even looked at somewhat askance in) the low (and independent) church tradition out of which I come. However, interest in the liturgical calendar within evangelicalism (particularly in churches within the Reformed tradition) has increased in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. See, e.g., Horace T. Allen Jr., “Calendar and Lectionary in Reformed Perspective and History,” in *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, ed. L. Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003): 390–414. Smith has devoted some space to “exegeting” the liturgical calendar in *Desiring the Kingdom*, 155–59.

<sup>5</sup> The structure and content of this (and the following) section has been greatly informed by Michael Linton’s essay “Happy New Liturgical Year!” *First Things*, December 3, 2008, <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2008/12/happy-new-liturgical-year> [last accessed December 8, 2015]. For discussion of the complex historical development of the church calendar, see Allen, “Calendar and Lectionary,” 392–403; and, with a view to Orthodox practice, Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (trans. A. Moorehouse; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996). Allen notes that development of the liturgical calendar is “a process that is ongoing.” Indeed, “In principle,



(feasts) and seasons. What probably first comes to mind for most at the mention of the church calendar are celebratory days (or feast days) and observances. The most obvious and climactic are Christmas and Easter (and the days of Passion Week). A little less well known are Ascension Day and Pentecost. Additional feast days of note include Epiphany in early January, Transfiguration Day about a month later, Ash Wednesday on its heels, and Trinity Sunday the week after Pentecost. Some of these days are fixed (e.g., Christmas on Dec. 25), some are variable or moveable (e.g., Easter, always on a Sunday, but the exact date differs each year).

Perhaps less familiar are the “seasons” of the liturgical year, which link together the church’s celebrations or feast days: Advent, Christmastide (or the Twelve Days of Christmas), a series of weeks simply called Ordinary Time, Lent, Passion Week, Eastertide, and another extended block of Ordinary Time, which is sometimes called Trinity Season. Plotted visually, it might look like Figure 1.

A few things are worth noting about this schema. First, this is only a partial calendar. It could be filled in with a lot more: more feast days and saints’ days, a color scheme for the changing seasons, lectionary readings, and concrete practices of fasting and penitence and celebration that all fit into the big picture.

Second, there is diversity both locally in different parts of the globe, historically in differing eras, and among various Christian traditions on the specific details of these dates and practices and colors. Nevertheless, the basic shape of the calendar as a whole seems to be preserved throughout.<sup>6</sup>

Third and importantly, the church year is built around the climactic events of salvation history—specifically, the saving deeds of God in Jesus Christ. As Smith comments, “time here revolves around a person—Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>7</sup> The church’s calendar basically parallels or narrates the life of Christ: birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and time of filling the church with the Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

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the ‘architecture’ of calendars is always open to further developments” (“Calendar and Lectionary,” 393). Allen also offers brief but helpful comments addressing the potential criticism that the NT bears no witness to the practice of intentional calendrical ordering of time (in some circles, the NT may even be read as overtly opposing the “observing of days”).

<sup>6</sup> While the notion of a “liturgical year” is, in some respects, a kind of “fiction” (see Kathleen Hughes, “Liturgical Year: Conflict and Challenge,” in *The Church Gives Thanks and Remembers: Essays on the Liturgical Year*, ed. L.J. Johnson [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1984]: 69–86, at 70, 77–78; also Allen, “Calendar and Lectionary,” 396), and there is no such thing as *the* liturgical calendar of the church, nevertheless there is enough overlap across times and places and traditions to identify a common “something” along the lines of what we are here outlining and calling the “church/liturgical calendar.” For a similar situation with respect to the diversity of proposals for a “center,” or central themes and plotlines, for biblical theology, see my “Plots, Themes, and Responsibilities: The Search for a Center of Biblical Theology Reexamined,” *Themelios* 35 (2010): 400–412, at 407–8.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 157.

<sup>8</sup> As Allen, “Calendar and Lectionary,” 391, tells the story, the early Reformers sought to simplify a Roman calendar that “had become, by the time of the sixteenth century, incredibly ‘cluttered up’ with attention to a legion of saints and theological considerations. The Reformers’ simplification centered on the life and work of Christ, following his story from Christmas to Easter to Ascension to Pentecost (see *ibid.*, 392).



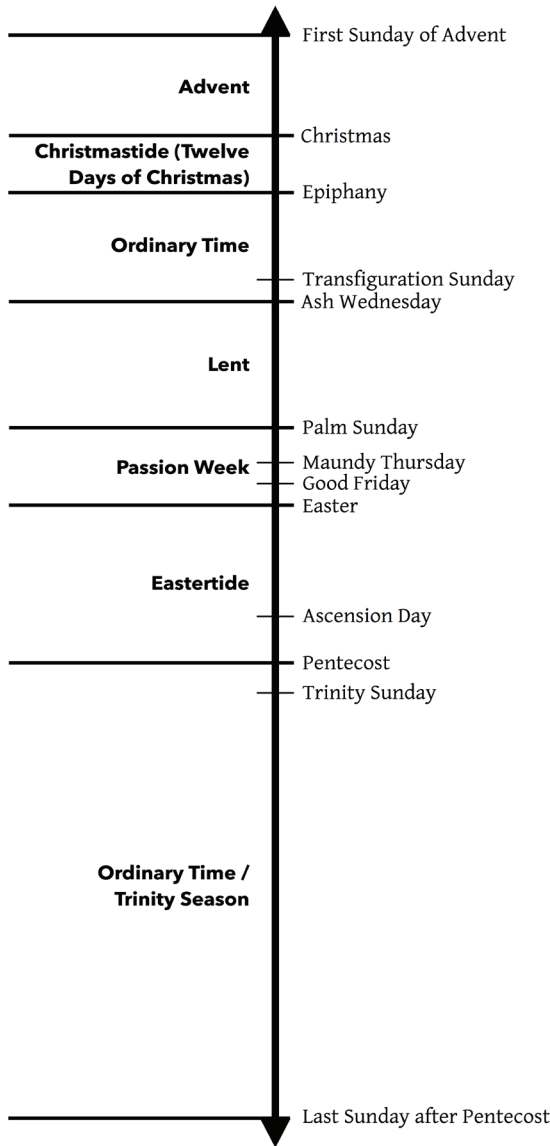


FIGURE 1. THE CHURCH CALENDAR: MAJOR HOLY DAYS AND SEASONS

Finally, the various seasons work in concert with the feast days/observances. There is a rhythm and logic. Seasons of preparation, repentance, and longing for the work of God promised (Advent, Lent) lead into feasts of joy in and thanksgiving for God's gracious deeds (Christmas, Easter),

which then flow into different seasons of intentional remembrance and celebration of the work of God accomplished (Christmastide, Eastertide). The great celebration of the full outpouring of God's trinitarian presence (Pentecost) flows into a season of living in and into the life and love of God (Ordinary Time or Trinity Season).

Hopefully, we can see that the church calendar has a meaningful flow and pattern, or better, a distinct *plotline*. It is, in fact, the plotline of Jesus' life (which is also a microcosm of, and the hermeneutical key to, the biblical plotline as a whole). As Robert Louis Wilken has commented, "Like the earliest (and later) Christian art, the liturgical year (as we now call it) had a narrative shape drawn from the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels. Through ritual it imprinted the biblical narrative on the minds and hearts of the faithful, not simply as a matter of private devotion but as a fully public act setting the rhythm of communal life."<sup>9</sup>

It is important, at this point, to underline that when Wilken speaks of the biblical narrative being "imprinted ... on the minds and hearts of the faithful" in the very rhythms and rituals called forth by the church calendar, he does not mean only that the church calendar serves as a teaching aid for better understanding of doctrines or as so much illustrative material for the "remembrance" of past historical events (though those are inevitably some of its functions). He means also that the church calendar is a way of ordering *public* time and is a manifestation of the church's distinct culture with its "unique sense of *temporality*."<sup>10</sup> It is less a prompt for thinking about things "behind" our temporal experience (e.g., "truths," or past events), and more a way of inhabiting time, of naming our experience of time as *the story of God's mighty saving deeds in Christ*, and of covenantally taking up and living into our part in that story.<sup>11</sup>

In this light, the church calendar is not just one among several different possible audio-visual aids for teaching the "content" of a story.<sup>12</sup> Rather, it is a kind of *lived* story—a story about God's work in Jesus Christ, to be sure, but a story also of which we are, and are being made, a part. How might this story be ours? What are our roles in this calendrical drama? We may say that ours is the part of preparing for (esp. through repentance and

<sup>9</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, "The Church as Culture," *First Things* 142 (April 2004): 31–36, at 34.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 156, emphasis original.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Leithart puts the matter well: "the church calendar isn't just a teaching device. It places us in the time of Jesus, and works the life and times of Jesus into us" ("Lord of Time," *Epistula*, April 2015, [http://resource2.veritaspress.com/epistula/0415/Feature\\_Article.html](http://resource2.veritaspress.com/epistula/0415/Feature_Article.html) [last accessed May 3, 2015]; thanks to Lindsey Brigham for pointing me to this essay). The church's calendar functions in the same way as Israel's feasts, which "solemnized a perpetual, present participation in the redemptive events of the past and their fulfillment in the future" (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 781, emphasis added).

<sup>12</sup> See Alexander Schmemmann's criticism of modern Christianity's reduction of the "Christian year" to mere "liturgical 'illustration' of certain theological affirmations," which "are in no way related to the real time or of consequence to it" (*For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* [2nd rev. and exp. ed.; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973], 52).

fasting), believing in, and worshipfully remembering and celebrating and giving thanks for God's gracious deeds in Christ. We could also say that the story lived or enacted in the church calendar is one of God coming to dwell among us—first in the Incarnation (foreshadowing the Second Coming), and second in the giving of the Spirit (as the down payment of our full inheritance). Our part in this story is to long for his coming, to celebrate the initial manifestations of it, to seek to live more fully in and into the presence of our Triune God, and to pray for fuller realizations of it. There is a rhythm in this story of promise and fulfillment, of longing and being satisfied, of God's gracious work for us and of our grateful receiving of and resting in and responding to it.

In such a story, to return to our initial concerns, care and compassion for those in need around us "makes sense" and is regularly practiced in the rhythm of God's gracious work and our grateful response. Our extending mercy to others "makes sense" and "fits" or is called for in this story since

1. it is a story that celebrates and revels in God's mercy to us, thereby reminding us to "be merciful as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36);
2. thanksgiving and rejoicing in God's abundance toward us, which are regular activities in this enacted story, have the remarkable capacity to fuel liberality toward others (see, e.g., 2 Cor 8:1–4);<sup>13</sup> and
3. the practices of fasting and humility, which the story repeatedly calls for, are, in part, for the sake of identifying with the humble and needy all around us (see Isa 58).

As Ellen Charry observes, while "theologians have by and large assumed that knowing God creates the proper conditions for loving God rather than the reverse," nevertheless "concomitant with dedication to knowing God, the church has stressed participation in Christian community and practices as a way not only of reinforcing the knowledge of God but also of shaping the mind so that knowledge of the love of God *fits into a life prepared to interpret it properly*."<sup>14</sup> A life habituated to the church calendar is prepared and ordered to interpret properly the grace of God, and thus equipped with knowledge of fitting responses to that grace, including the response of compassion. But more than that, space

<sup>13</sup> This is also part of the logic of the celebration of the Eucharist (from the Greek *eucharistia* [= thanksgiving]), which historically has been tied to the giving of alms (on which, see, e.g., Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 153–159, esp. 155, 157–58; in my church, we collect donations for the church Benevolence Fund on Communion Sundays). In much early Christian worship, the Eucharistic meal was expressly intended as a means of providing food for the poor (see Christopher N. Hays, "By Almsgiving and Faith Sins Are Purged? The Theological Underpinnings of Early Christian Care for the Poor," in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, ed. B. W. Longenecker and K. D. Liebengood [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 260–80, at 262–63; note also that concern for the poor is at the center of Paul's criticism of the Corinthian celebration of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:17–34).

<sup>14</sup> Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28, emphasis added.

is also opened up practically for the exercise of mercy and compassion throughout the course of the year. For example, in the season of Lent prayer and fasting partner with almsgiving;<sup>15</sup> in the Ordinary Time after Pentecost, which makes up the bulk of the church calendar, the kind of life lived by the early Christians after the first Christian Pentecost (see Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–35) is called for and practically pursued.

Perhaps a concrete illustration may be helpful. In “Does Community Have a Value?,” Wendell Berry tells the story of a subsistence farming community in Port Royal, Kentucky, in the late 1930s.<sup>16</sup> The community was made up of nine households, “all more or less within walking distance.” Each household had, of course, its own rhythms and responsibilities, “but all the big jobs they did together: housecleaning, wallpapering, quilting, canning, cooking for field crews.” In the fields, there was a similar mutuality in the “big jobs,” and “when they worked together, they ate together.” When one person was injured or ill, others would gather around him or her to help in their distress, knowing that the good of the whole was bound up with the good of the individual. Local knowledge and wisdom, practical skills, and ways of doing and living in response to the place were passed on from older to younger. Indeed, the place was “central to its own interest and its own economy,” so much so that “the community and its economy were almost identical.” Berry makes a crucial observation about the Port Royal community:

Even so cursory a description of one of the old local subsistence economies . . . reveals that its economic assets were to a considerable extent intangible: culture-borne knowledge, attitudes, and skills; family and community coherence; family and community labor; and cultural or religious principles such as respect for gifts (natural or divine), humility, fidelity, charity, and neighborliness. . . . The wonderful fact, then, is that those emotional and spiritual values that are now so inconsequentially associated with the idea of community were economic assets in the old communities, and they produced economic results.<sup>17</sup>

What is striking about the picture Berry paints is that “intangible” values and virtues are woven into the fabric of Port Royal economy and material culture. Respect for gifts (and, one supposes, thanksgiving), humility, fidelity, and so on were not simply private “values” arbitrarily added as epiphenomena onto a self-standing and self-sufficient public culture. They “fit” with the concrete practices of the public culture, were

<sup>15</sup> On which, see Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year: Its History and Its Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy* (trans. M. J. O’Connell; New York: Pueblo, 1981), 93; also Robert E. Webber, *Ancient–Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 113–15.

<sup>16</sup> In Wendell Berry, *Home Economics* (New York: Northpoint, 1987), 179–92. Berry’s “A Jonquil for Mary Penn” is a kind of short-story equivalent to this essay (in *Fidelity: Five Stories* [New York: Pantheon, 1992], 61–81).

<sup>17</sup> Berry, “Does Community Have a Value?,” 187. For the quotations in the preceding paragraph, see 180, 180–81, 181, 184.

part of the logic of their life together and economy. Similarly, I suggest that a virtue like compassion “fits” in the culture of which observance of the church calendar is a part. Here I have in mind important recent emphases not simply on the church *and* culture, but on the church *as* culture.<sup>18</sup> The church calendar is important because it is a part of the culture which is the church. Compassion is consistent with the internal logic of such a culture with its unique ordering of time, and within such a culture practical space is opened up for the pursuit and practice of mercy—which means that it is much easier to be compassionate within such a culture than without it.

All of this is to assert with James K. A. Smith that liturgical practice, such as observance of the church calendar, is a matter of *formation* and part of prayerfully seeking *sanctification*. The calendar and the practices it calls for “carry their own understanding that is implicit within them,”<sup>19</sup> or, as I have been articulating the issue, they embody a particular kind of story. By living into or enacting that story, the shape and rhythm of the story borne in liturgical practice becomes the shape and rhythm of the church’s lived experience in time and space. Just as importantly, we submit our imaginations to formation according to the “way of construing the world”<sup>20</sup> that is embedded in the practices of observing the church calendar.<sup>21</sup> Liturgical practice is part of being habituated to that “way of construing the world” so that it might become, in a sense, “automated.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Wilken, “The Church as Culture,” 31–36; Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon, 2003), passim; and Ken Myers, *All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture* (repr. with a new introduction; Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), v–xx.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 166. See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 3, who speaks of “the theology implicit and explicit” in the church’s liturgy (he also provides helpful discussion on the definition of “Christian liturgy”; see 3–9). Importantly, liturgical practice does not simply cause us to *think about* the implicit and explicit theology (as though liturgy were a creative and “artistic” way of transmitting doctrine to minds) but also imprints a way of “imagining” the world on the lives of the worshipers by enacting that imaginative vision (cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 166–67).

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 167.

<sup>21</sup> However, to say it this way sounds too voluntaristic, as if we are always and only *consciously and deliberately deciding* to submit ourselves to such formation. Sometimes (perhaps most often) that is not the case.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 167. In this same context, Smith adds in a footnote that what he is suggesting is “in the ballpark of the principle of *ex opere operato*” (ibid., 167, n. 29). This will surely make many uncomfortable (which Smith expressly acknowledges), but it is important to ask what precisely is the “work” that is “worked.” What Smith seems to assert is “worked” (or formed) by liturgical practice is a “way of construing the world,” a kind of imaginative vision of the whole. Tellingly, he speaks of this forming, this “implanting of the gospel” in the imagination, as “not ideal” *in itself* (ibid.). It seems that Smith has in mind, therefore, not a formation automatically unto conversion/sanctification, but some other kind of formation. It is a formation that is only a (potential) part of sanctification, not a formation that just is sanctification, not a formation that is “salvific” (in the narrow sense of the mechanism whereby at some specific time individuals “get saved,” receive “saving grace,” secure their eternal destiny). But it is a crucial formation nonetheless, largely because it has to do with the embodied human wholes we are created as. Thus, Smith goes on to

We are thus prepped and primed and increasingly practiced in seeing, naming, and even receiving reality in certain ways. Of course time is the gift of God, who is the chief actor in the story. Of course at the center of time—indeed, transforming the time of the old age into the time of the new—is the death of Christ and his resurrection on Easter morning. Of course responding to this gracious work of God, and living into the new creation inaugurated in Jesus' resurrection, involves a life of loving God *and* our neighbor. Of course the life of faith is the life of thanksgiving, and of course thanksgiving pairs with mercy toward those in need.

So while the church calendar does not *make* us virtuous or *create* virtue in us, neither is the calendar disconnected from virtue. We might say that virtue flows forth most freely from ordered forms, and the church calendar is an attempt to "impress" upon our being-in-time such ordered forms.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the ordering of our lives by the church calendar is a way of prayerfully seeking the virtue that tends to inhabit, or is bound up with, such order. The church calendar involves a "way of construing the world" in which love for God, compassion toward neighbor, and still other virtues "fit" and "make sense" and are even "natural." We take up the calendar with the aim and prayer that we might begin to imagine and construe the actual world we inhabit in space and time *as* the world of the gospel story (which it is), and that we might live in ways that flow "naturally" from such construing. Liturgical practice in the form of living within the rhythms and patterns of the church calendar is, I submit, a crucial component in the pursuit of an instinctual, reflexive compassion, a life of compassion that comes "by second nature." But there is more to be said, and it might be instructive, at this point, to contrast this basic outline of the church calendar with the calendar that most of us are likely more used to: the everyday calendar of modern American society.

## II. THE MODERN AMERICAN CALENDAR

Like the church calendar, our larger society's calendar has special celebratory days, or "holy days" (= holidays), and saints' days. Some of the most universally observed are Christmas (et al.), New Year's Day, and Independence Day. We should also add Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day. Another important one culturally, in terms of attention to it and ordering our lives around it,

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state that "what's going on in worship has relevance not just for my religious or spiritual life but also for my *human* life" (ibid., 169, emphasis original). In this light, we might say that what gets "worked" through liturgical practice is not only an ordered construal of the world but also ordered forms of human living. This work of formation leaves an imprint, an "afterimage," on one's whole person. For those affirming the faith, an "afterimage" remains to order aright their lives under their primary allegiance to and love for and faith in Jesus; for those renouncing the faith, the "afterimage" remains to haunt (Smith cites Richard Blake's work on Catholic filmmakers [the term "afterimage" is Blake's; see ibid., 167, n. 29]; Graham Greene's novels also come readily to mind).

<sup>23</sup> As C. S. Lewis has commented, "though 'like is not the same', it is better than unlike. Imitation may pass into initiation" ("Christianity and Culture," in *The Seeing Eye and Other Selected Essays from Christian Reflections*, ed. W. Hooper [New York: Ballantine, 1986]: 15–48, at 31).

is Super Bowl Sunday.<sup>24</sup> (Other “holy days” and “saints’ days” could be added [e.g., Father’s Day,<sup>25</sup> Veteran’s Day, MLK Day].) Some of these celebratory days are fixed (e.g., Independence Day on July 4), and some are variable (e.g., Mother’s Day, always on a Sunday).

These special days in our national-societal life, like the feast days of the church calendar, punctuate a series of what can be called “seasons.” The easiest to identify is the season stretching nowadays from Halloween to New Year’s Day—namely, the Holidays. What follows is a kind of recuperative (penitential) season (think New Year’s resolutions), which, for reasons that will become evident presently, we may call J-Term.<sup>26</sup> This season, about a month long, concludes symbolically with a major feast day: Super Bowl Sunday. The season that Super Bowl Sunday flows into is generally referred to as the School Year,<sup>27</sup> which lasts until Mother’s Day/Memorial Day (the two days together signaling a transition between seasons), and which has a parallel season from Labor Day to Christmas (thus overlapping with the Holidays). The season from Mother’s Day/Memorial Day to Labor Day, with a parallel brief period from Christmas to New Year’s Day, could be named Break (Summer and Winter, respectively). The modern American calendar can be plotted visually as in Figure 2.

It is clear that the modern American calendar has many formal similarities to the church calendar. Both mark celebratory days and feasts. Both provide a pattern of seasons. And, importantly, both have a plotline—that is, they both tell a story.<sup>28</sup> The church calendar is a story about God. It is the lived remembrance and celebration of God’s saving deeds in Jesus. About whom or what is the story of the American calendar, which I have roughly filled in?

<sup>24</sup> Linton, “Happy New Liturgical Year!,” highlights Super Bowl Sunday as “the most important occasion between New Year’s and the Fourth of July—actually, it’s more important than the Fourth of July.”

<sup>25</sup> It could be argued that Father’s Day is just as important in the modern American calendar as Mother’s Day. I have chosen to highlight Mother’s Day here for a few reasons, the most important of which is that, as we will see below, Mother’s Day plays an important role in the rhythm of the overall calendar (that of marking a change of “season”), a role that is not paralleled by Father’s Day.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Linton, “Happy New Liturgical Year!”

<sup>27</sup> Some friends of mine who have recently purchased a house tell me that the real estate industry deliberately marks the beginning of its “season” as the Monday following Super Bowl Sunday.

<sup>28</sup> Talking specifically about the state, civil society, and globalization as “ways of imagining space and time,” William Cavanaugh notes that “Far from merely ‘secular’ institutions and processes, these ways of imagining organize bodies around stories of human nature and human destiny which have deep theological analogues” (*Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002], 2).



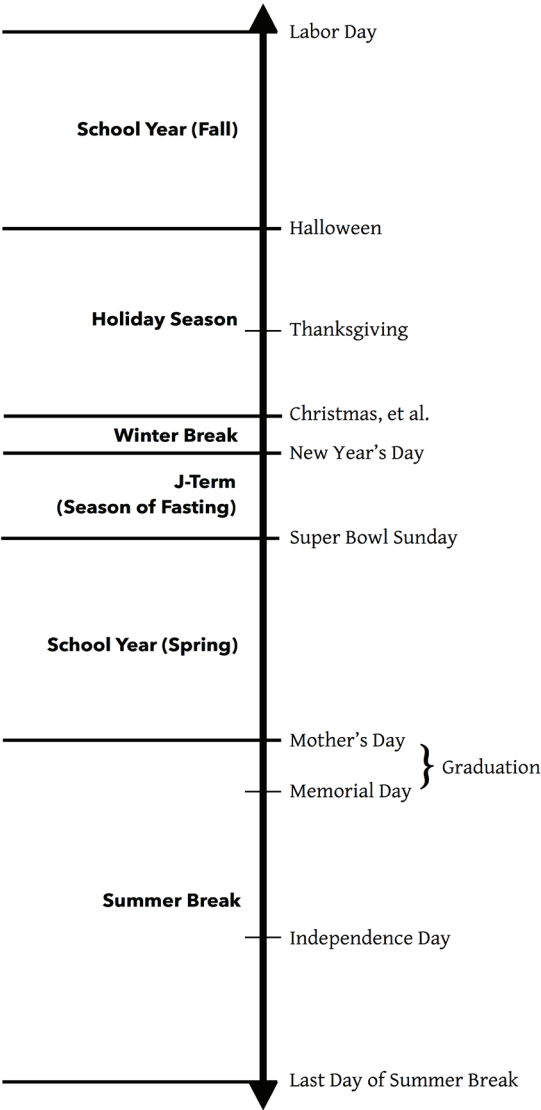


FIGURE 2. THE MODERN AMERICAN CALENDAR:  
MAJOR HOLY(I) DAYS AND SEASONS

To ask this question is to enter into the realm of phenomenology. There is no master interpretive key that gives us complete certainty about “what’s really going on” in our experience of the modern American calendar. In seeking to describe what the calendar might mean, what we



say should sound more like proposals and suggestions than authoritative pronouncements. Do you see here what I am seeing? Does this make “sense” of our collective experience of living in the rhythms and patterns of the American calendar? Is it “satisfying”?<sup>29</sup> Do we find this or that way of describing the “narrative logic” of the calendar compelling, illuminating of our experience, so that we say, “Yes, of course, that’s right!” even if it is a little surprising?<sup>30</sup> Thus, though I believe the following musings about the modern American calendar are on target, nevertheless they are still best read as interrogatives.

It seems to me that the story implicit in our contemporary calendar is, first, largely about money and the amusements it buys. These are key themes (even the gods) in this story. The special days are increasingly times to spend (or make) money (gifts, decor, consumer foods). Consider, for example, how Halloween has become increasingly important culturally, both as an opportunity to make and spend money (on costumes, candy, parties) and as a signal that the most important shopping season is beginning. And what are Summer and Winter Break for, if not spending cash on big vacations? The modern American calendar is not only about money, but it is, in my opinion, hard to deny that our calendar—its explicit themes and the rhythms and pursuits it calls forth—revolves around the making and spending of money.<sup>31</sup>

A second key feature in this story is school. The rhythms and practices of school dominate the modern American calendar, so much that we find ourselves having regularly to distinguish between the “school year” and the “calendar year” in conversation and planning. This is why I place Labor Day at the beginning of the calendar in Figure 2 above. Functionally for all of us, whether we are students or have “real jobs,”

<sup>29</sup> Here I am appropriating one of Richard Hays’s “tests” (namely, the test of “satisfaction”) for the discerning of literary echoes in texts, which for Hays is “finally the most important test” (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 31–32). In fact, phenomenological description of activities and artifacts is not unlike the work of textual interpretation, which is why Kevin Vanhoozer speaks of the need to read/exegete/interpret the “cultural texts” we encounter every day (see “What Is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians Should Read Culture,” in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. K. J. Vanhoozer, C. A. Anderson, and M. J. Sleasman [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007]: 15–60).

<sup>30</sup> The phrase is part of Matt Jenson’s parenthetical explanation of phenomenology; see *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on homo incurvatus in se* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 185, n. 194. Crucial to hearing Smith’s proposals aright is understanding his phenomenological approach. For Smith, the task of phenomenology “is nuanced *description* in the face of ‘what gives,’ and its warrant is the extent to which such descriptions are compelling on the basis of our prephilosophical experience” (*Imagining the Kingdom*, 42, n. 19, emphasis original). Smith’s description of Charles Taylor’s “phenomenological mode” in *How (Not) to Be Secular* is equally a description of his own work on cultural liturgies: “His claim is forthright, but qualified,” appealing “to a *sense*: this is an analysis you’ll find convincing if his phenomenology has just named something that’s been haunting you. If not, then Taylor doesn’t have any ‘proof’ to offer you” (*How [Not] to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 69, emphasis original).

<sup>31</sup> Michael Linton is especially emphatic that our society celebrates money through our calendar observance (see “Happy Liturgical New Year!”).

the year really begins in September (or mid-August).<sup>32</sup> That is when we speak of things getting started. June and July are a breather; September is when we roll up our sleeves and get to work (nowhere, outside of actual schools, is this more evident than in a church!). The story that we live in the modern calendar is a story that reinforces the rhythms and patterns of school. In such a story, we, as individual learners, are the chief actors. Ambition is virtue and our purpose is success: passing exams, making the grade, getting into a good school, landing a good job to make good money, saving up for “great” vacations (briefer, more expensive winter/summer breaks), securing a good and comfortable retirement. The story is one of hard work, passing “tests,” achievement, and attaining much earned times of amusement. The story’s title is “The American Dream.”<sup>33</sup>

The story told by and enacted through the modern American calendar underlines the glory and power of money, places us as students/workers in the role of chief protagonist, and posits for us roles and pursuits involving productivity, achievement, getting the grade/job, and relaxing and purchasing amusement as individuals or family units. Time itself is construed less as a gift to be received with thanksgiving and more as a commodity to “use” in our press toward achievement and acquisition. In this story, what practical space is opened up for compassion toward the helpless? Where might mercy “fit” in this story? Does it even “fit” at all? Indeed, where acquisitiveness reigns, how can gratitude (arguably one of the main well-springs of authentic compassion) thrive? If my read of the modern American calendar is anywhere near the mark, then there is at least a bit of dissonance between living within the rhythms called forth by this calendar and pursuing and practicing compassion. Embodying and enacting the story of the modern American calendar habituates us to see, name, and receive reality in ways that differ significantly from the habituation to be had via the church calendar.

### III. NORMALIZING WORLDLINESS

If left unchecked, I suggest that the modern American calendar contributes to the formation of our ways of construing reality, and more broadly of our ways of being in the world, that are not only different from but also, in certain crucial respects, *contrary* to the formation provided through the church calendar. That is to say, the critique of the modern American calendar being here offered is not simply that it is formative, but also that in its whole configuration it is disordered and therefore plays a role in disordered formation. It forms toward the wrong ends—namely, the service of idols. It contributes to a *malformation*, a “*mis*-formation

<sup>32</sup> See also Hughes, “Liturgical Year,” 78.

<sup>33</sup> It is also worth pointing out that the story told and lived in the modern American calendar also clearly celebrates the blood and sacrifice of various people who have made possible both our ability to go to school and our freedom to make and spend money. Chief among these individuals are our family members (esp. parents), and our soldiers and national forefathers who fought and served and died for our freedoms (note, e.g., Independence Day, Memorial Day). This frequently observed motif in the modern American calendar is (perhaps) more tangential to our concerns about cultivating compassion and mercy.

of our desires—aiming our heart away from the Creator to some aspect of the creation as if it were God.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, like the church calendar, the modern American calendar is a matter of the *liturgical* ordering of our lives, a matter of embodied worship and seeking and serving ultimate ends (idols) such as money, self, efficiency, comfort, and success. To observe the modern American calendar is to engage in liturgical (worshipful) practice, a practice that will “teach’ us to love something very different from the kingdom of God.”<sup>35</sup>

This is not to say that every individual component of the modern American calendar is fully and inescapably contrary to Christian commitment. It is conceivable that some elements of this calendar are more or less benign, and some may even be capable of standing alongside the story lived out through the church calendar without dissonance. Conflict and tension with the gospel are not the only viable categories in which to set various individual parts of the modern American calendar.<sup>36</sup> This is in part because the liturgical significance of the modern American calendar is less the mere sum of each individual element, and more something that emerges from the configuration or matrix as a whole of which each individual element is a part.<sup>37</sup> There is nothing wrong, in itself, with eating meat sacrificed to idols (see 1 Cor 8:4–8), but to do so within the larger configuration of a pagan temple feast must be named idolatry and sharing in demons (see 1 Cor 10:14–22). The problem for Christians is less located in any specific scene(s) in the story enacted through the modern American calendar, and more in the narrative shape and logic of the whole, some key features of which I have tried to outline.

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider how remarkable it is that we are able with relative *ease* to identify the makeup of the modern American calendar. In a certain respect, there is no such thing as the “modern American calendar.” Nothing actually goes by that name in our everyday experience (more on this below). The “modern American calendar” is a kind of fiction. And yet, when pressed, we have no problem identifying what it consists of. When I have taught on such matters

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88, emphasis original.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88.

<sup>36</sup> As Kathleen Hughes, “Liturgical Year,” 69, rightly notes, of equal importance to consider are the possibilities of “crisis, cooperation, conundrum, convergence, communion, collision, consonance, claim, connection, etc.” While Hughes’s basic point is appropriate, nevertheless she operates within a Niebuhrian “transformational” framework for understanding “Christ and culture” that is not without problems (on which, see the introductory comments of D. Stephen Long, *Theology and Culture: A Guide to the Discussion* [Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2010], 65–70; see also Wilken, “The Church as Culture,” 32; and Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 39–40).

<sup>37</sup> Schmemann’s notion of a “liturgical coefficient” seems relevant here: “that significance which, apart from its own immediate content, each [of the elements of worship] acquired as a result of its place in the general sequence or order of worship” (*Introduction*, 19). Importantly, Schmemann adds that only by attending to the “basic structures of worship” as a totality, which involves “all the interrelatedness of all the individual services and of each liturgical unit in particular,” can we protect the theological interpretation of liturgy “from arbitrary symbolic interpretations” (*ibid.*, 22).

in my church, without fail my classes have had no difficulty outlining the basic shape of the modern American calendar. Moreover, they have easily wrapped their minds around the notion of Super Bowl Sunday as a kind of “feast day.” There is no confusion about what it might mean to have recurring “seasons” such as the Holidays and Summer Break, which revolve around “holy days.” The modern American calendar is a cultural phenomenon that we can readily identify if asked. The ease of identification is owing to the fact that we are all (in the contemporary American church) very well-practiced, well-trained, and well-versed in this calendar.

Through a long engagement in the rituals of the modern American calendar, through regular and uncritical submission to its rhythms, the story of the modern American calendar has been “programmed” into our imaginations and experiences and patterns of living<sup>38</sup>—which simply means that we are well-formed to seek and serve idols. It is important to clarify that just as the church calendar does not “make” us virtuous, neither does the modern American calendar “make” us worship idols. Nevertheless, the worship of idols “makes sense” or “fits,” and is given ample space, in this calendar: “Secular liturgies don’t *create* our desire; they point it, aim it, direct it to certain ends.”<sup>39</sup> The calendar postures us in such ways that idolatrous endeavors and sensibilities and ends seem “natural,” are, in a sense, called for and appropriate. It is a way of normalizing worldliness, a socialization into “the world.” It’s just normal to live as though money and amusement were what life were about. It’s normal to view ourselves as the main actors in the story. It’s normal to live good, respectable, and generally godless lives (at least in the realms of economy, education, leisure, politics, family, and work).

As I have already suggested, a virtue such as selfless compassion in service of Christ is, at best, ill-fitted to life in the rhythms and logic of this calendar. Compassion is not impossible for those well-versed in the modern American calendar, but they will need a profoundly concerted and conscious effort to be compassionate since such a virtue is contrary to their formation. The quality and character of compassion will be inevitably affected.<sup>40</sup> Compassion might not be impossible, but the cultivation of *instinctual* and *spiritually reflexive* compassion of the sort testified to in Matthew 25 will have to overcome significant barriers, to say the least.

<sup>38</sup> And this is true in spite of the fact that, as Peter Leithart observes, “Americans [are] notoriously deaf to symbols and puritanical in our rejection of ritual” (*Against Christianity*, 83).

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 122, emphasis original. Similarly, while Smith says that “our love is shaped, primed, and aimed by liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and aim our heart to certain ends,” he stops short of saying that our love is *made* by liturgical practice (*ibid.*, 38).

<sup>40</sup> This line of thought is comparable to James Davison Hunter’s comments concerning the effects of a pluralistic, consumer culture, which “certainly undermines the possibility of belief but even more significantly, it undermines the *character* of belief—that is, *how* one believes” (*To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 204, emphasis original).

Our introductory questions concerned the cultivation of a people for whom compassion comes, in a sense, instinctively, by “second nature.” We have seen that liturgical practice such as observance of the church calendar is one aspect of such a pursuit, in that it forms our lives so that compassion “fits.” But we have also seen that we are formed otherwise by other “liturgies.” In particular, the liturgical formation we receive by way of living within the rhythms and patterns of the modern American calendar constitutes one major obstacle to our ecclesial task of cultivating a compassionate and Christ-honoring people.

#### IV. INVISIBLE INFLUENCE

But the challenge may go deeper than mere tension and conflict between the overt “content” of these two calendars, and the ends toward which we are formed through them. To get at this, let me point out a difficulty I have had in thinking through these matters. As I analyze the year observed by the Christian church, I have no problem knowing what to call all this: the church (or liturgical) calendar. But things are not so easy and obvious when I plot out the alternative calendar we have been considering. I have stumbled over what a good name for this other calendar might be. I have decided here on “the modern American calendar,” but that is a little clumsy and, as I have pointed out, no one refers to it by that name in everyday experience.<sup>41</sup>

Why might it be challenging for us to come up with a name for this other calendar? I propose that it is largely because we envision (imagine) these two calendars in markedly different ways. For us, the church calendar is known to be an artificial construct, which we might want to *superimpose* upon our experience of time for personal and private purposes (as a way of reinforcing our “Christian values”). We all know that the church calendar is not really “real time,” and it is not a way of ordering public (societal) time. But the “modern American calendar”? This calendar is so “normal” and taken for granted that we tend not to envision it as a “thing,” as an artificial construct to name, much less as something to subject to critical inquiry.<sup>42</sup> Why give a special name to something that is simply normal? This calendar is, as we say, “just the calendar,” *just a neutral and normal* and *natural* way of marking time, while the liturgical calendar is a special “church calendar” that we may, if we are a certain type of consumer, take

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<sup>41</sup> I suppose we could call it the “secular calendar” or “civic/national calendar” but, again, few refer to it by those terms in everyday discourse. Furthermore, with respect to the term “secular calendar,” it would, in most circles, give the false impression that the calendar is “religiously neutral,” which it is *not* (see, e.g., Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88, n. 20). With respect to the term “civic/national calendar,” there are several parts of the calendar that modern American society functionally operates within that are not, strictly speaking, civic/national matters (e.g., Super Bowl Sunday, Summer Break).

<sup>42</sup> Smith, too, notes that “we take our experience of time to be ‘natural’ (i.e., *not* a construal),” attributing this to the unique “time-consciousness” of modernity (*How [Not] to Be Secular*, 34, emphasis original).

up as a devotional aid in our plodding along through “just the calendar.”<sup>43</sup> All cultural institutions and artifacts have a “religious nature,” yet “we all tend to inhabit [them] as if they were neutral sites.”<sup>44</sup> As we have seen, the modern American calendar is not neutral. It is not “bare” reality, but is a religiously charged “take” on reality. It gives meaning to time and posits an identity for us, a “kingdom” to serve, a purpose for our lives. It tells and compels a lived story.

A calendar, any calendar, is not simply “the ways things are” but is always an interpretation, a “take” on reality expressed “calendrically.” A calendar, any calendar, is a way of receiving and naming reality by telling and enabling us to live into a story. It is important to underline that the modern American calendar is not problematic simply because it is an interpretation as opposed to the “bare” reality of time. We cannot *not* name our experience of time—we all interpret the passing of days and months and years through some system of organization and naming. Ordering and interpreting time, construing it as a story, is part of our God-given human nature. The modern American calendar is not problematic because it is an interpretation but because (1) it is in crucial respects a problematic interpretation of reality (a bit of which I have sought to highlight above), and (2) it is an interpretation of reality that, for many, operates under the status of “neutral” and “normal” and is thus functionally above critique (as I am here emphasizing). So the challenge facing a Christian church

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<sup>43</sup> In this context, “devotional” is a synonym for private and personal (as opposed to public, corporate). In popular accounts of the church calendar, the liturgical year is valuable because it adds spice to the ahistorical, “spiritual” (i.e., private, individual) side of our life. So, for example, Bobby Gross expressly claims that his otherwise helpful book *Living the Christian Year* is written to “acquaint you with the movements of this liturgical calendar so that you can use them in your own devotion to God” and “let the year give shape to your personal practice of Bible reflection and prayer” (*Living the Christian Year: Time to Inhabit the Story of God* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005], 19, 25, emphasis added). The problem here is not that what Gross suggests is wrong or unhelpful, but that the liturgical calendar is not only, or even primarily, an aid to one’s personal Bible study and prayer life. To view the church calendar simply as a personal “devotional aid” that helps me think and meditate upon various doctrinal points or events in the gospel story is not to take it seriously *as a calendar*. This way of commending observance of the church calendar assumes from the outset that observance of the calendar as a calendar is moot. Am I not able to think and meditate personally on, say, the Incarnation at any time of the year, not only during Advent? In fact, are there not better ways to get me thinking about that event than calendar observance? One would think a calendar would have something to do with *time* and *the experience and perception of time* and not only with objects of personal thought that could be gotten at quite apart from calendrical marking of time. But in many accounts of the liturgical calendar, even many that commend its value, calendar observance has little to do with time and the rhythmic passing of days and weeks and seasons by a community or society, and is instead the functional equivalent of a Passion play or a Christmas carol or reading the New Testament. Much better is the proposal of Kimberlee Conway Ireton, “Redeeming Time,” *Christian Reflection* 37 (2010): 11–16, at 12: “Marking time by the calendar of the Church instead of the calendars of our culture—the school year, the civic year, the fiscal year—sets you apart. . . . It means I look at time a little differently.” However, Ireton’s “you” and “I” might be better replaced with, or at least understood as representative of, an “us” and “we” (i.e., the church of God).

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 23, emphasis original.



seeking to cultivate Christ-honoring, neighbor-loving virtuous people living in contemporary America is not merely that we are all well-versed in a story that is at least somewhat at odds with the biblical story, but also that we do not even realize that this is a story to be named and identified as being at odds with the biblical story.

A great source of the story's power to influence lies in its functional invisibility. Since we do not imagine the modern American calendar to be a "special" calendar, we tend not to subject it to scrutiny. But this calendar is also *pervasive* in a way that other calendars are not, which further contributes to its functional invisibility. The modern American calendar is more or less observed through diverse stages of life and in a variety of contexts.<sup>45</sup> Its logic is echoed and sustained through numerous other practices, rituals, curricula, and institutions of modern American *culture* (of which the modern American calendar is a part, an artifact).

Culture has an atmospheric quality. It is like an odor that fills a whole room and is unnoticeable to the occupants because they do not recognize it *as an odor*. In our home there resides a dog, a "family member" of sorts (readers may pigeonhole us accordingly). Not long ago when someone visited our home for the first time, the first thing he mentioned as he stepped inside was, "You must have a dog; I can smell it." We have had our dog for several years, during which we have not generally noticed such a smell, but not because it is not there. It is because we have become accustomed to the smell, because it has become "normal" and hence unnoticed. Our day-to-day experience does not present it as a "thing" to consider, to analyze, to subject to scrutiny.<sup>46</sup> Only when we *step outside* our home and enter a new environment, a new atmosphere, with new and "strange" smells, are we enabled to begin to notice the odors of our "normal" environment. When we are dealing with maleficent odors, familiarity with a new and different atmosphere becomes of utmost importance.

A culture is like an odor—it is atmosphere-filling and hence goes largely unnoticed so long as we remain firmly within it. As an artifact of modern American culture, the modern American calendar is part of a larger and pervasive atmosphere. As a result, its liturgical nature and formative power remain functionally invisible, which is a problem if, as I have suggested, it tells the wrong story and names reality wrongly, in ways that are not in keeping with who God is, what he has made (us included), and what he is doing in time and space. As long as we imagine the modern American calendar to be simply normal and neutral, it stays unquestioned, and we practically welcome the gods and rulers of the age to prod and pull us wherever they choose without ever being aware of it. "Culture is," Philip Rieff has warned us, "the form of fighting before the

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Smith's comments on the "catholicity" of the iconography of the mall (*Desiring the Kingdom*, 21–22).

<sup>46</sup> When we speak of "cultural blind spots," we are assuming this aspect of culture. We are amazed at how Christians in antebellum America could have thought slavery to be biblical, and we say it was a "cultural blind spot." What we mean is that the atmosphere (the culture) of slave-trading and slave-owning was so broad and so "normal" as to be unnoticed, unquestioned, un-critiqued—or the critiques that were occasionally offered were easily brushed aside as fanciful or fanatical, "abnormal."

firing actually begins.”<sup>47</sup> We are in a war that does not (often) look or feel like one. What we need, then, is to develop a better fighting strategy. What we need is a different culture, a new “atmosphere,” to provide the “training” necessary to identify both analytically and experientially, as it were, some crucial contours of the battle.

## V. A SPACE OF COUNTER-FORMATION

Smith asks, given the “quasi-liturgy” and “formative pedagogy” of the shopping mall together with “its ‘parachurch’ extensions in television and advertising,” “Is there a place that could form us otherwise—a space of counter-formation?”<sup>48</sup> I am here asking the same question of the “quasi-liturgical” modern American calendar. And the answer I have been building up to is that the church with its liturgies and pedagogies—particularly, its observance of the church calendar—would seem to be a God-ordained “space of counter-formation.” The church calendar is important as part of a larger strategy for formation—of our postures and sensibilities and directions—in ways that are contrary to the formation that takes place in the modern American calendar. Just as importantly, the church calendar provides an alternative “atmosphere” that may enable us better to identify the modern American calendar as an “odorous” matter of liturgical formation—that is, as a matter of (mal)formation and *worship*.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, as Marshall McLuhan has claimed, “Without an anti-environment all environments are invisible.”<sup>50</sup> For McLuhan, it is the artist’s role “to create an anti-environment as a means of perception and adjustment.” We may say that the church calendar (and more generally, the church’s culture) similarly creates an “anti-environment” to help us detect and counteract the noxious “environments” we find ourselves in.

Yet Smith asks further and devastatingly, “What if the church unwittingly adopts the same liturgical practices as the market and the mall? Will it then really be a site of counter-formation?”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, will we not, as Smith has more pointedly stated in another context, be engaging “in merely *subcultural* production,” promoting “Jesufied’ versions of the majority culture”? He goes on,

Such subcultural production (that is, the production of an evangelical subculture) actually betrays that “large swaths [of evangelicalism] have been captured by the spirit of the age” (92). No matter how

<sup>47</sup> Philip Rieff, *My Life among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority*, vol. 1 of *Sacred Order/Social Order*, ed. K. S. Piver (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24–25.

<sup>49</sup> Even if my specific read of the modern American calendar is wrong, it is a cultural-liturgical artifact that forms us in *some* manner and must, like all things, be subjected to evaluation in the light of (and to potential critique from) the gospel. At very least, the church calendar offers a heuristic tool for such evaluation.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Essential McLuhan*, ed. E. McLuhan and F. Zingrone (New York: Basic, 1995), 36.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.



many Jesus action figures or Hipster Study Bibles™ we might sell, the battle's already been lost as soon as such phenomena exist. All we've done is carve out a new market sector that extends dominant cultural forces. This is a long way from "changing the world," despite our rhetoric to the contrary. The world has changed us.<sup>52</sup>

When it comes to calendar observance, Peter Leithart offers "a test for your local church: which holiday receives more attention, the Fourth of July or Ascension? Mother's Day or Pentecost?"<sup>53</sup> From my experience (admittedly limited, for the most part, to low and free church traditions), the former options do not simply get "more attention"; they receive nearly exclusive attention *institutionally*—that is, what we observe *as a church* is the Fourth of July, *not* Ascension; Mother's Day, *not* Pentecost.<sup>54</sup> The liturgical calendar may be appropriate for individual (devotional) use; but the church, as a public, orders its time largely according to the modern American calendar. In precisely the space where a formation counter to, and an exposing of, the malformation taking place through the modern American calendar should be offered, we ourselves seem to be happily (or at least unwittingly) contributing to that malformation. If, as Ken Myers has commented, "The church can only engage the culture by *being* a culture,"<sup>55</sup> then, at least with respect to cultural artifacts such as calendars, the church has largely abandoned the call to "engage" modern American culture in favor of echoing it.

Three clarifications are in order. First, many may be leery of something so "rote" as mere calendar observance in the church. Is not the observance of the liturgical calendar a matter of "empty formalism," even an encouragement of hypocrisy and false assurance? Hypocrisy and false assurance are real dangers. But they arise less from routine, forms, and ritual per se,<sup>56</sup> and more from our sinful tendency to abuse God's good gifts for our own self-centered advantage. More to the point here, Dorothy Bass's words with respect to practices of "receiving the day" are equally true of ordering our time more broadly by way of calendars: "The gestures, words, and work through which we practice receiving this day are

<sup>52</sup> James K. A. Smith, "How (Not) to Change the World" (review of James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*), *The Other Journal*, September 8, 2010, <http://theotherjournal.com/2010/09/08/how-not-to-change-the-world/> [last accessed May 3, 2015], emphasis original. Smith is quoting Hunter's work.

<sup>53</sup> Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 100.

<sup>54</sup> Leithart asks, "Now, why is that?" (*Against Christianity*, 100.). A minimum indictment would be that we have failed to recognize the (at least potentially) malformative power of the modern American calendar. A more serious indictment may involve our failure to recognize our calling *as a church* to be a culture. A maximum indictment is, however, not out of question: we have baptized worldliness so that ritually we may order our lives around and pursue what is *really* important to us and feel pious about it.

<sup>55</sup> Myers, *All God's Children*, xviii, emphasis original.

<sup>56</sup> Indeed, we always will and do ritualize what is most important to us. Warnings against "empty formalism" and "rote" ritualism are often red herrings—pious-sounding ways to criticize *certain* rituals, being ready all the while to defend stridently other rituals of choice (and the objects of worship they aim at).

repeated morning after morning, evening after evening, and also during the hours in between. Though the repetition can lull us into boredom or complacency, *there is no other way*.<sup>57</sup> Calendar observance is the only way we have of being in this world. We will name our days and seasons *something*. We will observe *some calendar*. The questions of import are, What does the calendar we observe as a church form us toward?<sup>58</sup> and, What resources are we as a church offering for identifying and combating currently prevailing mal-formative “liturgical” calendars?

Second, in asserting that the church with its liturgies and pedagogies is a God-ordained “space of counter-formation,” I really do mean to emphasize the church. Christian liturgical formation is formation that occurs in and through the *church’s* liturgy. The liturgical formation we need is not really something we can enact in individual isolation. Nor is it something that comes by way of para-church organizations or social gatherings.<sup>59</sup> Rather, it is centered in the church. We can go further: it is centered in the church’s *liturgy*. There is a sense in which the motto “all of life is worship” is true, but if by saying this we would obviate the need for gathering for corporate worship on the Lord’s Day and the practices that take place therein, then the statement loses its usefulness and truthfulness.<sup>60</sup> The practices and postures and logic of Christian corporate worship prepare us for and send us out to lives ordered to God.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 25, emphasis added.

<sup>58</sup> Perhaps we may need, first, to ask, What is the calendar we are observing as a church?

<sup>59</sup> Smith’s writings have been read with excitement in classical education circles, but they tend to emphasize the embodied *practice* side of “liturgical practice and formation” to the neglect of the central role of the church (as one example, note Jenny Rallens’s worthwhile lecture “The Liturgical Classroom and Virtue Formation,” from the 2013 Alcuin Retreat for Classical Educators sponsored by the Society for Classical Learning [a video of the lecture can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/83236278>]). Smith is, of course, concerned about “Christian education” and academic institutions, asking at the outset of his project, “what is at stake in a distinctively Christian education? What does the qualifier *Christian* mean when appended to education?” (*Desiring the Kingdom*, 17, emphasis original). But his answer is not that Christian education engages in and attends to “Christian practices” in a classroom, or at least not only that. Christian education also springs from, or is anchored in, the *liturgy of the Christian church* (see, e.g., *ibid.*, 24–25). Thus, Smith devotes an entire chapter to “exegeting” Christian corporate worship, and asserts therein that “the formative force of . . . extra-Sunday practices is diminished if they are unhooked from the liturgical practices of the ecclesial community, particularly if they become ersatz substitutes for gathered worship”; indeed, the corporate worship of the church “provides a center of gravity that then orients and nourishes other Christian practices, which are extensions of latent possibilities for practice in Christian worship” (*ibid.*, 212–13).

<sup>60</sup> See the comments in Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 148, and the larger discussion in John Bolt, “All of Life Is Worship? Abraham Kuyper and the Neo-Kuyperians,” in *Our Worship*, by Abraham Kuyper, ed. H. Boonstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009): 321–29; also Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 39–40.

<sup>61</sup> As I hope to explore elsewhere, implicit testimony to the priority of corporate worship for the church’s life in the world may be found in the structure of Ephesians. This letter is not best broken up into a “doctrine” or “theology” section (chs. 1–3) followed by an “application” section (chs. 4–6). Instead, Ephesians offers a *liturgy* (chs. 1–3) that flows into

Third, the resources the church has to offer to counter the malformation of the modern American calendar (and culture) include a distinct church calendar, but it is not only a calendar the church must offer and, thankfully, has historically offered. The counter-formation we need involves more than liturgical practice alone, if by “liturgical practice” we mean something separable from and exclusive of what we might call “the life of the mind.” As Nicholas Healy has recently argued, “the idea that frequent enactment of a practice over time will form us is far too simple.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed,

Going to church does not, of itself, make us more Christian. As most people admit, most Christians are much the same as everyone else in their daily behavior. The only way to become really different is to work hard at it both inside the church, and especially outside, in all our daily situations, by making cognitive as well as behavioral changes. *Thinking, not just enactment of practices, is necessary.*<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps it might be more accurate to say that church practice has always included practices and habits of mind and rational instruction—habits of memory and reflection and reading, practices of catechesis, the writing and recitation of creeds and confessions. Even observance of the church calendar is not simply a matter of embodied practice (though it is that), but also a matter of *naming* (understanding, interpreting) the reality of time aright.<sup>63</sup>

Smith often sounds as though he is suggesting otherwise—namely, that practice is a category *over against* (and more determinative of action than) thought. So, for example, “we are the sorts of animals whose orientation to the world is shaped from the body up *more than* from the head down.”<sup>64</sup> Again, “we are affective *before* we are cognitive.”<sup>65</sup> Smith seems to want to press a certain direction and degree of influence between “body” and

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life more generally as the one people of God (chs. 4–6). Ephesians 1–3 is less bare doctrine and more a basic order for corporate worship: call to worship (1:3–14); intercessory prayer (1:15–23); homiletical instruction (2:1–3:13); closing prayer (3:14–19); benediction and concluding “amen” (3:20–21).

<sup>62</sup> Nicholas M. Healy, *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 94, emphasis added. For Healy, “Formation is not simply a product of enacting a given set of practices. Persons are also formed by their reflections, discussions, and decisions about which practices to enact and how, as well as by their inevitable confusion over such matters. Our characters are constructed as the products of ongoing negotiations, whether explicit or entirely unreflected or something in between” (ibid., 96). Thus, “the liturgy, though indeed necessary and formative, is not enough” (ibid., 116). More generally, Healy offers much needed critical analysis of the turn to concrete practices (and, typically, away from dogmatic accounts) in contemporary ecclesiology; see ibid. (esp. chs. 4–5) for interaction with Stanley Hauerwas; and “Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?” *IJST* 5 (2003): 287–308, for interaction with Hauerwas and Reinhard Hütter.

<sup>63</sup> As Healy comments, “The enactment of a church practice thus involves *theological judgments*” (Hauerwas, 112, emphasis added).

<sup>64</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25, emphasis added.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53, emphasis added. Here, however, he adds a crucial parenthetical comment: “we are affective before we are cognitive (and even *while* we are

“head,” between affect and cognition.<sup>66</sup> I am less confident that the two can be separated so neatly and a direction and degree of influence so easily and (apparently) universally assigned. I am largely sympathetic with Smith’s criticisms of “worldview thinking.”<sup>67</sup> And I find the basic elements of his “theology of culture” more or less compelling.<sup>68</sup> But I wonder if, in his zeal to correct a certain overemphasis on ratiocination, Smith’s typical articulations tend to reinforce (or just as importantly, will be taken as reinforcement of) the same problematic formal bifurcation characteristic of much “worldview thinking” (namely, a soul-body dichotomy) simply with a differing material emphasis (the body is determinative). It may be, however, that a more apt description of Smith’s writing is to be found in an analysis that he himself offers of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. In an interview with Ken Myers, Smith suggests that Merleau-Ponty “is trying to, in a way, fight against a mind-body dualism, at the same time that he doesn’t want to collapse everything into just a materialistic monism.” Nevertheless, perhaps because of the limitations of language, Merleau-Ponty keeps “resorting to the language of soul and body.”<sup>69</sup> In the end, perhaps the language Smith frequently employs in his cultural liturgies project is language he has “resorted” to.<sup>70</sup>

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cognitive)” (emphasis original). The parenthetical comment seems to me to be the better articulation of the matter.

<sup>66</sup> Elsewhere, he is more equivocal. For example, when he asserts that our “affective take on the world” is a “construal of the world that is governed by our ‘emotional’ training as much as (or really, more than, or at least *before*) it is governed by information deposited in the intellect” (*Imagining the Kingdom*, 36, emphasis original), what are we to make of that curious and seemingly unsure parenthesis? Is it “really, more than,” or is it “before,” or might the initial “as much as” suffice? Is Smith trying to trump the intellect, or chastise it for its imperialism in favor a more democratic anthropology, or assign it a more accurate place within a robust “order of action”?

<sup>67</sup> Particularly, I agree that, where such “worldview thinking” is operative, “the formative cultural impact of sites like the mall tends to not show up on our radar. . . . An idea-centric or belief-centric approach will fail to see the pedagogy at work in the mall, and thus will also fail to articulate a critique and counter-pedagogy” (*Imagining the Kingdom*, 24). Again, “because such worldview approaches remain largely fixated on the cognitive, something like the mall drops off the radar (while an institution like the U.S. Supreme Court is unduly amplified)” (*Imagining the Kingdom*, 85).

<sup>68</sup> See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 35.

<sup>69</sup> James K. A. Smith, interview with Ken Myers, *Mars Hill Audio Journal* 121.6 (2014), beginning at 13:38 of the recording. For further comments on “lexical limitations” in Merleau-Ponty, see *Imagining the Kingdom*, 56, n. 37.

<sup>70</sup> An important possible instance comes when Smith glosses the Greek term *kardia*, preferring “guts” to “heart” (see *Desiring the Kingdom*, 18, 24, 26, 47, 57, 126, 137). Of course, “guts” can be very misleading, giving the impression that our *kardia* is nothing but our bowels. In fact, in Scripture our *kardia* is very much a matter of “understanding, knowledge, and will” (A. Sand, “καρδία, ας, ή,” EDNT 2:249–251, here 250; see, e.g., Matt 9:4, which speaks of “*thinking* [*enthymēomai*] evil in your *hearts* [*kardia*]”), though it is not exclusively a matter of the intellect (see, e.g., Phil 4:7, which pairs but distinguishes *kardia* and *noēma*). Smith might have had more lexical grounding if he had zeroed in on *splanchnon* instead of *kardia*. In an important admission, Smith explains that he chooses “a Message-like translation of *kardia*” in order to “shock us out of our familiarity” and press toward something that “is much more holistic (and less dualistic),” rather than to

In any case, the point here (one with which I believe Smith would more or less agree) is that the counter-formation necessary to curb malformation via the modern American calendar must involve much more than ecclesial observance of an alternative calendar. It must also involve other engagements in the whole of the church's liturgy as well as, or including, habits of the mind (both personal and corporate), practices of catechesis, and theological judgment and instruction. Living in a world of disordered loves and practices, we need to "develop disciplines of cognitive and embodied resistance."<sup>71</sup> Both cognitive and embodied resistance are crucial if we would enjoy deep and lasting faithfulness.<sup>72</sup>

## VI. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

If any of the discussion I have offered about calendars and compassion has proven compelling, then there may be some church leaders who desire to reconsider the calendrical practice in their local church contexts and to appropriate more of the church calendar in their communities.<sup>73</sup> Before concluding, then, it may be fitting to offer a few practical suggestions for how such appropriation might be pursued.

A first and obvious step is to seek to deepen our understanding of the church's liturgical calendar itself—its biblical and theological bases, its historical development, its internal rhythms and logic, its formative

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reduce *kardia* to the realm of materiality (ibid., 57). Smith is well-aware of the danger of reductionism, and the gloss "guts" seems to be his chosen means to help us identify a metaphorical space "between" the duality of mind and body (see *Imagining the Kingdom*, 13, 43). But it is probably not the best term for the task at hand, and may have been "resorted" to. Interestingly, Smith avoids (so far as I can tell) reference to a *kardia* = guts equation in *Imagining the Kingdom*.

<sup>71</sup> David John Seel Jr., "Material Boy: On Artifacts, Discernment, and Elites" (review of Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*), Ransom Fellowship, <http://www.ransomfellowship.org/article/detail.asp?AID=450&B=David%20John%20Seel,%20Jr.&TID=5> [last accessed March 13, 2015].

<sup>72</sup> On a somewhat related front, Schmemmann makes an important distinction between liturgical forms and "liturgical piety" that can "project" onto liturgical forms "content" and experiences that are alien to the forms (see *Introduction*, 97–99). This is a difference between the "objective content and order" of worship and the "reception, the experience, the understanding of worship" (ibid., 127). It seems to me that liturgical practice alone (understood in a reduced way as mere concrete practices and forms within the church) can provide little to challenge an unhealthy "liturgical piety" (cf. Healy, *Hauerwas*, 111–13).

<sup>73</sup> I focus on church leaders and not individual Christians in general for a couple reasons. On the one hand, church leaders are the most responsible for the shape of the church's liturgy and liturgical practice. Though Smith wants to emphasize that "worship is best understood on the order of action, not reflection," nevertheless he admits that "Reflection is especially important for those who are responsible for *leading* worship, so that the rhythms and practices of worship are *intentional*" (*Desiring the Kingdom*, 166, emphasis original; the binary opposition of "action, not reflection" seems unnecessary to me). On the other hand, while I have no qualms about individuals (or families) privately observing the church calendar in principle, nevertheless to present calendar observance as a matter only or primarily for individual appropriation is to run the risk of (1) not taking the church calendar seriously as a public calendar, and (2) institutionally contributing to malformation since we *will* observe some sort of calendar as churches.

impact as a matter of liturgical practice. (Tied to this is the need to grow in our awareness of other “liturgical” calendars that our lives tend to be ordered by.) Hopefully the thoughts shared here are a beginning step toward that end. Such understanding is crucial for the enactment of the liturgy, but it will also equip us to offer wise and fitting responses to church members who may look upon the liturgical calendar with no little suspicion and reservation.

Second, a careful consideration and re-evaluation of the days/seasons that we *actually* observe as a church is needed. As I have pointed out, the question is not *whether* to observe a calendar, but *how* we will “calendrically” order and shape our time together institutionally as a church and what the calendars we will necessarily observe consist of. In most churches of which I have been a part, the calendar highlighted in and as a church has been predominantly the modern American calendar with a small dose of the church calendar thrown in (i.e., acknowledgment of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter). Institutionally, we observe the church calendar much like “nominal” individual Christians attend church—only on the “special” days of the year. Of course, there has never been, and will never be, a church that observes *exclusively* one calendar or another, just as there has never been, and will never be, a church that is wholly separable and sealed off from its surrounding culture.<sup>74</sup> In “the wild,” all local churches will observe some kind of “mixed” calendar, for lack of a better term.<sup>75</sup> But what if we prayerfully sought out ways to reverse the quantities in the “mixture” that currently prevails in many of our churches so that our observance of the church calendar were less incidental and “nominal”? To do so, we would need to begin by identifying the current “mixture” we offer in our churches, plotting out the shape and rhythm of a typical year in our local churches (much like we did for the abstractions of “the church calendar” and “the modern American calendar” in the opening sections above). From there, we may need discerningly to decrease the “thickness” of our ritual observance of days/seasons of the modern American calendar in our corporate gatherings.<sup>76</sup> Would, for example, a few brief words acknowledging mothers during the morning welcome on Mother’s Day be preferable to using the whole service to thematize motherhood and having mothers in the congregation stand year after year?

<sup>74</sup> As Peter Leithart has recently commented, “the middle ground is the only ground we have. Purely common-grace and purely special-grace communities are theoretical only. They have never actually existed for sons of Adam and Noah” (“Kuyper’s Common Grace,” *First Things* (blog), May 9, 2014, <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/leithart/2014/05/kuypers-common-grace> [last accessed November 30, 2015]). With respect to liturgy and liturgical practice, see John D. Witvliet, “Theological Models for the Relationship between Liturgy and Culture,” in *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003): 91–123, esp. 114–23.

<sup>75</sup> I would not, however, go so far as Hughes, “Liturgical Year,” 79, to suggest that “When Hallmark is successful in establishing a new feast and the entire country is caught up in caring enough to send the very best, the Church calendar cannot *not* acknowledge it” (emphasis original).

<sup>76</sup> See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 82–84, on “thick” and “thin” practices/rituals.



Third, to turn to more constructive suggestions, there are a variety of ways we can seek to highlight important feast days and seasons/seasonal transitions, some more subtle and some more overt. Many possibilities will be discovered by acquainting ourselves with historic church practices, but a few proposals come readily to mind. We can decorate and color our buildings and sanctuaries (or even simply our bulletins) to mark visually the changing seasons.<sup>77</sup> We can select “themes” for our individual services that are in accord with the particular Sundays of the year on which, and the seasons of the year during which, we gather (e.g., Transfiguration Sunday, Sundays after Pentecost). This would require a discerning selection of calls to worship, words of welcome, songs/hymns, times of confession, intercessory prayers, responsive readings, Scripture readings, etc.<sup>78</sup> With respect specifically to the relationship of Scripture to the church calendar, Scripture readings might be strategically chosen to help us both to interpret the church calendar aright and (to say the same thing from a different angle) to give us a regular, annual rehearsal of the story of Jesus (and more broadly, the whole canonical storyline). Here the use of something like the Revised Common Lectionary would prove quite helpful, at very least as a starting point for guiding us in the selection of lections from Sunday to Sunday.<sup>79</sup>

We might also incorporate various other practices, rituals, and celebrations that are consistent with and reinforce the logic of the present day/season of the church calendar. I have joked (or only half-joked) with a friend about hosting Pentecost Day barbecues (think “tongues of fire”) as a way of celebrating the pouring out of the Spirit and the birth of the church. Churches regularly hold picnics and potlucks during the course

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 155–56.

<sup>78</sup> Arranging orders of service around a particular theme for special days is not at all strange to us. We do so regularly with the “holy days” of the modern American calendar (e.g., emphasizing the notion of “freedom” on the Sunday closest to Independence Day; having mothers in the congregation stand on Mother’s Day and focusing that day’s sermon on motherhood).

<sup>79</sup> Horace Allen, “Calendar and Lectionary,” 391, observes that the recovery among Reformed churches of calendrical considerations often occurs *apart from* intentional consideration of (and involvement in) lectionary use. One historical factor contributing to this development is the abandonment among early Reformers (e.g., Zwingli, Calvin) of lectionary use “in favor of ‘in course’ or continuous reading week by week.” This had the effect of “dissociating ‘days’ from lections”—that is, the lived experience of the calendar had little or no meaningful parallel in the church’s engagement with Scripture. Calendar was detached from canon, the latter being increasingly tied to clerical will—that is, the church’s lived experience of the Scriptures was decided by *individual pastors* who “spontaneously” selected texts to read and preach from week to week (or season to season). “Let it not be forgotten,” Allen comments, “that there is always a lectionary system operative, even if it is as casual and spontaneous as the ‘inspiration’ of the local pastor in any given week as the Lord’s Day approaches” (ibid., 410). Of course, no formal lectionary is without faults, but a functional “lectionary system,” which is all the more influential for not being recognized as such, is important to bring to the light. For an entertaining set of rants against the Common Lectionary, see Robert Farrar Capon, *The Foolishness of Preaching: Proclaiming the Gospel against the Wisdom of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 72–78; similar but more measured critique is provided by Oliver O’Donovan in Oliver O’Donovan with Michael Vasey, *Liturgy and Ethics* (Bramcote: Grove, 1993), 12–13.



of the year. What if we keyed them to important days in the church's calendar? We might also offer special services for days such as Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, and Ascension Day, and throughout Holy Week—all of which would be at least as appropriate for who we are as a church as offering a special Thanksgiving eve service, as many churches regularly do. Additionally, it might be worth considering the holding of other regularly recurring events during fitting times of the church year. For example, what if we scheduled a "Missions Week" around Epiphany given its connection to Gentile mission, or during Trinity Season as a mark of the church's life in and with the Triune God? Differently, we might emphasize the practices of corporate fasting and almsgiving during penitential and anticipatory seasons such as Advent and Lent. Or we might consider, in line with the general practice of the early church, performing baptisms and first communions on Easter Sunday, using the season of Lent for our baptismal instruction.

There is much more we could and should say. But hopefully these few suggestions provide some useful starting points as we seek after a liturgical life and practice that will form us well and counter malformation.

## VII. THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE SPIRIT

At the conclusion of an illuminating essay entitled "Tutoring the Affections: Liturgy and Christian Formation in the Early Church," Robert Wilken confesses to "something of a bad conscience."<sup>80</sup> That is a good way of describing an ongoing unease I have had throughout the writing of this article. Part of this unease arises from a matter of emphasis. I have been exploring the nature and importance of the church calendar with a view to its possible connection to the cultivation of compassion in the lives of God's people. For the most part my focus has been on the church calendar as a strategy of resistance to the mal-forming influences of the modern American calendar and, more generally, of life in a fallen and disordered world/culture. But something like the church calendar is not important simply as an instrument of resistance and counter-formation; it is also, I believe, a part of or a seeking after true and ordered formation. It is not an effort in counter-cultural activity alone, but also a prayerful pursuit and anticipation of true culture. I do not want to commend the way of negation taken by the Pharisee in Luke 18, suggesting that we observe the church calendar only or primarily as a way to make us aware, and thus lift up our "thanksgiving," that we are not like our individualistic consumer culture. I do not want to cater to an adolescent impulse toward contrarianism or a fundamentalistic delight not so much in truth, goodness, and beauty but in being able to show how everyone else is wrong. I want to live into the church calendar as part of authentic thanksgiving for what we *are* and *have* as a gift from God, and part of a constructive labor in naming reality (specifically the passing of days and seasons) aright.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Robert L. Wilken, "Tutoring the Affections: Liturgy and Christian Formation in the Early Church," *Antiphon* 8 (2003): 21–27, at 26.

<sup>81</sup> Oliver O'Donovan rightly observes that part of Adam's task, now fulfilled in Christ, was "to call things by their proper names" (*Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline*

But a second and more significant source of my unease is the same thing that gives rise to Wilken's "bad conscience." I fear I may be giving a false impression about the nature and weightiness of liturgy—namely, that it is chiefly important for its functional value, that it is a means to an end (i.e., formation) outside of it. Wilken explains:

Although everything I have said is, I hope, correct, and reflects the contribution of the Church's worship to formation in the Christian life, yet I cannot bring these remarks to a close without saying that it is a debasement of liturgy if we view it primarily as an instrument, a means for some other end, even as laudable a goal as formation in the Christian life. The liturgy is not a device to accomplish some other end. Worship is its own end.<sup>82</sup>

As the form and expression of the church's worship, liturgy is its own end. It is not a calculated strategy to attain something else, even something as good as the cultivation of compassion. It is a reverent response to the goodness, grace, and presence of our Creator and Savior and Lord. As Wilken goes on to conclude, "Only when liturgy serves its proper end, the celebration of Christ's presence and the praise and adoration of the triune God, will it be able to serve other ends."<sup>83</sup> This is simply a liturgically focused way of saying, with C. S. Lewis, that when we pursue "first things" first, "second things" tend to follow.<sup>84</sup>

Of course, we can still ask why it is that "second things" (in this instance, formation unto virtue) tend to follow "first things" (worship of God). I have offered a hint toward an answer at the very outset by asking after a holy instinct and a "*spiritual* reflex" of compassion. We need to take the "Spirit" in "spiritual" seriously.<sup>85</sup> Our liturgical practices might prepare lives well-suited for the virtue of compassion, lives into which compassion "fits." But like love, joy, peace, and the rest, compassion is a fruit of the Spirit—it is born of the Spirit, sustained and empowered by the Spirit, guided by the Spirit. Liturgical practice per se does not create compassion; the Spirit does. But I agree with Smith that "the Spirit meets, nourishes, transforms, and empowers us just *through* and *in* such material practices."<sup>86</sup> If formation unto compassion tends to arise from

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for *Evangelical Ethics* [2nd ed.; Leicester: Apollos, 1994], 26). See further Myers, *All God's Children*, 38–39; and Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 75–78.

<sup>82</sup> Wilken, "Tutoring the Affections," 26.

<sup>83</sup> Wilken, "Tutoring the Affections," 26. See also Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 150.

<sup>84</sup> See C. S. Lewis, "First and Second Things," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. W. Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970): 278–81.

<sup>85</sup> The word "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*), for the Apostle Paul, "functions primarily as an adjective for the Spirit, referring to *that which belongs to, or pertains to, the Spirit*" (Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994], 29, emphasis original; see further 28–32).

<sup>86</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 150, emphasis original; see more fully 148–51. Smith's brief but pregnant comments concerning "catching" sleep (following Merleau-Ponty) with his concluding suggestion that Christian (liturgical) practices may be "habitations of the Spirit" (following Craig Dykstra) are important to consider in this connection as well (see

the practice of the church's liturgy, it is because the church's liturgy is a place where the Lord through his Spirit is present to us. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom and transformation.

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*Imagining the Kingdom*, 65). We might best think of liturgical practice as a kind of lived prayer, an embodied crying out through Christ to the Father for the Spirit's help and enablement, indeed, for rebirth by the Spirit.

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## PREACHING, SPIRITUAL FORMATION, AND THE FIGURAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

BY JEREMY MANN\*

Christians believe “the astonishing supposition that texts which are between possibly 3,000 and almost 2,000 years old can offer orientation for the discovery of truth in the third millennium.”<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Bullinger goes further in the Second Helvetic Confession: “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.”<sup>2</sup> How are the stories and poems of slaves and nomads simultaneously Almighty God’s message to all people for all time? It is nearly absurd: murderers, cowards, and thieves producing something “finer than gold,” said to endure beyond the destruction of the cosmos (Mark 13:31). And what could possibly transform the mouth of an ordinary preacher into the mouth of Christ?<sup>3</sup>

These questions are significant for anyone who believes God guides his Church largely through the proclamation of his Word. In addressing them, this essay has two primary aims: first, to consider the larger topic of biblical interpretation with particular reference to preaching, and second, to motivate an evangelical retrieval of figural interpretation, a historical approach that seeks to grasp all dimensions of biblical texts in service of spiritual formation. The two aims are related by their common interest in how the writings of Scripture, borne out of particular settings and written by finite human beings, can be said to directly address people in all times and places. I believe figural interpretation is useful for anyone seeking to understand the Bible, but I hope to show its unique relevance for the task of preaching, which is God’s ordained means for building his kingdom after the ascension of Christ (Rom. 10:17).

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<sup>1</sup> Christoph Schwöbel, “The Preacher’s Art: Preaching Theologically,” in Colin Gunton, ed. *Theology through Preaching* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 1, in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 178.

<sup>3</sup> “Tis a right excellent thing, that every honest pastor’s and preacher’s mouth is Christ’s mouth, and his word and forgiveness is Christ’s word and forgiveness ... For the office is not the pastor’s or preacher’s but God’s; and the Word which he preacheth is likewise not the pastor’s and preacher’s but God’s” (Martin Luther, quoted in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1 [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 107).

## I. HERMEUNITICS

Kevin Vanhoozer writes, "Authors are *doers*."<sup>4</sup> They write with certain aims, but they are not entirely free agents. First, they communicate within a system of shared symbols.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, no text conveys the intended encoded meaning alone and nothing else. The performative act of attempting communication involves both the intended ends of the author/speaker and additional, unintended (but no less real) effects. Because of this, every text has a life beyond the author's control and total comprehension, even in immediate direct address. These rules are not new; Socrates chose not to write because of his fear of the written word's unwieldy power.<sup>6</sup> Instead of "the death of the author," it is better to think of the life of the text. Texts shape reality. A text's "livelihood" is dependent on this activity: an hourly weather forecast is nearly useless immediately. Saying that a text has a life of its own does not force one to surrender the centrality of the author in interpretation, as long as it is recognized that interpretation can have two objects. Texts begin their lives as instruments of authorial action. But even during its creator's life, the text asserts its own independence as artifact—a thing that is handwritten in haste, or a tunnel into the subconscious, or an example of linguistic evolution. Independent of the communicative intention realized through the text, it means all sorts of things (e.g., last year's forecast as a bit of banal ephemera).

Interpretation of a text as *communication* requires consideration of the author's purpose in direct address. "Direct address" is significant—it highlights the relationship between the author and the audience—reminding the interpreter that the author has options for scope and register. "Direct" is an apt term, for it implies a vector. The author's context fixes his or her site of action, as well as his or her perspective—a looking toward somewhere. The horizon of the author, that gradient between the clear foreground, the stage-setting background, and the unseen (both in the future and in contemporary settings that are unknown), influences the interpretive process, and the life of the text as instrument of communication.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 209.

<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein's arguments against private language are unrivaled for their force on this point (*Philosophical Investigations*, cf. §201–§269; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Philosophical Investigations*, rev. ed. [Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009], 134).

<sup>6</sup> "When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it" (*Phaedrus*, 275c, in Plato, *Complete Works* [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997], 552).

<sup>7</sup> To help draw out this point: consider a speaker or author addressing in various settings the *Aqedah*, Abraham's binding of Isaac described in Genesis 22. Imagine a child in Sunday School asking, "What does the sacrifice of Isaac mean?" How does the answer change when the same question is asked by a dissertation examiner? Or by an isolated tribe that practices child sacrifice? Or by Zionists that have expressed their interest in reclaiming the Temple Mount? Each setting informs the response, and the catalog illustrates the possible life a response might have outside the direct address.

Literature, given its ongoing invitation for engagement, keeps finding an audience insofar as it continues to address something real.<sup>8</sup> Plato's *Republic* is still doing work. Poetry is a genre particularly prone to wander; it also sharpens the point about conditioned modes of reception. The sense in which an author can speak to a setting with which he or she has no contact can be labeled "indirect address." There is still intentionality, a desire to speak *to* something, but the projected action is performed in a kind of void, a space that will exist only beyond the author, introducing questions that cannot be foreseen. The line between direct and indirect address is blurry. An author can address an unknown audience, but he or she has diminishing agency over the message received. The interpreter following centuries after the occasion of writing recognizes both the distance and relevance of indirect address. Emphasizing the *relevance*, Ulrich Luz points out Mark's ultimate concern in his gospel, making clear that "one can 'understand' Jesus only if one is ready to follow him on his road to the cross."<sup>9</sup>

On the opposite side, emphasizing the *distance* of the Bible's addresses, one finds a spokesman like Krister Stendahl, emblematic of a whole tradition in biblical studies catalyzed by the Enlightenment. Elaborating on Johann Gabler's famous 1787 lecture, Stendahl argues for a sharp division between two different disciplines: biblical studies asks "What *did* it mean?" and systematic theology asks "What *does* it mean?"<sup>10</sup> This approach, predicated on the dismissal of a divine author (the only agent that could conceivably speak directly across millennia), seeks to preserve a use for the Bible beyond that of direct address. While confessional Christians will undoubtedly reject aspects of Stendahl's dichotomy, the challenge introduced must be taken seriously: how can believers maintain that texts written millennia ago among primitive, nomadic people easily translate into the many cultural settings in which the Bible is preached?

## II. THE INSPIRED WORD

A robust doctrine of inspiration uniquely preserves both the distance and relevance of the words of Scripture. The text of the Bible is both a human and divine product.<sup>11</sup> With all eternity in view, God speaks

<sup>8</sup> Jan Fokkelman highlights this projective quality in Nathan's parable: "David means to occupy himself with the reality outside of himself, the rich man and his misdeed, but, in actual fact, he is involved with himself and seeks to restore his feeling of well-being in this way ... Nathan provides him with a projection screen for this very purpose, and, indeed, David projects vehemently" (J. B. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, A full interpretation based on stylistic and structural analyses*, vol. 1, *King David* [II Sam. 9-20 & I Kings 1-2] [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981], 77).

<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Luz, "Reflections on the Appropriate Interpretation of New Testament Texts," in *Theology, History, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Darren Sarisky (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 285.

<sup>10</sup> Krister Stendahl, "Selections from 'Biblical Theology, Contemporary'" in *Theology, History, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Darren Sarisky (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 248.

<sup>11</sup> The best summary of the relationship between inspiration and speech act theory is Gregg R. Allison's "Speech Act Theory and Its Implications for the Doctrine of the



through the human author occasionally to a specific setting and forever to the Church, spread across space and time. In reference to ancient texts written in the foothills of Judea, Paul tells a mixed group of believers living in the imperial capital, "Whatever was written in former times was written for our instruction" (Rom 15:4).

The Word of God is a threefold Word. The Scriptures, Christ himself, and preaching are all called "the Word" in the Bible. All three are Spirit-mediated and inter-referential. God speaks words that are powerful enough to create and sustain the universe (Ps 33:6). The Spirit of God inspired each word of the Bible by guiding the work of the writers, ensuring trustworthiness (1 Pet 1:20-21). Jesus is the only Word that brings life (Jn 6:68), and he speaks of himself as fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, and of their testimony of his identity and mission. We read the Pentateuch today as God's sacred word, just as Ezra did; we also read it with a fuller sense of what it was intended to do, as described through additional revelation.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, we read the New Testament both as a collection of tailored biographies and specifically addressed letters *and* as the whole Church's only sure guide, given for the edification of all the saints, past, present and future. The preached Word of Christ's followers is the ordained means of expressing that message in this age (Rom 10:17). The Spirit enlivens the message and seals reception of the message (Eph 1:13). Furthermore, God's Spirit leads us *into all truth*, guidance that is both fully congruent with the Word itself and necessary for the true reception of its message. This also bears on our self-conception of our ability to mentally apprehend all that is written, with recognition of our utter dependence on God's own self-disclosure, but also in our individual finitude and the relative opacity of many passages of Scripture.<sup>13</sup> Both recognition of our limits and appreciation for the Spirit's guidance of the Church cause us to start with Christian tradition, using it as a reliable guide, but not a sovereign ruler. While pre-critical exegetes were aware of their own limits, the Enlightenment chastens us to recognize the remarkable yet finite rational powers we possess, which in faith we believe are still granted knowledge of God.<sup>14</sup> As Mark Strauss writes, "We can

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Inerrancy/Infallibility of Scripture," *Philosophia Christi* 8 (1995): 1-23.

<sup>12</sup> See John Calvin, *Institutes* 2.7.16 for the pivotal and still involving distinction between the "moral" and the "symbolic" aspects of the law. Augustine made the same distinction (*Faust.* 6.2, 7, 9), describing the cultic laws as no longer having the same imperative force, "because their fulfillment is in Christ" (*Faust.* 19.18). Jesus the Son is now our high priest, our sacrifice, our prophet, our king, our temple, and our example.

<sup>13</sup> This is due not to any flaw in the text, but to the corruption we have as fallen creatures, prone to rejection of the truth and unconscious obtuseness. The community of the church does help us though. Hays puts this well: "Our metaphorical readings must be tested prayerfully within the community of faith by others who seek God's will along with us through close reading of the text" (Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* [New York: Harper Collins, 1996], 304).

<sup>14</sup> Alvin Plantinga's account of proper functionalism expands on this in *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

know something *truly* without knowing it *absolutely*.”<sup>15</sup> Let us now turn to figural interpretation, starting with an example.

### III. THE FIGURAL PREACHING OF JESUS

Luke 4:16-30 recounts Jesus' only sermon delivered in a synagogue. The reading Jesus chooses for the occasion is from Isaiah 61.<sup>16</sup> After reading, when “the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him,” he tells the assembly, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Just as the crowd rises in fury and presses forward to throw him down a nearby cliff, Jesus adds his own commentary. He notes that though there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, the prophet was sent to the Zarephath. Likewise, though there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, only Naaman the Syrian was cleansed. After these closing words, Jesus slips away.

What sort of the Old Testament interpretation is this? The events as described in 1 and 2 Kings do not give any hint of serving as instances of prophecy. They could perhaps be examples of typology, although they stretch the usual conception of typology—what exactly would the antitype be in this case? The rejection of Jesus' neighbors from Nazareth? The pending rejection of nearly all of Israel? Alternatively, in some sense the aphorism Jesus utters in v. 24, “No prophet is acceptable in his hometown,” is a kind of spiritual lesson drawn from the events in the lives of Elijah, Elisha, and Israel's other prophets, now applied to a new setting. Is this just a figurative object lesson, or maybe a kind of rebuke drawn from an allegorical interpretation of the first two stories in Kings?

Two additional factors complicate this particular case. First, as God the Son, through whom all things were made, Jesus could have intentionally ordained the episodes with Zarephath and Naaman for such a time as this; he might have set this whole scene up, an object lesson spread across roughly five centuries. Thomas Aquinas believed that while all authors can use words to signify things, Almighty God is able to signify things with other things—the true referent of the bronze snake hung on a pole is the bloody God, hung on a tree. Is Jesus doing this supernatural event-signifying? And by implication, if the teacher making this allusion to Zarephath and Naaman were *not* God himself, is the sermon thereby different? Without an explicit connection, Jesus' sermon could be seen as a flagrant example of the chief sin of biblical interpretation, “eisegesis.”

The second related complication concerns the fact that unlike Luke's gospel, Matthew's account of this sermon does not include Jesus mentioning Zarephath or Naaman. This is expected. Unlike Luke, who is frequently showing Samaritans, Romans, and other outsiders to be exemplars of faith, Matthew has relatively little interest in those outside God's chosen people. It is in Matthew's gospel that Jesus tells his disciples, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans,

<sup>15</sup> Mark L. Strauss, *How to Read the Bible in Changing Times: Understanding and Applying God's Word Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 83.

<sup>16</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...”

but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:5). This reference to the lost sheep clearly echoes Jeremiah 50, where the Lord also commands his people to flee from the midst of Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans; they must "cut off from Babylon the sower" (v. 16) and devote her to destruction. So, given his unique theme and his choice to leave out Zarephath and Naaman, what would Matthew think of what Luke is doing? How would he classify this rendering of the account?

In some ways, the questions raised above are not especially consequential. The general idea communicated is clear: Jesus is a prophet in Israel continuing in the line of other rejected prophets, and Luke is showing that through Jesus, God is in fact shining a new "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32), an outcome that has obscurely glimmered in prophetic texts for centuries. I use this case, however, to motivate a particular line of argument concerning the nature of symbolic or figural interpretation, namely, that Jesus' invocation of the Old Testament passages does not neatly fit into a particular category. I believe there are other many other examples of figural interpretation that resist easy classification. In Jesus' paralleling use of two historical events, he introduces elements of typology, but the events do not bookend the grand arc of redemption characteristic of other typological symbols. At the same time, in some sense the two stories are allegories, insofar as the main characters are used as icons of larger groups, "insiders" and "outsiders," with moral lessons drawn that apply to the listeners. And although there is not a formal term for it, one can argue that Jesus's stories are hardly *interpretive* at all, and the references serve as, to use Douglas Moo's phrase, "scriptural language as a vehicle of expression."<sup>17</sup> Each of these ways of interpreting Jesus' figurative language has some plausibility; it is hard to decisively rule any out. Let us then proceed by treating these types of uses individually, and then approach the larger problem again.

#### IV. FIGURAL INTERPRETATION

The concept of typology is etymologically derived from the Greek word *τύπος*, which literally means "impression" (Jn 20:25) or "image" (Acts 7:43), and is occasionally used metaphorically to mean "model" or "exemplar" (Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 4:12). The most important explanation of New Testament's distinctive use of *τύπος* is found in 1 Cor. 10:1-13, where Paul describes the exodus and events surrounding Mt. Sinai as a type of the life of the Christian. He concludes the lesson by saying, "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." This broader notion of prophetic foreshadowing is described using a number of different terms in the New Testament: *τύπος*, as already mentioned (e.g., in Rom 5:14 where Paul states that Adam is "a *type* of him that was to come"), *σινία* (e.g., in Col 2:17 to call Jewish food and Sabbath laws "a *shadow* of the things to come"), *ὑπόδειγμα* (paired with

<sup>17</sup> Douglas Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge, eds, *Hermeneutics, Authority, Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 188.

σκιὰ in Hebrews 8:5 to describe the Old Testament priesthood as “a *copy* and shadow of the heavenly things), and *παραβολή* (e.g., in Heb 9:9 to refer to the Holy of Holies, “which is *symbolic* for the present age”). For our purposes, let us classify all of these as variations under the larger genus.

As a hermeneutical category, typology occupies an important place in the history of biblical interpretation. In his standard-setting exploration of the concept, Leonhard Goppelt argues typology is the most significant method of interpretation in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> Wick Broomall’s definition is representative: “A type is a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth whose full embodiment or antitype is found in the New Testament revelation.”<sup>19</sup> Other definitions commonly place typology in contradistinction with allegory in Christian theology, as in E. E. Ellis’s account:

Unlike allegorical exposition, the typology of the NT writers represents the OT not as a book of metaphors hiding a deeper meaning but as an account of historical events and teaching from which the meaning of the text arises. Typology views the relationship ... in terms of two principles, historical correspondence and escalation.<sup>20</sup>

Ellis argues that typology is grounded in historical events, unlike allegory. While this approach to distinguishing allegory from typology is not uncommon post Enlightenment, it is not quite accurate to early Christian history. Origen for instance, perhaps the most infamous of the Church Fathers for his constant appeals to an allegorical “spiritual” sense, did not consider allegorical and literal readings mutually exclusive: “it is perfectly clear to us that the historical account is true; as that Abraham was buried in the double cave at Hebron, as also Isaac and Jacob, and the wives of each of them; and that Shechem was given as a portion to Joseph; and that Jerusalem is the metropolis of Judea...”<sup>21</sup> Before the advent of theological liberalism in recent centuries, allegory was never at odds with historicity *per se*. Allegory was an instrument used when a literal reading of a text seemed impossible, but this was rare, and largely in keeping with contemporary discussions of genre and metaphor. A better means of distinguishing allegory and typology is emphasizing the two distinctive features of typology, mentioned in the last sentence of Ellis’ treatment: “historical correspondence” and “escalation.”<sup>22</sup> Escalation refers to a theme’s development, a feature that can be manifest in a number of

<sup>18</sup> Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 198.

<sup>19</sup> Wick Broomall, *Biblical Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1900), 76.

<sup>20</sup> Foreword to Goppelt, *Typos*, x.

<sup>21</sup> Origen, *De Principiis*, Book IV, section 18-19.

<sup>22</sup> G.K. Beale has an account of typology that breaks these features into a more granular composite, but the substance is the same, and I do not find the specificity more illuminating: G.K. Beale, *Handbook On the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

different ways: greater clarity, permanence, vividness, or completeness. A number of theologians define historical correspondence as necessarily encompassing both testaments (see Broomall above), but this is not warranted.<sup>23</sup> Noah, for instance, serves as a type of Adam.<sup>24</sup> Isaiah 43:16–21 describes the exodus of Israel as a type of a more permanent and widespread salvation, and at least one scholar understands Ps 110:4 as a typological reading of Melchizedek.<sup>25</sup>

Let us now consider allegory, which, in part due to neglect, is a difficult concept to define. For many scholars it serves as shorthand for any interpretation that is absurd, baseless, or fanciful.<sup>26</sup> G. K. Beale says allegory “pays no attention to what an OT text originally meant.”<sup>27</sup> Doug Moo describes it as an approach that “finds meanings hidden behind the words of the text,” often with only the specially “enlightened” being able to perceive the true meaning.<sup>28</sup> A more heresy-tinged assessment comes from Graeme Goldsworthy; he claims allegory is docetic for its effective disregard for the earthly aspects of Old Testament history.<sup>29</sup> However, as I have already noted, allegory as employed in Christian history does not necessarily entail a low regard for either the historical facts or the plain reading of the account it treats. Furthermore, as I will discuss later on, allegory need not be considered the unique instrument of hacks and charlatans; there are principles that inform its use just like any other method of interpretation, despite abuse of the method in some eras of Christian thought.

For the purposes of this article, I am treating allegory as a subclass of figural interpretation that uses the extended imagery, implied abstraction, and resonances of a text to infer spiritual truths.<sup>30</sup> Allegory is usually distinguished from metaphor by its involvement of multiple, often related symbols, or by its suggestion of a deeper relation than simple resemblance. On the other side, allegory is distinct from typology in that allegory does not contain the teleological aspect of typology—there is no sense of escalation or fulfillment embedded in the concept. Because of this absence

<sup>23</sup> Goppelt also included the spanning of both testaments as one of the three features of typology.

<sup>24</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> C. A. Evans and L. Novakovic, “Typology,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 990.

<sup>26</sup> I’m reminded of Alvin Plantinga’s working definition of the term “fundamentalist”: “The full meaning of the term, therefore (in this use), can be given by something like ‘stupid sumbitch whose theological opinions are considerably to the right of mine.’” Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: 2000), 245.

<sup>27</sup> Beale, *Handbook of New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 35.

<sup>28</sup> Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” 181.

<sup>29</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 270.

<sup>30</sup> This has a great deal of similarity with Kevin Vanhoozer’s approach to allegory in *Is There a Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), although Vanhoozer is less optimistic about the likelihood of an allegorical interpretation’s meaning being derived from “within” the text.

of progression, allegory does not require iteration the way typology does (at least two in every set: type and antitype); a text might be related to another in an allegorical way, or an allegorical motif may reoccur in Scripture, but the concept does not require it. Finally, unlike typology, allegory does not enjoy an expansive list of explicitly named New Testament examples; the only time the word is used in the New Testament is Paul's interpretation of Hagar and Sarah as the two covenants as allegorical in Gal 4:22-31.

This does not mean allegory is especially rare, however. Despite its tarnished reputation, the concept crops up in Scripture regularly, once one is unafraid to look for it. The only two parables of Jesus that he himself interprets function at least in part allegorically. The parable of the sower in Mark 4:1-20 (and also Matt 13:1-23) uses a number of concrete objects to signify spiritual realities: Satan is represented by a bird, persecution and worldly distraction represented by thorns, and sower represented by the preacher. The parable of the tares (Matt 13:24-43) uses the same device: the sower is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the harvest is the close of the age, etc. Michael Fink classifies 1 Cor 5:6-8; 9:8-10; 10:1-11 as allegorical.<sup>31</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:8-12 finds Paul referencing Deut 25:4 when describing the surrender of his claim to payment:

For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?<sup>32</sup>

Let us now consider more cases, continuing where we left off with Jesus in Nazareth's synagogue. Augustine considered the manner of the tearing of the temple curtain upon Jesus' death to be significant, "the curtain was torn *from top to bottom*." Augustine says that the direction of the tearing is a picture of the rending of the barrier between God and man being initiated by God. Just as God has instituted the temple cult, he was now introducing a new era.<sup>33</sup> No doubt this detail is some sense symbolic, but in what way? The curtain itself constitutes an element of the larger typological theme of God's temple, serving to divide the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The tearing of the curtain, however, does not itself seem to serve as either a type or an antitype. To call it a metaphor seems inappropriate as well. What further complicates the matter (as in the case of Christ's sermon already discussed) is the fact that Christians assume a degree of intentionality in the unfolding of all events, not the least those events recorded in Scripture. For this reason, allegory can, at least in principle, be grounded in the same expectation of self-disclosure

<sup>31</sup> Michael Fink, "Allegory," in *Holman Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler, available online at <https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/hbd/view.cgi?n=243> (last accessed March 10, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> ESV.

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels*, Book III, chap. xxi in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VI, 206.



as typology. We cannot insist the curtain ripped from top to bottom just by happenstance, although it might not be unwarranted to draw meaning from it either. At the same time, however, expectant readers of the Scriptures have every reason to carefully attend to such details, given Jesus' own close reading of the Hebrew Bible.

I have attempted to cast doubt on the sharpness of the lines dividing typology, allegory, and metaphor (these serving as three broad classes of vehicles of symbolic reference). C. A. Evans and L. Novakovic are also somewhat skeptical of hard distinctions between various species of symbolic interpretation. They include *midrash* and *peshet* for an assessment of the four streams flowing through the culture immediately surrounding the scriptures:

Despite their differences, there is significant overlap between these methods of interpretation. For example, to some extent, all four involve a searching of Scripture (*midrash*); all four find symbolic meaning that transcends the letter of the text (*allegory*); all four recognize the presence of mystery and hidden truth within the text (*peshet*); and all four believe that to some extent the present and future are foreshadowed by biblical history (*typology*).<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, examples of each type involve varying degrees of opacity: some are quite clear on their own, some are clear enough further explained by other inspired authors, some are initially opaque but then explained, some are still opaque after being explained, some are clear only to a very historical or culturally informed reader, some are suggestive but unclear, and some are not clear at all, unyielding it seems to any avenue of inquiry.

#### V. FIGURAL INTERPRETATION AND THE THRESHOLD OF CERTAINTY

There are no universal standards that separate legitimate from illegitimate interpretation. Not only does debate surround the types of evidence needed to support a claim, but also the level of certainty required in those individual domains, and in aggregate, to motivate a particular intention. Walter Kaiser believes that New Testament authors never interpret Old Testament texts in ways that extend beyond the intention of the original human author. Kaiser's position is informed largely by his rejection of the atomistic attempt of many modern scholars to discern each text's *Sitz im Leben* (motivated by skepticism of the historical or theological coherence of the whole). To protect against an exegetical free-for-all, Kaiser denies that interpretations foreign to the human authors of Scripture can ever be valid. To Kaiser's credit, he recognizes the challenging work required to support such a view. In light of the many New Testament quotations that seem to move far beyond the originally suggested meaning, Kaiser usually appeals to a larger notion of context

<sup>34</sup> Evans and Novakovic, "Typology," 990.



than generally assumed, invoking the broader theological backdrop in which the prophet speaks.<sup>35</sup> He is frequently adamant about what is at stake: "... the whole revelation of God as revelation hangs in jeopardy if we, an apostle, or an angel from heaven try to add to, delete, rearrange, or reassign the sense or meaning that a prophet himself received."<sup>36</sup>

Peter Leithart disagrees:

The authors of the New Testament do unconscionable things with the Old Testament ... Whatever he might have been thinking at the time, Hosea was, by Matthew's account, referring to Jesus' flight from Bethlehem when he wrote, "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Hos 11:1; Matt 2:15). Whatever Zechariah had in mind, he was actually prophesying Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem when he wrote, "Behold your king is coming to you" (Zech 9:9; Matt 21:5).<sup>37</sup>

Leithart believes that in the effort to preserve the integrity of the inspired human author, evangelicals influenced by the grammatical-historical method have implicitly downplayed the divine author, specifically the divine author's power to develop themes and image, across books and testaments (developments that often transcend the self-understanding of the human author though whom God speaks). The historical-grammatical method provides the basic tools for understanding the plain sense of Scripture, the sense that shapes doctrine and must always hold pride of place in biblical interpretation. Philology, geography, archeology, and cultural analysis can all help readers understand the world of the text. Literary methods are no less important. The danger, however, is that biblical studies adopts not only the tools of biblical critics, but the mindset as well—excluding the divine author in slavish attention to the human. Furthermore, the grammatical-historical method invites the subtle temptation to work so thoroughly through the text that one is in fact behind it, replacing the text's authority with its contextual background. A theological approach to Scripture is critical for fully understanding it.

Evangelical consensus has largely rejected Kaiser's more narrow approach to authorial intention, but the concept has evolved. Beale describes authorial intent as "expandable": developing in a way congruent with the original, but not "brand-new" or "contradictory"; the Old Testament authors had a true understanding of what they wrote but not an exhaustive understanding.<sup>38</sup> Thus the author himself, if he were presented with development of salvation history since his own era, would recognize the expanded use, even if he could not on his own conceive of it.

<sup>35</sup> Kaiser is not alone; C.H. Dodd's seminal lectures convinced many that New Testament authors presupposed the context of the many texts they cite, often in complex ways. C.H. Dodd, *The Old Testament in the New: The Ethel M. Wood Lecture Delivered before the University of London 4 March, 1952* (London: Athlone, 1952).

<sup>36</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 135.

<sup>37</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: the Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, 27.

Related but somewhat distinct to *types* of evidence is the question of *certainty*. This is something like the degree to which the accumulated evidence implies a certain interpretation. Different scholars might agree for what counts as legitimizing evidence but disagree on what amount of evidence is necessary to validate a particular interpretation. Imagine this issue dividing exegetes along a spectrum. Leaving aside the caricature of fundamentalist evangelicals interpreting the whole Bible “literally,” the most restrictive view would be something akin to Kaiser’s treatment, which inherently rules out a robust account of typology. This is because the only way the Old Testament writer could mean what the New Testament writers see in the Old Testament (e.g., “for they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” 1 Cor 10:4), is for their statements to be purely prophetic, and prophecy and typology are conceptually distinct.<sup>39</sup> The next position, somewhat less restrictive, treats typology as a kind of wild animal, observable in the pages of Scripture but off-limits to the uninspired Bible interpreter. Richard Longenecker is a noteworthy proponent of this view:

I suggest we should not attempt to reproduce their midrashic handling of the text, their allegorical explications, or much of their Jewish manner of argumentation ... “Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?” Where that exegesis is based on a revelatory stance, or where it evidences itself to be merely cultural, or where it shows itself to be circumstantial or *ad hominem* in nature, “No.” Where, however, it treats the Old Testament in more literal fashion, following the course of what we speak of today as historico-grammatical exegesis, “Yes.”<sup>40</sup>

There are two items of note here: first, Longenecker suggests that the point made earlier in this paper about the prevalence of allegory—despite only one explicit mention in the New Testament—is correct. More importantly, Longenecker makes a distinction between the conclusions New Testament authors reached and the way they reached them. In effect, Longenecker is making a judgment about trustworthy modes of interpretation. Historical-grammatical methods are valid, other methods are not. A somewhat different approach to this view is that held by Roy Zuck, who defines an antitype as only a “person, event, or thing *so designated in the New Testament* that corresponds to and fulfills (heightens) the type.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Some of Kaiser’s statements suggest he wants to retain some minimal notion of typology, but I have not found in his work a thorough treatment of the concept, and most mentions of it are negative: “Some of the tent pegs in the Tabernacle were simply there to hold it up.” Quoted in “Walt Kaiser on Christ-Centered Teaching and Preaching,” in *Christ-Centered Teaching and Preaching*, Ed Stetzer, ed. (Nashville: Lifeway, 2013), 14–17.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 219.

<sup>41</sup> R. B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Wheaton: Victor, 1991), 176, emphasis mine.

A slightly less restrictive approach to allegory and typology might be called the “historical-grammatical *or* certainty” view. This is presented by Bryan Chapell: “...where New Testament writers specifically cite or *unmistakably* echo how an Old Testament person or feature figure the person and work of Christ—as with Adam, David, Melchizedek, the Passover, and the temple—a preacher may safely use typological exposition.”<sup>42</sup> According to this view, typological interpretations (and some allegorical interpretations, as I have suggested above, although Chapell would no doubt dispute this) are valid in two cases: when the New Testament authors already do it in the same instance, and when the exegete is absolutely certain such an interpretation is correct.<sup>43</sup> Although they do not always argue for such a position, one suspects this is the view of many evangelical scholars; D.A. Carson seems to advocate for such a position,<sup>44</sup> and Gordon P. Hugenberger fairly clearly does.<sup>45</sup>

We also have reason to think Calvin held this view. The early Reformers were as a group skeptical of the elaborate allegories of both contemporary Roman Catholic theologians and the church fathers, but Calvin especially so. One of his first works was an introduction and translation of John Chrysostom, whom he regarded as the most salvageable preacher of the patristic age. After growing tired of Martin Bucer and Philip Malanthon's long-winded and at times esoteric commentaries, Calvin resolved that his own would be *perspicua brevitatem*.<sup>46</sup> “Brevity” is easily rendered; the first term means something like “clarity” or “simplicity.” In his preface to Romans he writes that the duty of commentator is “to lay open the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to explain, he deviates from his mark, or at least strays out of his own sphere, to the extent that he leads his readers away from it.”<sup>47</sup> This does not mean Calvin was an Intentionalist. Intertextual discussions, or typology (which Calvin did accept in some measure) was generally the purview of the *Institutes*; his Old Testament commentaries and preaching are so focused, in fact, that Calvin was frequently derided as a “Judaizer.” In his defense, Calvin maintained that allegorizations were “puerile” and “childish,” believing that a conservative

<sup>42</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 281, emphasis mine.

<sup>43</sup> Chapell does not give any immediate examples of such a case, but Joseph is often mentioned in similar discussions, despite being referenced only in Hebrews as an example of faith.

<sup>44</sup> Both in his essay “The Hermeneutical Competence of New Testament Commentaries,” in *On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries: Festschrift for Grant R. Osborne on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday* Stanley, E. Porter and Eckhard J. Schnabel, eds., (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 8. Leiden: Brill, 2013), 147-172, and his class lectures at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon Hugenberger, “Introductory Notes on Typology,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the use of the Old Testament in the New*, G. K. Beale, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 337-441.

<sup>46</sup> T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 88.

<sup>47</sup> T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 91.

stance as a requirement for the exegete: "Let everyone, then, who desires to be proficient in the Scriptures keep to this rule—to gather from the Prophets and the apostle what is solid."<sup>48</sup>

The position I plan to defend is one step less restrictive than this one, but let me first acknowledge that there are many other positions on the other side of mine, far more free in using figure, allegory, typology, and metaphor. I have defended some of the practices of the early church fathers, but a great deal of it is hard to take seriously, e.g., Augustine's description of the extra payment of the good Samaritan to the innkeeper as either Paul's commendation of celibacy or his own vocation as a tent-maker, despite being within his rights to ask for financial support. Caesarius considered the ten cheeses David carried to his brothers in 1 Samuel 17 a figure for the Decalogue, and the ephah of flour, "a quantity of three measures" a picture of "the mystery of the Trinity."<sup>49</sup> Protestants are also guilty: Cocceius, the Dutch reformer, believed that every single event in the Old Testament histories had some antitype in the New Testament.<sup>50</sup>

In consideration of the dangers of figural interpretation, we must also explore the dangers of rejecting figural interpretation and adopting a position within the broad category of Intentionalism. As has already been mentioned, Intentionalism is often favored by confessional scholars with a high regard for Scripture because it seems to protect the text from the ever-present threat of groundless manipulation. The problem with Intentionalism is that it cannot reasonably avoid the dilemma outlined by Gabler, Stendahl, and co. We can put it this way: how can the author of Psalm 137, "which bemoans captivity in Babylon, makes rude remarks about Edomites, and expresses an ineradicable longing for a glimpse of Jerusalem ..."<sup>51</sup> be said to *directly* address readers in the late-modern age?

To explain the bearing of Scripture on diverse settings, Kaiser uses the image of a ladder of abstraction. The teachings of Scripture are "principlized" by distilling concrete (and in some sense accidental) particulars out, and the abstract universals are applied to new sets of particulars.<sup>52</sup> This process implies the admission that much of Scripture is *indirectly* addressing the decontextualized reader.

Does a model that categorizes parts of the Bible as indirect discourse have a problem? In one sense, no. One can still affirm that the whole Bible is true and that all of Scripture *applies* to all people, in one way or another, much like the fall of Rome informs Americans' perspectives on

<sup>48</sup> Calvin, Comm. Hos. 6:2 (*Opera quae supersunt Omnia*; ed. W. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, 1863-1900) 42: 320.

<sup>49</sup> John R. Franke, ed., *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel*, (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 4; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 268-70.

<sup>50</sup> Patrick, Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1900), 9-14.

<sup>51</sup> David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," in *Theology, History, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Darren Sarisky (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015): 267-278. The quote comes from 271.

<sup>52</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "A Principlizing Model," in *Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, 22.

their country. There is a problem, however, if one considers the occasion of reading and preaching Scripture in church as God's Word *to* his people, something it seems all Intentionalists believe. Leithart argues that some type of non-Intentionalist interpretative scheme is "almost unavoidable" for "integrating the various demands of preaching and teaching Scripture."

<sup>53</sup> In my experience, this demand to directly address God's people through his Word is especially pronounced in congregational worship: there are very few Intentionalists in the pulpit on Sunday morning, whatever their professors say in seminary classrooms. There are some passages that do seem to have as their scope all humanity, throughout time. But vast tracts of the Old Testament do not suggest this scope; how should they be preached?

There are additional problems with Intentionalism. First, Kaiser's view of authorial intention does not bear scrutiny of the texts in question; they simply do not suggest the Old Testament human author had the New Testament events in mind when writing. Both Kaiser and his disputants (myself included) must make a judgment either way: is it accurate to describe some situation *y* as in some sense "in view" when text *x* was written. Rejecters of Intentionalism say it does not seem accurate; this judgment is reinforced by the underlying belief that rejection itself does not pose a problem—if anything, the rejecters would probably argue that this approach glorifies God all the more, given that it points to his providential hand in corresponding texts and future events.

The second thing we seem to lose under Intentionalism is the model of interpretation given to us in the New Testament. Jesus, Paul, and other New Testament writers do not attend to context as closely as modern employers of the historical-grammatical approach. If we are not open to their approach, we have lost all our canonical guides of intertextual interpretation. This is problematic in part because one of the important functions of the Bible is its guidance about how to use the Bible; it gives us models to follow. More specifically, God seems to intend to train his people in the reception of his Word by giving examples of other receivers of the Word. When Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for their reading of the law, wise readers discern how *not* to follow in their stead. Nowhere have I seen this problem addressed by Intentionalists: how does their position not engender an overly skeptical approach to the apostles? Perhaps they would say the apostles received prophetic insight informing their use of the Old Testament, insight we neither have ourselves nor can definitively rule out. If this is so, we are like people trying to sew without seeing that needles are being used. The burden of proof, however, rests on this view; why is it nowhere suggested in epistolary Scripture, given that prophecy is a common category? I suspect that underlying the opposing view is an approach to Scripture that is primarily propositional: God's Word tells us what is true about the world and about Christ; it is not a manual for literary interpretation or formation of the heart's affections and imagination.

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<sup>53</sup> Peter Leithart, "The Quadriga, or Something Like It," in *Ancient Faith for the Church's Future*, Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman, eds., (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008), 115.

The third thing we lose when we demand a high degree of certainty is the edification available just beneath that threshold. Those who value certainty above all else say this edification is not worth the risk. Those embracing reduced certainty say the goods are too good to pass up. Part of my rationale in believing this is grounded in my view of the nature of God's revelation. Neither special revelation nor general revelation yield their treasures to the lazy or passive. The Bible was not pre-translated for ease of evangelism. The fact that the earth revolves around the sun was not discovered quickly. In both cases there were long periods of hard, focused labor. Even in the modern age there are often moments of genuine puzzlement: are the unusual numbers in the Old Testament best translated 1,000 or 20? Do humans have souls *and* spirits? My view of Scripture is also not one that seeks to weed out every false belief with maximum vehemence. True doctrine is not unimportant. As Paul tells Timothy, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:16). But the type of figural interpretation I defend above is not focused on doctrinal questions; it concerns the use of imagery to *serve* doctrine. I do not believe that a symbol thoughtfully used to illustrate a plain doctrine of Scripture threatens the faith. The goal of Christian preaching is rich understanding of God's Word and zealous acts of faith and love. If any interpretive maneuver does not generally result in *good* fruit, it should not be continued. I do not believe, however, that stating that Goliath serves as a scaly example of Satan and David as the anointed one born in Bethlehem is especially dangerous for either doctrine or practice. In fact, an approach to Scripture that is overly cautious can also do harm. Many pastors will have witnessed groups argue for some length about whether it is proper to thank God that Jesus is in their midst, given two or three are gathered together in his name (Matt 18:20). Since the verse in question is in a context describing how to break fellowship with a brother in sin, some believe it should not be used in other types of corporate gatherings. Not only is the argument theologically suspect, it restricts one's use of biblical language to the point of absurdity, given how embedded every verse is in some context. Should we also not say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" since we do not live in Canaan and we are members of a new covenant? And after all, Jesus says "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters...such a person cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). These approaches risk positioning the Christian as only passive receptor of the Bible, failing to see that God's Word is our primary weapon in the last stages of a cosmic war.

## VI. SYMBOL AND FORMATION

As we continue developing an alternative approach, let us consider a helpful distinction made by Thomas Aquinas. Thomas argued that while there was a place for imaginative, spiritual interpretations of Scripture, only the plain sense could establish doctrine. Thomas considered this a slight but important sharpening of Augustine:



In the holy scripture no confusion results, for all the senses are founded on one – the literal – from which alone can any argument be drawn, and not from those intended in allegory, as Augustine says. Nevertheless, nothing of holy scripture perishes on account of this, since nothing necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense which is not elsewhere put forward by the scripture in its literal sense.<sup>54</sup>

Thomas clearly prioritizes the “literal” sense; it governs all others, delimiting their boundaries.<sup>55</sup> Mention of Augustine is helpful, as he is especially clear in describing the purpose of the spiritual sense in the first place. For Augustine, a biblical text should be taken in its context with the help of all available means to understand difficult passages, but ultimately this study serves the formation of the Christian’s affections. He writes “what one reads should be carefully considered until a reading is established which reaches the kingdom of love.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, while something like the grammatical-historical approach can aid the project, it is this praxis of love in the context of the Church that is the criterion of interpretation. This is not to say that absolutely anything can be defended by Scripture if it somehow results in love, however bizarrely. This hermeneutical principle, one that animated the Church throughout the medieval era, simply describes the ultimate *telos* of God’s Word. Reading Scriptures serves as a guide to Christian praxis while this same praxis of love becomes the viewpoint with which to correctly read the Scriptures. A polyvalent understanding of Scripture, wherein the text speaks to an immediate situation (best discovered by scrutiny of the context and likely intentions of the human author) and a broader spiritual concern (usually the life and ministry of Christ, often in a manner that describes the life of faith patterned after Christ), preserves both the occasional character of the texts of the Bible and its timeless relevance “once for all time.” For example, the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt describes a real historical event, but it also illustrates the mission of Jesus to set all people free and the movement of the believer from death to life through baptism. In the primary, plain sense, the passage describes some element of salvation history. In the secondary readings, the text speaks to the life of the believer in Christ. This second dimension is less relevant to dogma, but perhaps more relevant to the formation of “little-Christ,” a significant goal of preaching.

Armed with these two ideas—(1) the preserved but deprioritized place of symbolic interpretation and (2) the goal of formation—we begin to see the importance of imagery and symbolism in the Bible for the preacher. As narrative theology and postmodern scholarship have emphasized in recent decades, non-propositional “pictures” of truth are

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 1. a. 10.

<sup>55</sup> “Literal” is only clarifying if the term is understood to mean something slightly different than contemporary use. The opposite of literal in this setting is not figurative, but rather “spiritual.”

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, book III, 23.



often more evocative than hard facts. Eugene Peterson explains in *Tell It Slant* that the parables of Jesus open possibilities for their audience that direct preaching cannot access.<sup>57</sup> Parables allow the listener to suspend judgment on who is right, suspend obsession with self-reference, and suspend the inherent complexities of the ordinary life. This is all true, but it is only the beginning of biblical examples; there is far more “picturing” than simply the parables in the Gospels. Robert Alter shows that Old Testament narrative is shot through with remarkable artistry, skill, and scene-staging. In his chapter on “type-scenes,” symbolic touchstones that are repeated and modified,<sup>58</sup> Alter, a nonreligious guide, pleads with the reader:

Instead of relegating every perceived recurrence in the text to the limbo of duplicated sources or fixed folkloric archetypes, we must begin to see that the resurgence of certain pronounced patterns at certain narrative junctures was conventionally anticipated, even counted on, and that against that ground of anticipation the biblical authors set words, motifs, themes, personages, and actions into an elaborate dance of significant innovation. For much of art lies in the shifting aperture between the shadowy fore image in the anticipating mind of the observer and the realized revelatory image in the work itself, and that is what we must learn to perceive more finely in the Bible.<sup>59</sup>

It is of course not altogether controversial to argue for a literary approach to Scripture. But what seems often missed is the way this implicates the interpreter into a far more complicated project than someone interpreting a contract or an instruction manual. James K. A. Smith describes this well:

Our ultimate love moves us and motivates us because we are lured by this picture of human flourishing. Rather than being pushed by beliefs, we are pulled by a telos that we desire. It's not so much that we're intellectually convinced and then muster the willpower to pursue what we ought; rather, at a precognitive level, we are attracted to a vision of the good life that has been painted for us in stories and myths, images and icons. It is not primarily our minds that are captivated but rather our imaginations that are captured, and when our imagination is hooked, we're hooked.<sup>60</sup>

How are our imaginations captured? What is the character of “being hooked”? And finally, how do we gradually encourage a congregation's

<sup>57</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation On the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers*, Reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 15–19.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., three times in Genesis a patriarch flees south pretending his wife is his sister, with subtle but significant variations.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 62.

<sup>60</sup> James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 54.

imagination to become more and more captured by Christ? Robert Penn Warren once wrote that the most natural reading of a poem is not the first, or the tenth, but the hundredth.<sup>61</sup> A nuance savored in the hundredth reading, however, does not engender confidence among evangelicals—one can image being dismissed with a wave: “it was all just a bit too *shadowy*. Give me what’s solid.” The suggestion that a text could speak something only heard in the hundredth reading also implies a kind of unconscious hearing—an erosion of the unacknowledged or undiscerned resistance to a text that only gives away after exposure after exposure after exposure.

One element of the power of literary figures depends on their ambiguity. Jan Fokkelman considers in his literary commentary on the books of Samuel the way David engages Nathan’s fable of the man with many sheep:

David means to occupy himself with the reality outside of himself, the rich man and his misdeed, but, in actual fact, he is involved with himself and seeks to restore his feeling of well-being in this way... Nathan provides him with a projection screen for this very purpose, and, indeed, David projects vehemently.<sup>62</sup>

Fokkelman shows in a deeper sense the degree to which David “means to pass verdict upon another but actually passes verdict entirely upon himself.” It is not hard to imagine the scene going differently: Nathan approaches the king, points his boney prophetic finger right at David’s face, and unleashes his tongue in fiery rebuke. Before the attendants can even take the hideous details in, the guards drag the old man away.

This ambiguity or vagueness (described well as “polyvalency”) explains how a text like Genesis 22, the *Aqedah*, can be powerfully preached as either a picture of God’s faithful provision of the sacrificial lamb, or as a warning of God’s insistence on total allegiance. Which is the right way to preach it? This question is more complicated than another important question: what is the right way to write a commentary chapter about Genesis 22? To ask about preaching immediately constrains the interpreter with the obligation to consider what is needed, not just what is available. Image a third grader in Sunday School asking, “What does the sacrifice of Isaac mean?” How does the answer change when the same question is asked by a doctoral supervisor? Or by an isolated tribe that practices child sacrifice? Or by Zionists who have just expressed their interest in reclaiming the Temple Mount? To consider this question is interesting in its own right, but especially relevant to this topic is the way symbolism within the narrative “speaks” to these different audiences. More positively, by using symbols and imagery, a preacher is able to amplify the text’s various resonances, responding to the needs of a particular congregation. Such a maneuver is hardly new territory for many pastors,

<sup>61</sup> Peter Leithart shared this quote with me, but neither of us could track down its source.

<sup>62</sup> J. B. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, A full interpretation based on stylistic and structural analyses*, vol. 1, *King David* (II Sam. 9-20 & I Kings 1-2) (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1981), 77.

particularly in the recent resurgence of typologically-driven Christology.<sup>63</sup> To use an example from Peter Leithart, the story of David and Goliath contains imagery suggestive of a number of themes.<sup>64</sup> Goliath is dressed in scales and has his head crushed, suggesting he serves as a figure for the serpent, Satan. David serves as federal head for the whole nation, a nation at once guilty for its tolerance of Goliath and enslaved by the terror of its foe. Depending on the needs of the congregation, David can serve as an image of Christ as champion of a cowardly people or as an image of the mature believer: he defends the name of the Lord, trusting that the Lord will deliver him. Can either of these particular readings be definitely proved? No. They are gestures and shadows. Careful reading and poetic imagination do not naturally welcome proofs, but they are none the less real, and, if Smith is correct, they are likely more formative. And, in contrast to the attentive but secular approach of Alter, there is an additional factor for the Christian, namely God's artistic flourishes woven between texts and throughout the events they describe. Typology might be thought of as a view of history that takes God as the most important constitutive element, the hub around which all events turn and find deep connection. It is an approach to Scripture that attempts to be governed by God's authority completely, but also attends to the revealed nature of varied context, setting, genre, and self-use.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this article I have outlined an approach to the interpretation of Scripture that privileges the direct communication of God to his people through the preached Word. In addition to pointing out challenges to some interpretive approaches, I have worked to frustrate the attempt to neatly divide typology and allegory, proposing an account of allegory that puts the abused notion back to good use. I have tried to show that those preaching God's Word have unique demands that warrant the judicious use of various types of literary figures, following the example of Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles. What remains to be done is provide a more thorough account of what informs and restricts this process.

<sup>63</sup> Al Mohler refers to the famous quote from Spurgeon: "As Charles Spurgeon expressed this so eloquently, preach the Word, place it in its canonical context, and 'make a bee-line to the cross.'" (R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, New ed. [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008], 21). The Spurgeon quote can be found a few places, among them a sermon delivered on March 13th, 1859.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Leithart, "The Quadriga, or Something Like It," in *Ancient Faith for the Church's Future*, Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman, eds., (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 117.

## A PAULINE STRATEGY FOR CHALLENGING CULTURAL LITURGIES: MAKING CORINTHIAN DISCIPLES

RYAN JACKSON\*

Anyone seeking to embody the heart of pastoral ministry will have spent significant energy considering how we might be more effective at shepherding people. The burden of the pastor's heart is to engage in the role of the *undershepherd* in helping to guide the Lord's people into a closer relationship with him (1 Peter 5:2-4). There are few things more thrilling than the joy of watching God transform a life. When stray sheep are called closer to the Chief Shepherd, there is great joy in heaven, and there is a sense of rejoicing in the pastor's heart, too.

The process of helping people live in closer proximity to Jesus is the essence of discipleship. In fact, it is the heart of the final marching orders Jesus left his followers before his ascension. In Matthew's account of the Great Commission, the main imperative is: "make disciples" (Mat 28:19). While making disciples certainly involves evangelism, it is not limited to an evangelistic moment that is completed at a conversion experience. In order to fulfill this commandment of Jesus, we have to be engaged in leading people through a process of growth and maturation. The remaining elements of the Great Commission itself bear that out. Making disciples involves baptism—bringing people to a place of identifying with the work of Jesus on their behalf—and it involves teaching. The teaching Jesus had in mind was not just a transfer of information. It wasn't just about a mental download of doctrine. The commandment involves teaching people "to observe" (Mat 28:20). Being a disciple then isn't just about affirming a set of theological propositions; it is also about action.

One of the Pauline ways of speaking of this is to call people into conformity with the likeness of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). People who have a spiritual encounter with Jesus thereafter spend the remainder of their lives working out the full implications of what that means (Phil 2:12). The process requires continual transformation, and we can see this reality at work in the lives of people within our circles of care. If the spiritual process could be paralleled with the physical life cycle, we might illustrate it with these phases of spiritual life: unborn, children, and adult. In this admittedly simplistic taxonomy, the *unborn* would be those who have not yet come into an appropriate relationship with God. The *children* are those who have become a part of God's people, but remain immature.

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Finally, the *adults* would be those followers of Jesus who attain to varying degrees of maturity in the faith.<sup>1</sup>

This is an important illustration because various Christian traditions become fixated with particular phases of the life cycle to the neglect of the others. Highly evangelistic traditions may focus on getting people into the kingdom of God, but languish when it comes to helping people move to maturity. Other traditions may focus on maturity in the faith without appropriate evangelistic fervor. Neither extreme embraces the balance of the Great Commission, nor indeed of the Great Commandment—to love the Lord with the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Forms of Christian education that end up being little more than information transfer do not help this problem. In James K. A. Smith's volumes on cultural liturgies, he provides compelling arguments for a healthy reconsideration of Christian Education. Smith urges us to consider an alternative anthropology in which love and the imagination are most important in forming our identity and determining how we relate to the world. He then suggests that education from a Christian perspective is about how to facilitate transformation of the human heart in a way that redirects it towards greater ends. In particular, Smith argues, this should happen through Christian worship and liturgical formation. In this way, Smith offers us a reconsideration of how we should engage in the process of discipleship by reconnecting the task of the college with the mission of the church.

Smith's case studies in cultural exegesis demonstrate the way in which human persons are oriented towards particular versions of the good life through "bodily practices, routines, or rituals that grab hold of our hearts through our imagination, which is closely linked to our bodily senses."<sup>2</sup>

This anthropological adjustment is offered as a correction to the overly "heady" understanding of people as thinking creatures.<sup>3</sup> Instead, Smith argues, bodily practices are important because human beings experience and come to *know* the world not first in propositional and conceptual terms, but in terms of an orientation of desire. Smith's anthropological taxonomy seeks to challenge a strictly Cartesian rationalism with Heidegger's more embodied approach to the person. In distinction to an anthropology that reduced the human to thinker or perceiver, Heidegger wanted to show that people approach the world more from the feelings than from the mind. Smith takes Heidegger's approach even farther by pushing him all the way back to Augustine, who argued that the most primordial way humans approach the world is as creatures of love. In this regard, "Our (ultimate) love is constitutive of our identity."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller articulation of the trajectory of discipleship, see the excellent study designed to help churches measure their effectiveness at building communities of growing believers: Greg L. Hawkins & Cally Parkinson, *Move: What 1,000 Churches REVEAL about Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 41-63.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 51.

As humans, our love is directed toward our understanding of the philosophical *summum bonum*, which could be spoken of from a biblical perspective as the Kingdom of God. The real question those who have interest in discipleship should be asking is: What is it that directs the desire of the human heart? What is it that determines the *telos* to which the heart is set? Smith argues that our habits “constitute the fulcrum of our desire: they are the hinge that ‘turns’ our heart, our love, such that it is predisposed to be aimed in certain directions.”<sup>5</sup> *Habits* are formed from the repetition of bodily practices that function at a precognitive level to inscribe upon the heart knowledge that transcends a merely propositional understanding. Smith calls this knowledge *praktagnosia*, and it is variously illustrated as the kind of knowledge one might have of hometown geography or of the keyboard on a computer.<sup>6</sup> You may not be able to give street names, but you know how to get to your grandmother’s house. You may not be able to say what letter is to the right of the letter “e,” but you can type without looking. This is because there is an embodiment of knowledge that is greater than what happens merely at the cognitive level—*praktagnosia*. This embodied knowledge is formed from “the complex of inclinations and dispositions that make us lean into the world with a habituated momentum in certain directions,” a reality Smith refers to as *habitus*.<sup>7</sup>

Armed with this anthropology of the human being primarily as a loving rather than thinking creature, Smith builds a case that the world implicitly understands this and engages it effectively in ways that the church frequently misses. If the message of the church is delivered only in cognitive terms, it will never compete with the more visceral appeal of the “gospel” offered by the institutions which embody alternate visions of the “kingdom.” Smith analyzes three cultural institutions (the mall, the stadium, and the university) to demonstrate this point. Each of these institutions achieves its goals of directing human hearts toward its desired ends by engaging people at the level of their heart (*kardia*) rather than strictly at the level of the mind.<sup>8</sup> If the church hopes for its message to be heard above the clamoring voices of those institutions, the church must learn how to move beyond challenging alternate worldviews and engage in a challenge of the social *imaginaries* that communicate truth

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 56–7.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 79.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 24–25. As we shall see, Paul’s anthropology is capable of expressing the diversity of the human being without undermining the unity of the person. For Paul, it is not the mind, but the heart (*kardia*) that is the integrative core of the person. J. K. Chamblin, “Psychology,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993): 765–75, at 769. Paul uses a number of different aspects of the person sometimes interchangeably to express the essence or core of the human being. See Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 528–38. Note the classic treatment in: R. Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).



through image, story, and mythology.<sup>9</sup> These secular *imaginaries* produce embodied practices and rituals that eventually aim the human heart away from God.<sup>10</sup>

While there are certainly contemporary elements of this problem unique to our time, the issue itself is not without biblical precedent. The Apostle Paul's Corinthian correspondence provides us with a unique window into the social *imaginaries* present in first century culture.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps more than in any other New Testament literature, we find in Paul's interaction with the people of Corinth an excellent case study in how the church provides an alternative social *imaginary* that challenges and undermines what is offered by a predominately pagan culture.<sup>12</sup> Corinth was a cosmopolitan city that reflected the values espoused by the Roman Imperial propaganda. Advancing a strategy that would confront and subvert the cultural liturgies of his day would be critical to Paul's missionary endeavor.

Founded by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., Roman Corinth was populated mainly with freedmen, with veterans, and with artisans and craftsmen from a diverse background. The eclectic denizens of Corinth were assembled mostly from the have-nots of the Roman Empire and given a chance to attain a certain degree of advancement in this city, which took its cues from mother Rome. This meant that the people of Corinth pursued contemporary ideals of *Romanitas* in order to establish their belonging in a world that had previously excluded them.<sup>13</sup> Heavily influenced by a culture of honor and shame, a person with humble beginnings, if they acquired resources of economic or political capital, could improve their status and in turn their sense of self-worth.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, commercial and social competition in ancient Corinth reached startling proportions and gave rise to a cutthroat culture in which only the strongest could survive.<sup>15</sup> In Corinthian culture, boasting and self-promotion were necessary means

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 65.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Smith discusses a social imaginary from the work of Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23-30; see Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 65-71.

<sup>12</sup> David Horrell argues that Paul's Corinthians correspondence is of exception value in that it recalls elements of Paul's earliest instruction to the fledgling Christian community in Corinth (David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 77).

<sup>13</sup> Smith argues that Christian worship is political in that it marks us and trains us as citizens of another king and as people who are seeking another kingdom (*Desiring The Kingdom*, 154). This is very resonant with the way that Paul's Gospel invited a subversion of the power structures of Rome; see R. A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, Intl., 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Anthony C. Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 13.

<sup>15</sup> The struggle for prestige and status in the Corinthian culture lies behind many of the problems Paul faced in his ministry there. The fact that Corinth was the first Greek city to host Roman gladiatorial games confirms the savage spirit of Corinthian competitiveness (Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 11).



of achieving greater honor in society. To be a good citizen was considered the height of virtue, while any other behavior than that which advanced the social construct of the city or Empire was either suspect or blatantly shameful.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the difficulties of survival in this context, Corinth was a thriving cosmopolitan and pluralistic city. Due to its strategic location for trade, it quickly became an economic and cultural center well-known for its prosperity. Located just south of the narrow isthmus that connected the two major land masses of Greece, Corinth commanded harbors both in the Aegean Sea to the east as well as in the Ionian Sea to the west. This made Corinth a crossroads for trade in the Roman Empire.<sup>17</sup> True to form with its reputation for being highly competitive, Corinth quickly became a major economic force in the first century both through its engagement in trade as well as through its own manufacturing, which was renowned for its quality and aesthetic value in the period.

In addition to being renowned for its wealth, Corinth was also renowned for its avant-garde living. A number of factors converged to make Corinth a place of extremely diverse morality. The constant traffic from international merchants, the tourism attracted by the nearby cultic site of Delphi, the regular schedule of popular athletic events, and the host of religious pilgrims attracted to the various centers of worship in and around Corinth led to a heterogeneous culture renowned for its sexual promiscuity, its idolatrous rituals, and its ruthless competitiveness.<sup>18</sup>

Given the multi-cultural nature of Corinth, it should come as no surprise that the city accommodated a wide variety of idolatrous practices. The most prominent of these would have been the Roman imperial cult, which was situated in a highly provocative and suggestive location among the smorgasbord of religious practices offered.<sup>19</sup> While certainly not every citizen would have participated in this particular cult, those who hoped to advance within the power structures of the day would almost certainly have done. The imperial cult helped to relay the Imperial propaganda and offered opportunity for people desperate to achieve honor and status to demonstrate the seriousness of their commitment to the public ideals.<sup>20</sup>

The interesting thing for our purposes is how the behavior in a city like Corinth was conditioned by the social practices that made up everyday life in this context. The social, religious, and political institutions were intertwined to embrace the Roman ethos and communicate clear ideas about the world. These institutions were all embodied in *prognostika*

<sup>16</sup> The proliferation of public benefaction in Corinth demonstrates the lengths to which its citizens would go to ensure their social status. For further study, see Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: the Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983), 53-56.

<sup>19</sup> Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 272.

<sup>20</sup> See S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

that directed the hearts of the adherents towards the Roman (or at least the Corinthian) vision of the good life.

The early Christian community in Corinth struggled because they were willing to accept certain propositions of the gospel message, but they failed to have that message actually shape their lives in terms of their practices. In essence, "The Corinthians were simply trying to be Christians with a minimal amount of social and theological disturbance."<sup>21</sup> Or as Fee elegantly puts it, "Although they were the Christian church in Corinth, an inordinate amount of Corinth was yet in them, emerging in a number of attitudes and behaviors that required radical surgery without killing the patient. This is what 1 Corinthians attempts to do."<sup>22</sup>

The Corinthians' dysfunctional view of reality and inadequate experience of the Spirit led to execrable behavior that the Apostle Paul challenged throughout his dealings with them. Whether from an eschatological distortion, or an erroneous view of the material world, or a puffed-up view of knowledge, they managed to justify behavior that Paul found out of sync with the Kingdom of God. So, the apostle Paul sought to deal with this issue in a way that would challenge and subvert the prevailing liturgies within the Corinthian culture.<sup>23</sup> If the Apostle Paul was going to establish a new community of faith in the pagan city of Corinth, he was going to have to engage a strategy that would go beyond an appeal to the person as thinker. While that approach may have gained surer footing in Athens, the philosophical nerve center of Paul's world, even there it would not have been without difficulty—and it certainly would not be sufficient in the culture of ancient Corinth, a city aflame in pursuit of a decadent version of the good life. How he does that should prove incredibly instructive for us.<sup>24</sup>

Paul's Corinthian correspondence is so helpful for us because it is primarily interested not in theoretical knowledge of God, but in the practical application of that profound truth to real world situations.<sup>25</sup> In the apostolic attempt to redirect the hearts of the believers in Corinth, we

<sup>21</sup> Lyle D. Vander Broek quoted in Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner. *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 4.

<sup>23</sup> In this way, Paul's task in Corinth can be said to be essentially about the formation of desire. Paul is attempting to redirect the love of the Corinthians towards the Kingdom of God and away from the prevailing cultural vision of beauty. Cf. Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Thistleton argues for a particular resonance between first century Roman Corinthian culture and ours. "All this provides an embarrassingly close model of a postmodern context for the gospel in our own times, even given the huge historical differences and distances in so many other respects" (Thistleton, *Corinthians*, 17).

<sup>25</sup> In particular, Paul was interested in establishing believing communities through whom the message of the Gospel could be advanced. Note the interesting work of Graham Hill on what it means for the church to be *missional* (Graham Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Introducing Missional Ecclesiology* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012]).

can see at least three interconnected motifs that guide the process.<sup>26</sup> Paul's strategy is based upon an *eschatological shift* that leads to a *transformed epistemology* and produces a *radically subversive ethic*.

### AN ESCHATOLOGICAL SHIFT

First, Paul's strategy in ministry to the Corinthians involves an *eschatological shift*.<sup>27</sup> It is commonly recognized that Pauline eschatology is heavily influenced by Jewish apocalyptic thought.<sup>28</sup> While Jewish apocalyptic influence may be noted in Paul's writings, his thinking also stands in distinction to the apocalyptic mindsets of his time. Both Jewish apocalyptic writings and Paul view history as a division of time into two successive ages. The present age, a world hostile in its manifold rebellion against God, will ultimately be overtaken by the new age of the Spirit when God will overcome all opposition to his rule (cf. 4 *Ezra* 4:26; 7:50). The noteworthy difference between Paul and the apocalyptic literature contemporary with him is that this intervention of God is viewed as a future event in the apocalyptic literature, but Paul interpreted the Christ event as the pivotal crux of history which brought the old age to a close and initiated the subsequent and final age of the Spirit, the final Judgment, and the ultimate establishment of God's reign.

Paul modified the Jewish thinking in which he had been steeped. He placed the time of God's most radical invasion of the world in the past in the events of the life, death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Paul inverts the future oriented hope of God's actions described in Jewish writings into an eschatological system where the epicenter of God's cosmic earthquake was located in the past; and, at the same time, he maintained an expectation for the consummation of that action in the future.<sup>30</sup> There was a form of this eschatological tension in some Jewish writings from our period but

<sup>26</sup> This work will focus mostly on 1 Corinthians though these themes are significantly supported throughout the Pauline literature.

<sup>27</sup> Much could be said here about the way in which Paul challenged the Roman view of time and space with his eschatological reorientation. For further discussion, see T. R. Jackson, "Roman Imperial Ideology and Paul's Concept of New Creation," in *New Creation in Paul's Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2010): 60-80.

<sup>28</sup> The caution of R. Barry Matlock notwithstanding, this remains an important background against which we can understand Paul's own theological innovations (R. Barry Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* [JSNTSS, 127; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]).

<sup>29</sup> V.P. Furnish, II Corinthians (The Anchor Bible, 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 333-4.

<sup>30</sup> Y. Kwon prefers to speak about an organic relationship in eschatological perspectives rather than an eschatological tension. However, a tension does arise when we attempt to explain how Paul can seem to suggest so much has been accomplished for the believer in one instance and in another suggest so much is left to come. The tension is not with God but with how to explain the presence of evil even after the cross. In the end, Kwon's preference for an organic relationship between the present and future may just be a way of sneaking in the old understanding of inaugurated eschatology under cover of different terminology (Y. Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians* [Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004]).

the focus lay in the future whereas Paul's writing included two foci: the past as well as the future.<sup>31</sup>

For Paul, the death and resurrection of Jesus marked the end of the old age and the beginning of the new age of the Spirit,<sup>32</sup> which he viewed as already begun but not yet brought to complete consummation. The old-age problems that characterize the world still exist while the characteristics of the new age of the Spirit have begun to be present in an overlapping of the ages. This inaugurated but not consummated eschatological matrix is important throughout Paul's letters, and it is powerfully present in Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians. First Corinthians begins with a focus on the cross (1:17; 2:2) and ends with a focus on the resurrection (15:12-28, 42-57), and this places this letter firmly within this important eschatological construct. But, there are also strong pointers throughout the letter that indicate Paul's eschatological matrix is at play in his strategy of discipleship for the Corinthian community.<sup>33</sup>

The introductory thanksgiving of the letter is cast in an eschatological framework as Paul attempts to encourage the Corinthian church and affirm their status as an eschatological community.<sup>34</sup> He has received word that the competitive spirit of the city has infiltrated the worship community in their pursuit of spiritual giftings. They are comparing themselves with one another in a kind of spiritual one-upmanship that is divisive rather than unifying. So, Paul begins by reminding them that the work of the Spirit is very real among them (1 Cor. 1:7-8) and that the community is an apocalyptic community looking forward to the "day of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>35</sup>

This pervasive eschatological reality underlies Paul's approach to the situation at Corinth. The Apostle deals with the problems he faces in the Corinthian church from this theological matrix in many ways.<sup>36</sup> He challenges the worldly wisdom of the Corinthians with the wisdom

<sup>31</sup> See the excellent work of P. Minear on apocalyptic cosmology. Interestingly, the book of Revelation is the exception which proves the rule. This is the only actual apocalyptic writing which has a similar eschatological tension and this is precisely because it is predicated on the Christ event (P. Minear, "The Cosmology of the Apocalypse," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder [London: SCM Press, 1962], 23-37).

<sup>32</sup> J. Beker. *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 362.

<sup>33</sup> For an interesting application of this important concept, see Keith T. Marriner, *Following the Lamb: The Theme of Discipleship in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> P. T. O'Brien has shown how themes addressed in the introductory thanksgivings of Paul's letters frequently serve as a kind of symphonic overture for themes to which he plans to return in the course of his writing (P. T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* [Leiden: Brill, 1977]).

<sup>35</sup> They are an apocalyptic community in the sense that they "eagerly await" the "revealing" (τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν) of Jesus! Cf. Rom. 8:18-25.

<sup>36</sup> For further discussion of this eschatological matrix, see G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

revealed from the Spirit (1:6-10).<sup>37</sup> He argues that believers should not engage in lawsuits because it compromised their integrity as those who would participate in God's eschatological judgment of the world at the end of time (1 Cor 4:1-5; 6:1-11).

One particularly enlightening exorcism of this reality occurs in 1 Cor 7:29-31 where Paul uses an eschatological argument as ground for urging Corinthian readers/hearers to remain as they are (7:17, 24). The status of circumcision/uncircumcision, slave/free and marriage/singleness are all addressed under the aegis of an eschatological reality. Paul's argument throughout is based on a detachment from the importance of human affairs because the "form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31). The intention is to demonstrate that the present world is not our ultimate reality. Paul views the time in which the Corinthians were living to be the culminating time of human history (1 Cor 10:11). He reminds them of Israel's history and indicates that their history was intended to instruct not only the ancient Israelites, but also the newly formed people of God that included both Jew and Gentile. For him, the Old Testament narratives were important for their own sake, but they also point forward to God's saving purposes, which have found their fulfillment in Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

What is particularly important in our context is the way Paul uses the negative example of Israel in such a highly charged eschatological strategy of dealing with the Corinthian practice of eating food sacrificed to idols—whether purchased from the marketplace or attending feasts held in the temples. Paul makes the point in the argument of this section (1 Cor. 8:1-11:1) that food sold in the marketplace may be taken without concern for its provenance, but that believers should be concerned about how their actions affect the faith of others, and they should be concerned about actually being associated with idolatrous practices.

Most likely what was happening in Corinth was the commonplace practice of people holding special dinners in temple precincts.<sup>39</sup> Some believers argued on the basis of superior "knowledge" that they were free to do so because the idols were merely false gods (1 Cor 8:4). Paul rejects this position, arguing that believers ought to be responsible for how their actions affect others as well as maintain certain compunctions about direct association with idolatrous practices. He does so by reminding the Corinthians that they are God's eschatological people. He directly confronts the liturgies of the Corinthian social setting, which would have been especially at play in the meals he is warning them about in this context with the sobering reminder of Israel's idolatrous past, and he clearly sets that historical narrative in the larger context of God's eschatological plan. It is no accident then that Paul turns in chapter 11 to a discussion of an alternative meal—one that repudiates the idolatrous temple feasts and

<sup>37</sup> This concept is immensely eschatological since the new age envisaged within the Judaism of Paul's day was to be the age of the Spirit.

<sup>38</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 458-9.

<sup>39</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 191-95.

embodies the eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God.<sup>40</sup> Resituating the Corinthians on God's calendar of the ages is critical to Paul's strategy of redirecting their affections.

### TRANSFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

Secondly, the *eschatological shift* leads to a *transformed epistemology*. This may be observed in the way Paul addresses divisions within the church at Corinth (1 Cor 1:10-4:21). There are at least three major issues Paul addresses in various ways throughout this section in an attempt to move the Corinthians closer to what a truly eschatological community ought to look like.<sup>41</sup> First, the divisions of the church at Corinth have something to do with strife over various leaders. There is no compelling evidence that there was actually division among the leaders themselves.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the Corinthians seemed to rally around various leaders based on their estimation of the leaders' status in the community.<sup>43</sup> Their interest in identifying with the various leaders was likely related to their desire to assert their own honor and status above that of the other believers in the community.

Secondly, the strife is connected with the Corinthians' inadequate understanding of wisdom and knowledge. They have an over-inflated view of their own perception and an exalted view of the efficacy of knowledge. The terms σοφία or σοφός appear in heavy concentration in 1 Corinthians 1-3. The fact that the terms are used derisively by Paul indicates he is challenging what he believes to be faulty perceptions on the part of the Corinthians. Likewise, the term γνῶσις is used more heavily in Paul's letters to the Corinthians than in all of his other letters combined.<sup>44</sup> The Corinthians pride themselves on their acquisition of rights based on their advanced understanding (1 Cor 8:1-13). But, Paul offers them a totally different way of perception—through love rather than through knowledge (1 Cor 8:2-3).

Thirdly, judging from the defense of his authority as an apostle, there must have existed at Corinth a significant level of distrust with regard to Paul's role in the community. Paul's opponents in Corinth were most likely concerned with the nature of his leadership as his appearance did not match the powerful and authoritative image they felt should be characteristic of an apostle. There were models in Corinth of how a

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (Akron: OSL Publications, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Fee argues that there are at least four issues going on in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians (*Corinthians*, 48-9).

<sup>42</sup> In fact, quite the contrary, Paul speaks positively of Apollos for example in 3:5-9 and 16:12. If there were a problem among the leaders, we might have expected Paul to challenge the offending parties, as he did with Peter in Galatians 2:7-8.

<sup>43</sup> It is highly likely that this is related to the Corinthian understanding of patronage and power; see John Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> γνῶσις appears 10 times in 1 Corinthians, 6 times in 2 Corinthians, and only 7 times in the remainder of Pauline literature.



community should receive and support visiting teachers.<sup>45</sup> Public orators were highly sought after in first century Corinth, and there was a robust culture of self-congratulatory boasting among them that served as their marketing strategy for their services. Those willing to pay could assume the orator into his or her patronage and obtain some level of prestige for doing so as well as influence the message of the orator. Paul's approach to ministry renounced the conventions of the day and refused to accept payment from his audience as a way of setting himself apart from the orators (Cf. 1 Cor 9:15-16). By doing so, he may have alienated a group of Corinthians who attempted to place him under their patronage for their own social advantage. Paul's work in the marketplace as a craftsman to support his ministry would have further challenged their sensibilities. They may have had significant difficulty submitting to a person of such menial estate.<sup>46</sup>

The Corinthians had misunderstood Paul (2 Cor 1:14) because they misunderstood the nature of the ministry he had received from Christ—a ministry characterized by weakness and suffering. Paul defends his ministry on the basis that the eschatological inversion inaugurated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus effects an epistemological change (1 Cor 4:3-5, 8, 9-13, 20).

In 2 Cor 5:16, just before employing the eschatologically charged language of "new creation" in 5:17, Paul indicates a change of perspective wrought by the Christ event. Whereas Paul had previously known Christ *κατὰ σάρκα*, he now had a new way of knowing the world and everything in it. He appeals to the Corinthians to embrace this new kind of epistemology in application to his own ministry.

What he is asserting is that there are different systems of measurement. According to the measure of his opponents, his authority does not hold up. But they are evaluating him *κατὰ σάρκα* just as he had once evaluated the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>47</sup> However, that cataclysmic event marked the beginning of an entirely new mode of knowledge. The common sense rulings of the old age are foolishness in the new creation.<sup>48</sup> Paul "coins an epistemological locution—to know by the norm of the

<sup>45</sup> B. W. Winter, "The Entries and Ethics of Orators and Paul." *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.1 (1993) 55-74.

<sup>46</sup> "In a city where social climbing was a major preoccupation, Paul's deliberate stepping down in apparent status would have been seen by many as disturbing, disgusting, and even provocative" (Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 21).

<sup>47</sup> "Flesh" is an important concept in Paul and can be used in a number of different ways. R. Jewett's study of Paul's anthropological terms astutely points out how this term is associated with the old age (cf. Gal 4:21-31). He acknowledges that Paul uses *κατὰ σάρκα* in 2 Cor 5:16 to level the charge that those who are falsely evaluating his ministry are doing so according to the characteristics of the old age in conflict with those of the new age of the new creation (Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 453-6).

<sup>48</sup> Suffering could not be viewed positively in the old world. It is only acceptable because of the promise of resurrection.



flesh—by which he refers to the passé, old-age manner of acquiring knowledge.”<sup>49</sup>

The epistemological transformation spoken of by Paul would have been incredibly resonant in the Corinthian community, which was inundated with Roman imperial ideology. As a model Roman colony, Corinth embraced wholesale the new reality offered by the empire.<sup>50</sup> Paul sought to describe a reinterpretation of reality that stood in stark contrast to the social world created by the power of Rome.<sup>51</sup>

While the Pauline juxtaposition of *σάρξ* versus *πνεῦμα* (Rom 1:4; 8:4-5; Gal 4:29) is typically brought into the interpretation of this passage, Martyn proposes that the opposite to knowing *κατὰ σάρκα* is knowing *κατὰ σταυρόν*.<sup>52</sup> Though the expression *κατὰ σταυρόν* is not actually used by Paul, it seems to encapsulate the meaning of his argument. Earlier, Paul had argued that it was the love of Christ that *controlled* or *compelled* him (5:14). The love of Christ is to be understood here in the context of the very next verse where the self-sacrificial action of his death and resurrection for the benefit of others is set forth. It was that event which turned the ages, which was presented to Paul by the resurrected Lord Himself on the Damascus road, which, in turn, revolutionized Paul's own understanding of the world and the times in which he lived, and which provided the paradigm for his own apostolic ministry.<sup>53</sup> He understood that the message of the cross was “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23) but, for him, it was nothing less than the event of God's invasion into the world to display the power of his salvation (1 Cor 1:18, 24; cf. Rom 1:16).

Paul redefines wisdom according to the cross. Whereas the Corinthians understood wisdom and knowledge in the context of honor and power, Paul offers an entirely alternate basis for wisdom and knowledge. In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses “wisdom” in a number of ways.<sup>54</sup> It sometimes refers to the use of human arguments with a view towards persuasion or in the sense of applying worldly rules of measurement in adjudicating

<sup>49</sup> Martyn 1997:95-7. J. L. Martyn argues that the Corinthians would have had no problems understanding Paul on this matter on the basis of similar ideas found in Philo where the Platonic idea of true knowledge being hindered by the flesh is present (cf. *Agriculture* 97; *Migration* 14; *Unchangeable* 143; *Giants* 53). J. L. Martyn. *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> For example, Mary E. Walbank. “Evidence for the Imperial Cult in Julio-Claudian Corinth,” in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Alastair Small (Ann Arbor, MI: Thomson-Shore, 1996), 201-13.

<sup>51</sup> R. A. Horsley, “Paul's Assembly in Corinth: An Alternative Society,” in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 53, 371-95; cf. Wayne A. Meeks. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 164-92; Chow, *Patronage*, 188-90.

<sup>52</sup> W. Hulitt Gloer suggests that *κατὰ πνεῦμα* could be connected to *κατὰ σταυρόν* in Paul (*An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Understanding of New Creation and Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:14-21* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1996), 108, 398).

<sup>53</sup> S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1984).

<sup>54</sup> C. K. Barrett in Ciampa, *Corinthians*, 87.

truth. It is also used in reference to God's plan of redemption involving a crucified Messiah, and as such it entails the substance of salvation itself.

Paul sets at odds the power wielded and pursued by the status brokers of the Corinthian community with the wisdom and power of his Gospel message about the cross (1 Cor 1:17-18, 24-25). The cross upends all of their worldly understandings of wisdom. What the world thinks is wise is actually foolishness to God; it falls under God's eschatological judgment, which has already begun in his powerful invasion of this age in the cross of Christ.<sup>55</sup> Conversely the wisdom of God is described as foolishness (*μωρία*) to the perishing but the power (*δύναμις*) of God to those being saved (v. 18).

Paul insists that his message is eschatological wisdom that communicates God's truth to the Corinthians (2:6-9). The wisdom he offers is not "the wisdom of this age (1 Cor 2:6)." Instead, it is the wisdom of God previously hidden from human understanding but now made known by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:6-10). It is the specific role of the Spirit to help believers understand the wisdom of the cross (2:6-16). The eschatological importance of this is reiterated by Paul with the quotation in 1 Cor 2:9. This quotation has been a notoriously difficult crux in the history of interpreting this passage. The main problem is that we cannot identify exactly what Paul is quoting. Paul's use of the phrase "it is written" indicates that Paul believes the following to be scripture. This is a normal construction for Pauline citations of the Old Testament. However, 1 Cor 2:9 in its current form does not appear to represent any single Old Testament text. Origen explained this problem by suggesting that Paul was quoting from an early apocalyptic source called *The Apocalypse of Elijah*, which we know exists but which has been lost to us.<sup>56</sup> Others have suggested that this may reflect the *Gospel of Thomas* 17 where Jesus allegedly says, "I will give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has not entered into the heart of man."<sup>57</sup>

The most satisfying explanation is that this represents an early reflection on several biblical texts, the most significant of which appears in Isaiah 64:4, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him (Isa 64:4 ESV)." This text appears in the context of Isaiah's longing for God's end-time salvation, which culminates in the Isaianic material in new creation language. The salvation plan of God extends to include a new heaven and a new earth in Isa 65:17.<sup>58</sup> If this is the vein of thought that influenced Paul in this passage, the point is made even stronger that human perception, human understanding is insufficient to comprehend

<sup>55</sup> Note in this regard the use of Isa 29:14 in 1 Cor 1:19. This may be an Isaianic reminder of the "Wonderful Counselor" (Isa 9:6), the Messianic ruler who would effect God's end-time salvation.

<sup>56</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 109.

<sup>57</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 109.

<sup>58</sup> I argue that this theme is heavily influential for Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 (T.R. Jackson, *New Creation*).

the purposes of God in the world, but that the end-time work of the Spirit, the ultimate catalyst for and marker of the new creation, provides God's people with an alternate way of knowing that subverts the world's inadequate judgments.

Paul's alternate way of knowing allows him to redefine leadership, an issue at the center of whatever disputes were going on in Corinth, and establish the nature of the church in contradistinction to the typical social groups of the time. In terms of leadership, Paul uses four important terms that reset the inappropriate understanding of the Corinthians. Rather than viewing leaders as superior in privilege and status, Paul refers to leaders as "servants" (δίακονοι) (1 Cor 3:5). He thus undermines the kind of factions oriented around various personas that threatened the unity of the community. He further indicates that the leaders of the church are "fellow workers" (συνεργοί) with God (1 Cor 3:9) and that they serve as the subordinates of Christ (ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ) (1 Cor 4:1). There is no delusion of grandeur entertained about the status of leadership in the Pauline communities. Leaders are stewards (οἰκονόμους) who manage what belongs to God.

All of this calls into question the basis of knowledge employed by the Corinthians. Paul argues that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of human logic, worldly thinking, or rhetorical skill, but a demonstration of the Spirit's power (1 Cor 4:20).<sup>59</sup> The Spirit's power is demonstrated through the creation and maintenance of the otherwise foolish and weak ministry of Paul and through the transformation of the Corinthians themselves. In order for the Corinthians to fulfill their role as God's eschatological people, they were called upon by Paul to embrace the alternate epistemology inaugurated by the cross of Jesus. Whereas the Corinthians may have tended too heavily towards understanding the end times to be fully present, Paul lived out a cruciform apostleship that challenged their faulty understanding and called them to see that God was facilitating his plan in the world in a totally unexpected and counterintuitive way. Paul expects a change in the behavior of the Corinthians not simply based on reason but based on a whole new reality in which they participate through the work of the Spirit.

#### A RADICALLY SUBVERSIVE ETHIC

Finally, Paul's *eschatological epistemology* produced a *radically subversive ethic*. This seems to be a key point in Paul's strategy against the cultural liturgies faced by the Corinthian believers. Paul operated within a culture especially adept at aiming the heart's desires towards its own versions of the good life.<sup>60</sup> For his missionary work in Corinth to be successful,

<sup>59</sup> Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 377.

<sup>60</sup> If discipleship must necessarily involve fulfillment of the love commands, this becomes even more poignant. First, our love for one another is testimony that we are followers (John 13:35). Secondly, our obedience to the commandments is the way we are meant to feed and to demonstrate our love for God (2 John 1:6). Cf. 1 Cor 7:19. Note the forthcoming work on the ethical nature of Pauline theology: J. Paul Sampley, *Walking in Love: Moral Progress and Spiritual Growth with the Apostle Paul* (Fortress Press, 2016).

he needed an alternate strategy that fully embodied what the kingdom of God looked like among the Corinthians. It is highly instructive for us that Paul's strategy for the Corinthians was not primarily articulated in terms of a liturgy, but of an ethic—a particular way of living. That is certainly not to say that liturgy was not important for him, but that Paul dealt more thoroughly with the lived experience of the Corinthians. This point is made clear at the very beginning of the letter where Paul refers to the Corinthians as a community "called to be holy" (1:2).<sup>61</sup> It is very clear in this letter that the lifestyles of the Corinthian believers did not necessarily exemplify this calling, but Paul is reminding them of their calling to inspire them to strive towards living out the status granted to them by God.<sup>62</sup>

In 1 Cor 2:1-5, Paul describes clearly his approach to the ministry he hoped would effectively call the Corinthian people to the hope of his gospel message. He points out how his message stood in stark contrast to the social conventions expected of public orators of his day (2:1).<sup>63</sup> Paul determined to focus on the crucified Jesus as the core of his message (2:2). This would have been a strategic mistake if the basis for wisdom and knowledge were to be founded in this world's way of thinking, but the cross was in fact the way that God chose to demonstrate his wisdom to the world.

Paul goes on to argue that his message wasn't characterized by the kind of persuasion they expected from the rhetoricians where the results of the speaking were dependent upon the power of the speaker's delivery.<sup>64</sup> Quite the contrary, Paul's message (λόγος) was delivered in the form of a proclamation (κήρυγμα) that did not rely on human powers of persuasion, but upon the transforming power of the Spirit of God (2:4-5).<sup>65</sup> The "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (ESV 2:4) is not likely a reference to miraculous signs and wonders, as that would assert the kind of power that the Corinthians craved. This would play against the thrust of Paul's argument here. Rather, the effectiveness of the message evidenced in the transformed lives of the Corinthians themselves (2 Cor 3:2-3) is the best testimony to vindicate Paul against any who might undermine or otherwise diminish his work.<sup>66</sup>

The worldly (κατὰ σάρκα) wisdom of the Corinthians led to an improper assessment of Paul's ministry and to divisions within the community. Paul's cruciform ministry was challenging to the Corinthian sensibilities because it did not conform to their image of power and

<sup>61</sup> This is a reality not only in the letters of Paul, but also in the NT as a whole. See David G. Peterson, *Possessed By God: A NT Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>62</sup> Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 77. See J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

<sup>63</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 90-2.

<sup>64</sup> B. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 94-5.

<sup>66</sup> The magnitude of their transformation strengthens the point (1 Cor 1:26)! See: Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 222.

authority. Since Paul did not engage in the common social maneuvering, they read him as being weak and ineffective. But, Paul's decision to know nothing among them but the crucified Jesus (1 Cor 2:2) was not a mere rhetorical convention. It was in essence a way of life that he embraced. It was a form for doing ministry.<sup>67</sup> It was through his embracing his own weakness that the strength of the Spirit was manifest, as his testimony confirms (1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 1:9; 4:10; 12:9). This kind of ministry wasn't appealing to those who evaluated through the faulty epistemology of the old age. To them, it was neither powerful nor persuasive. The Corinthians and Paul essentially disagreed over what it meant for them to be a community created and sustained by the Spirit.

The Corinthian experience of the Spirit led them to believe that they were protected from the ill effects of participation in actions involving their bodies. They viewed themselves as spiritually superior to others, including Paul himself.<sup>68</sup> Believing themselves to be living above the mundane limitations of their present world, they alternately over- or under-emphasized the importance of their physical embodiment of the Kingdom of God. For example, some within the community were sexually promiscuous (1 Corinthians 5) while others denied the importance of sex and even marriage itself (1 Corinthians 7). These extreme ethics were the result of their over-estimation of their spiritual experience. They believed the evidence of the Spirit's presence among them was either their asceticism or their libertinism. Furthermore, they manifested miraculous demonstrations of the Spirit, including *glossolalia*. They believed themselves to speak with the very language of heaven and to have fully received the promises of the Spirit, some of which Paul reserved for the future.

The Corinthians' intensely spiritualized view of reality is ultimately attested in their misunderstanding of Paul's teaching concerning the resurrection of the body. Believing themselves to have already obtained the fullness of the Spirit, and viewing reality from the perspective of a type of dualism that devalued the material world, the Corinthians could not envisage the need for a physical resurrection (1 Cor 15:35-58).<sup>69</sup> Paul, of course, responds by reminding them that the bodily resurrection of Jesus himself was central to the faith (1 Cor 15:1-11), and that the resurrection of Jesus made bodily resurrection for all believers a necessary corollary (1 Cor 15:12-34) in which God demonstrates value for the physical universe.

Yet, the community of Corinthians established by Paul believed they were inoculated against their "fleshly" behavior because they had participated in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Hafemann, "The Role of Suffering in the Mission of Paul," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 165-84.

<sup>68</sup> The repeated use of the term *πνευματικός* in the letter confirms this assessment. Paul's self-defense is articulated in a way that challenges their assumptions about their relationship to him (Cf. 1 Cor. 14:37). See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 83.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, *Desiring The Kingdom*, 32.

is the point of Paul's warning about participating in idol feasts in 1 Cor 10:1-5. The power of the analogy lies in the fact that ancient Israel had its own parallels with baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>70</sup> Though they engaged in their own religious practices, God was not pleased "with most of them," and they fell under his judgment (v. 5). Likewise, the Corinthians cannot expect participation in the sacraments to protect them from the spiritual dangers of engaging in idolatrous rituals—rituals that Paul described as being "fellowship (κοινωνός) with demons" (1 Cor 10:20-21).

As Fee concludes,

Thus, all the while they are prating about being πνευματικοί, they are also indulging in theological and behavioral fancies that have removed them far from the real life of the Spirit, where one lives out the future in the present even in weakness, not in triumphalist terms, but in terms of the ethical life of those 'who have been sanctified in the name of Christ and by the power of the Spirit' (6:11).<sup>71</sup>

Together, the Corinthians form the community where the Spirit of God dwells, and this is why unity is so important in their context (1 Cor 3:16-17). The thought that some among them might create divisions based on human assessments of power compromised the vision of Kingdom Paul wanted to proclaim. Christians who were suing one another challenged the claim that this world's system of values was defunct (1 Cor 6:6). Distorted sexuality, whether in promiscuity or in rejection of appropriate marital relationships, inappropriately separated the spirit from the body and led to significant difficulties among Corinthian believers (1 Cor 5; 7). Participation in idolatrous rituals in the name of superior knowledge threatened the love that was supposed to be central to their eschatological community. Worship that focused on external demonstrations of power played into the hands of the improper evaluations of power and status embraced by the larger society. Devaluing of the physical world led to an erroneous view of spiritual realities and led to false perception of the body. Throughout this letter, Paul appeals to the Corinthians to embrace an ethic that testifies to the eschatological reality of the gospel.

For Paul, the message wasn't a disembodied set of propositions that were declaimed during Christian worship, nor was it simply a way of doing worship that reminded the Corinthians of the reality of the gospel message. It was fully embodied in his own ministry and his way of life. He specifically tells the Corinthians that he is sending Timothy to them to "to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church" (1 Cor 4:17 ESV). It was his way of living and the life to which he called the community that gave the greatest subversive challenge to the prevailing institutions in Roman Corinth that actively sought to direct the hearts of its people.

<sup>70</sup> This is not to suggest that Israel's experiences were sacramental in exactly the same way as baptism and the Eucharist are considered within the Christian tradition. See: Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 181-3.

<sup>71</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 83.



Paul expected the people of Corinth to embody the same kind of *radically subversive ethic* in their lives. If Ciampa and Rosner are correct, the problems Paul addressed at Corinth are not random issues pieced together in an ad hoc argument. In their view, the letter operates from within a Jewish context influenced by Deuteronomy and Isaiah. It is organized around two primary concerns from the Jewish tradition: sexual immorality and idolatry.<sup>72</sup> They take 1 Cor 4:18-7:40 to be basically dealing with the problem of sexual immorality. The negative side of this deals with the problems in Corinth itself and the positive side has to do with sexual relationships within marriage. They then argue that 1 Cor 8-14 is essentially addressing the problem of idolatry negatively in its manifestations in the Corinthians' situations and positively in terms of appropriate worship.<sup>73</sup>

However the argument of the letter might be arranged, Paul's interest in the behavior of the Corinthians is undeniable. The sexually charged atmosphere of Roman Corinth was widely known in the ancient world. Its pluralistic ethos welcomed many gods and goddesses into its affections. Paul's challenge to those competing affections came in the form of urgent admonitions to the Corinthians about appropriate Christian living.

Of course, Christian ethics is an expression of worship, so it will also be helpful to address the question of what the believers in Corinth actually did when they gathered. David Horrell defines Pauline Christianity as "a symbolic order embodied in communities."<sup>74</sup> So, what form did the embodiment of the symbolic order in worship actually take?<sup>75</sup> While many practices that existed in the Corinthian church may be considered liturgical, including exercising the gifts of the Spirit, prayer, hymns, confessions, and other aspects of early Christian practice, for the sake of our discussion, we can limit our interaction to baptism and the Lord's Supper as these practices are highly attested in the letters of Paul themselves.

Baptism was the ritual of initiation into the Christian community; it marked the entrance of the person into "the Body" of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).<sup>76</sup> The believers in Corinth were likely immersed in water, though there is later evidence that there was provision for allowing water to

<sup>72</sup> Horrell argues that the vices listed in 1 Corinthians fall under three general headings: sexual immorality, greediness, and idolatry (*Social Ethos*, 79).

<sup>73</sup> Ciampa, *Corinthians*, 23; see also B. S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

<sup>74</sup> Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 80.

<sup>75</sup> For in-depth analysis of early Christian liturgical practices, see Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*. But, Dunn cautions against interpreting Paul on the basis of liturgies we assume existed in his communities: Jams Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> Note the important work of James Dunn who argues that Spirit-Baptism is Paul's way of denoting the gift of the Spirit that accompanies the initiatory rite of conversion—water baptism. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament on the Gift of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1979). For further study on the liturgical importance of baptism, see Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism*, (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).



be poured over the head when there was insufficient access to enough water for full immersion.<sup>77</sup> Early believers were usually baptized naked, which contributes to the proliferation of “putting on” and “putting off” or clothing language so common in Paul, and frequently used in baptismal contexts.<sup>78</sup> The Baptism itself as the initiation rite symbolized and embodied separation from the world, transition into a new social group, and reaggregation into a new reality. The ritual actually enacted concepts central to Paul’s message. Horrell observes that Baptism “dramatized the believers’ transition from the old life to the new, their escape from the wrath to come and their entry into the community of those who are ‘one in Christ.’”<sup>79</sup> Baptism was not repeated for the individual, but believers would have witnessed the baptisms of other initiates. This ritual would certainly reinforce the nature of the church as an alternate society that embodied an altogether different approach to reality than that espoused by the typical Corinthian.<sup>80</sup>

The Lord’s Supper was about *κοινωνία* within the body, an enactment of membership and participation in the community.<sup>81</sup> Without 1 Corinthians, we would know very little about how the earliest Christian communities actually celebrated the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:17-34).<sup>82</sup> This practice in Corinth involved more than just the communion wafer or the bread and wine common in contemporary celebrations. There was a full meal involved according to Paul’s account in 1 Cor 11:17-34. But, it was more than just a meal. The bread and wine represented both a memorial of the death of Jesus, as well as a participatory sharing in the effects of his sacrificial death. Celebratory meals were typical components of other Greco-Roman associations that met frequently in Corinth. For the church to have its own rite of fellowship would have been perfectly in line with that customary practice.<sup>83</sup> However, the community of which this meal was a part would have stood in stark contrast to the various assemblies of Corinth. It would look and act much different from the typical social gathering in Corinth.

<sup>77</sup> The Didache instructs that believers should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Cold water was preferred as was “living water” as from a stream or river. Fasting was required of both the baptizer and the baptized, and the community was instructed to join in the fast as well (Didache 7:1-4). The Didache represents teaching much later than Paul’s writings, but these rituals may represent traditions that go back much farther than their own composition.

<sup>78</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 151. Cf. Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14; 2 Cor 5:3. For further study, see Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>79</sup> Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 86.

<sup>80</sup> R. A. Horsley. “Paul’s Assembly in Corinth: An Alternative Society,” in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005): 371-95.

<sup>81</sup> For further study on the liturgical importance of the Lord’s Supper, see: Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, (Yonkers: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997).

<sup>82</sup> Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 86.

<sup>83</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 157-62.

First, the meal itself was a time when the community of believers could care for the less fortunate. In Corinth, those believers with higher social status would consume the food, leaving those of low estate hungry and deprived—a practice that Paul repudiates in 1 Cor 11:21. Secondly, the ceremonial portion of the meal commemorated the story of the sacrificial death of Jesus and its effectiveness for those who participate with him by faith. The meal demonstrated that participation in the powerfully embodied images of eating and drinking. Thirdly, the meal itself was an intensely eschatological meal. Believers were told to perpetuate the practice “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). This was a regular reminder of the eschatological transformation so important to Paul’s work. Finally, the meal itself was a time for unity and fellowship. The community’s fellowship was arranged not according to the hierarchical and competitive structure of Corinthian society, but conditioned by love and marked by unity. It transcended social norms of race, gender, religion, and class in order to dramatically express the truth of Paul’s Gospel that God’s new humanity was a reality in the lives of the participants (Gal 3:26–28; 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19).<sup>84</sup>

The liturgies offered by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian community are incredibly important for helping to aim the heart of Corinthian believers towards the Kingdom of God. James K.A. Smith’s work is an excellent reassessment of anthropology and brilliant cultural analysis. His explanation of how cultural liturgies serve to form a kind of person is very helpful as well as his strongly ecclesial theology of how the worship of the church ought to subvert what is on offer from the world. The important question in light of the Apostle Paul’s strategy in the city of Corinth has to do with how the particular ritual forces of cultural formation become *thick* practices.<sup>85</sup> Smith argues that there are *thin* habits like brushing teeth or exercising daily that may not touch our identity and that there are also *thick* habits that play an important part in shaping us. The difference of course between these two can be difficult to determine. What makes a practice *thick*?

For a practice to be deeply meaningful to us usually requires that there has already been some kind of inner transformation of the heart. So, taking public transportation can be *thick* with meaning if it confirms a strong conviction that doing so helps to preserve the environment. However, it is less evident that taking public transportation will actually aim the heart towards environmentalism. This is certainly not to devalue the importance of liturgy in Christian worship. Christian liturgy embodies and enacts the message itself in a way that other *thick* practices do not. However, it is instructive to note that Paul, who was keenly interested in the liturgy of the church, did not seem to rely on a reformation of Corinthian liturgy. His liturgical communities could certainly be discussed as the location of the Spirit’s work, but his focus was not directed to the liturgy itself as the means of obtaining the transformation of the Spirit.

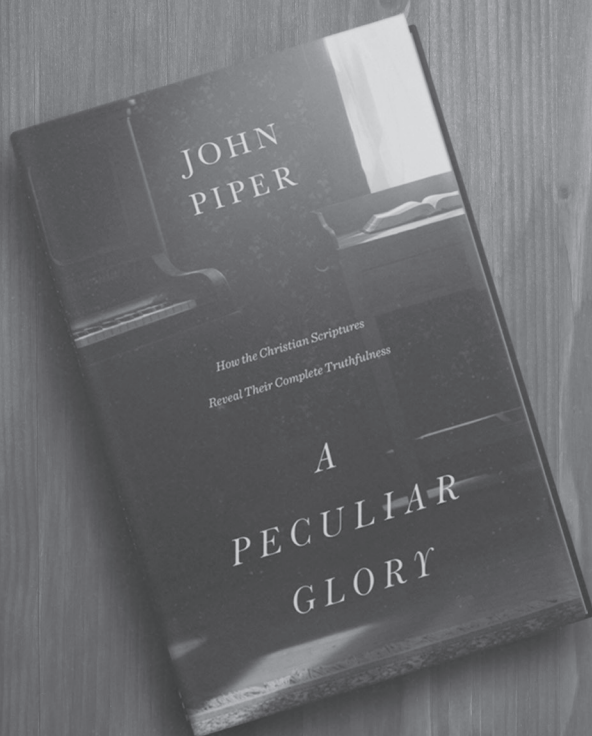
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<sup>84</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 157–62.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 80–85.

What I am suggesting is that the best challenge to the enticing liturgies of the world must necessarily involve Christian liturgies that value deeply the ethical lives of believers. When Paul confronts the Corinthian situation, which parallels ours in many important ways, his primary strategy began with an important *eschatological shift*. This was no theoretical/propositional concept to be affirmed. It was absolutely foundational for the Christian community. It unmasked the worldly powers and pulled back the curtain on God's ultimate reality. This *eschatological inversion* supported a *transformed epistemology* that offered believers a new way of assessing the world and the challenges they faced in it. The cross itself became a new measure of reality. All of this led to a *radically subversive ethic* that embodied the good life of the Kingdom of God first in the life of the apostle Paul himself and then in the lives of the Christ followers of Corinth. This strategic pattern should become an essential part of whatever pedagogical practices we engage to retrain our hearts toward the holy. Christlike living teaches us the chief *praktognosia* and *habitus* of the Kingdom of God.

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FOLLOWING THE “MAN OF SORROWS” - JESUS’  
PATH TOWARD OPENHEARTEDNESS:  
A REFLECTION ON EMBODIMENT  
AND THE PRACTICE  
OF LAMENT

JOEL WILLITTS\*

A heart that is broken is a heart that is open.

“Cedarwood Road” U2

Some of the most famous words Jesus ever spoke were beautifully woven into the opening lines of Matthew’s magisterial sermon of Jesus, the “Sermon on the Mount” (5:3-5):

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness are interrelated dispositions of the ideal disciple. While there are a variety of ways to understand the Beatitudes, one thing is clear: those who follow Jesus are to be those who exhibit a disposition like this. This disposition has an obvious concrete expression. Scot McKnight in his recent commentary on the Sermon makes the point that Jesus radically proclaimed the offer of the kingdom to those who had no power or position, in his words, “the most unlikely of people.”<sup>1</sup>

Also, and perhaps as a consequence, there is deep resonance with the Lament Psalms of the Hebrew Bible. The disposition of the poor in spirit (all the more Matthew’s version seems to point in this direction), the mournful and the meek characterize those who sing lament songs (cf. Psalm 109). It is those in a place of “disorientation,” to use Walter Brueggemann’s language, who are readily able to embrace a “new orientation.” As counterintuitive as it may seem, and the crucifixion-resurrection paradigm makes this point dramatically, it is the vulnerability of life, indeed the death of life, that leads to new life.

It is important to notice that this position of “disorientation” has eschatological significance in these statements. The kingdom is the

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<sup>1</sup> Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount* (eds. Scot McKnight, et al., 2013), 31.

disciples' ("theirs") now, but the comfort and the inheritance are yet future ("they will"). For Jesus' disciples, the "disorientation" is both a state of being and an existential ebb and flow of personal experience. So both in the day-to-day affairs of living as well as in our state of being this side of the consummation of the age, disciples are to be characterized as lamenters. Scott Ellington refers to this as the "vocation of lament."<sup>2</sup> And Rebekah Eklund recently wrote:

As a Christian eschatological practice, lament is a liminal practice. It is 'shaped by the incongruities between what is and what should or might be'; It is an instigator and sustainer of liminality. Those who lament stand on the boundary between the old age and the new and hope for things unseen. In the New Testament, lament is a practice for the *now*. It is a practice that makes sense not only because there is a God who hears and who redeems but also because there is a *not* yet . . . blessed are those who lament.<sup>3</sup>

This instinct to read the beatitudes as Jesus' path of discipleship is confirmed, surprisingly, by a passage in Revelation. In Revelation 6, the seals are opened, and in the midst of Evil's havoc on the world throughout history, the suffering church is pictured as a lamenting body:

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they maintained. They called out "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (6:9-11).<sup>4</sup>

The refrains "How long?" and graphic imaginative language like "avenge our blood" is the vernacular of the Psalms of lament. Lamentation, or to use a more common expression, *grieving*, is the path of discipleship to openheartedness.

I'm using the idea of "openhearted" as a catch phrase to represent in-the-process-of-being-restored, healthy human existence in the times between the times, in the time between Jesus' ascension and parousia. It is a place where we experience the extremities of both joy and pain. The Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware calls this "repentance:"

Filled with grief yet at the same time filled with joy, repentance expresses that creative tension found at all times in the Christian

<sup>2</sup> Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 190.

<sup>3</sup> Rebekah Ann Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament* (515; London; New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 171.

<sup>4</sup> "In Scene 2 [Seals of ch. 6 (esp. 6:9-11)], the church is assured that she will suffer, though her final safety will never be a question. But she is not accepting the suffering meekly. She is calling for vengeance on those who cause it. And lest we should imagine that this is a merely human prayer, which in the stress of the moment has lost sight of the divine command to pray for (not against) one's persecutors, we are shown in Scene 3 [Trumpets of ch. 8] that God hears . . ." (Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation: I Saw Heaven Opened* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975], 73, 91); see also Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 171-73.

life on this earth . . . As a life of continual repentance, our Christian discipleship is a sharing at one and the same time in Gethsemane and the Transfiguration, in the Cross and the Resurrection. St. John Climacus sums the matter up by saying: "If you put on blessed and grace-filled mourning as a wedding robe, you will know the spiritual laughter of the soul."<sup>5</sup>

In their album *Songs of Innocence*, the Irish band U2 points out the path to this openheartedness in a song called "Cedarwood Road." In the chorus lyric, Bono sings:

Northside just across the river to Southside  
That's a long way here  
All the green and all the gold  
The hurt you hide, the joy you hold  
The foolish pride that gets you out the door  
Up on Cedarwood Road, on Cedarwood Road

"Cedarwood Road" is the street where lead singer Bono (Paul Hewson) grew up on the north side of Dublin, where violence was a common experience in his teenage years. This is every bit a lament. The lyrics name, that is render in poetic speech, the difficulty of living on the other side of childhood trauma. U2 poetically put into words the truth of the harm that that adult boy still carries around.

Sleepwalking down the road  
Not waking from those dreams  
'Cause it's never dead it's still in my head  
It was a warzone in my teens  
I'm still standing on that street  
Still need an enemy  
The worst ones I can't see  
You can... you can . . .

If the door is open it isn't theft  
You can't return to where you've never left  
Blossoms falling from a tree they cover you and cover me  
Symbols clashing, Bibles smashing  
Paint the world you need to see  
Sometimes fear is the only place we can call home  
Cedarwood Road

"Cedarwood Road" is the path to open heartedness as the last line of the song captures it: *And a heart that is broken is a heart that is open*. "Cedarwood Road" represents the necessity to name what is true and in our present to embrace the "fear we call home." It is only in this naming

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<sup>5</sup> Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom: Volume 1 of the Collected Works* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 56.



and embracing and ultimately relinquishing will we live. This is how David Fricke of Rolling Stone described the song:

Bono's lyrics are striking in their specific, personal history. In "Cedarwood Road," . . . the singer remembers the fear and unrequited anger that drove him to music and to be heard—and which won't go away. "I'm still standing on that street/Still need an enemy," he admits against Clayton and Mullen's strident, brooding rhythm and the enraged stutter of the Edge's guitar.<sup>6</sup>

As Fricke intonates, the musical composition reflects the embodied dialectic of brokenheartedness and openheartedness. The music is imaginative and powerful because of its embodiment expressions of tension and extremity. The melodic verses jarringly interrupted by the gritty rock rhythms of the chorus represent the discordant experience of real life and expresses bodily the difficulties of living in a fallen world.<sup>7</sup>

Another way of framing openheartedness is what Brueggemann calls the "second naïveté:"

The second naïveté is postcritical, not precritical. The second naïveté has been through the pit and is now prepared to "hope all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). But now hope is after the pit. It now knows that finally things have been reduced and need be reduced no more. It knows that our experience is demystified as it must be. But it knows that even in a world demystified and reduced, grace intrudes and God makes all things new. The ones who give thanks and sing genuinely new songs must be naïve or they would not bother to sing songs and to give thanks. *But it is a praise in which the anguish of disorientation is not forgotten, removed, or absent.*<sup>8</sup>

To put it simply, *the path to an open heart is walking into the brokenness of our lives*. This is because: (1) we are embodied creatures and our bodies have stories, (2) we are sophisticated embodied creatures whose bodies learn to avoid pain at an unconscious or pre-conscious level, and so (3) we carry stories of trauma, neglect, abuse, failure, and disappointment – the vulnerability and fragility of living in this world – "in our bones" which then powerfully influence and shape our being in the world. And all of this under our cognition.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/u2-songs-of-innocence-2014-0911#ixzz3GQO7TbM4>, last accessed October 17, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Some critics don't have the imagination required to capture the intentional discordant elements of the song. Consider this review by Mark Schiff of AXS: "The song's intro sounds a bit nostalgic, before a surprisingly sludgy riff disrupts the mood. However, like some of the other songs, the various parts don't quite fit together, with the verse retreating to something lighter. There are some compelling elements to the song but it doesn't coalesce into a meaningful whole" (<http://m.axs.com/news/keep-it-or-delete-it-a-track-by-track-review-of-u2-s-surprise-new-albu-19249>, last accessed October 17, 2014). His view is "delete it".

<sup>8</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms in the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 25, emphasis added.

If we are to regain (this is for most of us), and then maintain, openheartedness as weathered survivors we must, in agreement with the recent work of James K. A. Smith, do something.<sup>9</sup> But what?

I will argue in this essay that we must imaginatively name the harm Evil has done and continues to do to us, and to our loved ones, and to the communities of faith of which we are apart, and to the wider world around us. We must render into imaginative speech, moreover, our state of complete vulnerability, our real powerlessness in the face of everything significant we are asked to do as humans, in spite of our every attempt to pretend otherwise.

This proposal, however, is not a new one. It is an attempt to reclaim the liturgy of lament God has gifted to believers, one that purposes through regular bodily practice to lead us to render into imaginative speech our body's harm and vulnerability, and so to move us into a state of brokenness where open hearts live in the world with relational presence and empathy – in Smith's language, the “habitus”, the disposition and character of “the man of sorrows.”

#### I. MY BODY HAS A STORY—“INTIMACY MAKES ME GIGGLE”

“Where do you feel that in your body?” Scott, my therapist, asked. “Where do I feel it in my body? What kind of question is that!” I thought to myself. “I have just shared with you a memory from my childhood; it's coming from my head.”

At that point, I didn't see any connection between what I shared and my body; I was completely unaware conceptually and experientially of body memory. But this just goes to show the problem: what I shared, if it had been portrayed on screen in a film, would have been offensive and emotionally disturbing. But I had no bodily sense of it. I paused for what seemed like a long time trying to discern my body on the register of my mind. And after several seconds, which felt like minutes, I had to admit: “I don't know. I can't feel my body. I don't feel anything.”

The experience reminds me of the time I was having physical therapy not long ago for a neck injury. The PT was trying to teach me an exercise to build my core. It required that I rock my pelvis forward and backward. Humorously to him and a little embarrassingly for me, I could not get my head to communicate with that part of my body. I don't know if I had ever even tried to consciously get those particular muscles to do something. Obviously, my subconscious communicates with my pelvis all the time, but initially, I couldn't consciously communicate. After several attempts, I finally got a neuron-pathway created, but only after several days of practice did the exercise become an easy movement to call up. It is profound fact that one can be so disconnected from one's own body. Such bodily fragmentation is not the way we first address the world as children; watch a 7-year old boy for awhile if you need proof!

<sup>9</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

Back to the session with Scott. He responded, "That is interesting. Because your story and your present experience clearly point to the fact that your body is communicating, and loudly. The question is not whether your body is speaking, but rather, are you paying any attention." Scott sent me away from that early session of the therapy with only one task, "Joel," he said, "I want you to pay attention to your body this week. Take note of what it is telling you. Pay attention." It was that day, not much more than a year ago, that my mind reintroduced itself to my body.

During this year, I've been taking notice of my body and, you know, it has had a lot to say. I've come to realize personally what Andrew Schmutzer noted, "The body is a profound participant in meaning, an astute scribe that also records life's horrific experiences."<sup>10</sup> Schmutzer puts the emphasis on the traumatic experiences our bodies remember, and this is useful because it is the negative, painful experiences that are our body's best teachers. Reference to the proverbial hand on a hot stove is enough to make the point.

What is more, it is the wounded body that acts out its knowledge in ways that make impossible the open heart we have been discussing. Often, despite our best cognitive intentions, our bodies sabotage holiness before God and deep connection with others. Christian psychologist Dan Allender stresses the point: "your neurons never forget." In the realm of sexual abuse, which is something of the angle of this essay, Joy Schroeder has said:

Memories of sexual abuse can be integrally bound up with the body. Some victims have visible scars, permanent injuries, chronic pains, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy. For others, the scars are not visible, but *memory of the abuse remains lodged in the psyche and as body memory*.<sup>11</sup>

What I have come to learn is that my *body* has a story. It is a story that affects my being in the world, and it is a story of which I was largely unaware. It is not that I repressed the story of abuse as is the experience of some. Rather, it is that I had only dealt with it on the register of my mind. My body was still waiting attention.

I have wondered about why this is the case. Why didn't I know that my body along with my mind required participation in the process of healing? The problem cannot simply be reduced to one or two things, but I think two factors have significantly contributed to this weakness in our discipleship practice: (1) the general lack of theoretical (philosophy) and practical (physiological) awareness about the bodily nature of childhood trauma, and (2) a Christian evangelical tradition trapped by the cognitivist philosophical spirit of the age.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew J. Schmutzer, "Spiritual Formation and Sexual Abuse: Embodiment, Community, and Healing," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 2, no. 1 (2009): 73.

<sup>11</sup> Joy A. Schroeder, "Sexual Abuse and a Theology of Embodiment," in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused* (ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 193, emphasis added.

Recently, Bessel van der Kolk has described the sea-change in psychiatric approaches to trauma that has taken place in the last three decades. He writes:

When I began my psychiatry rotation, however, I was struck by the contrast between the incredible complexity of the mind and the ways that we human beings are connected and attached to one another, and how little psychiatrists knew about the origins of the problems they were treating.<sup>12</sup>

He credits the recent developments in the areas of neuroscience, developmental psychopathy, and interpersonal neurobiology as the sources for the new view that:

Trauma produces actual physiological changes, including a recalibration of the brain’s alarm system, an increase in stress hormone activity, and alterations in the system that filters relevant information from irrelevant. We now know that trauma compromises the brain area that communicates the physical, embodied feeling of being alive. These changes explain why traumatized individuals become hypervigilant to threat at the expense of spontaneously engaging in their day-to-day lives. They also help us understand why traumatized people so often keep repeating the same problems and have such trouble learning from experience. We now know that their behaviors are not the result of moral failings or signs of lack of willpower or bad character— they are caused by actual changes in the brain.<sup>13</sup>

The bodily impact of trauma goes a long way to explain my divided self. As is true for many, if not most, who have experienced the trauma of abuse, the unconscious bodily strategy is to disassociate.<sup>14</sup> In order to live with the abuse, the survivor ejects out of her body to her mind. She intellectualizes everything finding safety there from being in her body. Anyone who has suffered abuse can relate to the sense of wanting to be anywhere but in their own skin. Such a person has unconsciously, precognitively really, formed a way of being in the world that is divided and fragmented.

But I put some blame on my Christian tradition that ignored the constructive role the body must play in spiritual formation. Because the body, if addressed at all, was viewed negatively, as something wild and sinful, it needed to be controlled through discipline of the mind. As budding adolescents, all we heard about our bodies was it could get in the way of holiness. We needed to tame the body to be “good Christians.” So,

<sup>12</sup> Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2014), loc. 177.

<sup>13</sup> Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *Body*, loc. 184.

<sup>14</sup> Heather Davediuk Gingrich, “The Role of Disociation in Sexual Abuse,” in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused* (ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 528-38.

I was not disciplined to grieve over the harm Evil inflicted. I was not invited to consider how that “wildness” of my body related to my brokenness.

This is in fact one of the main contributions of James K. A. Smith’s work. In my estimation, he rightly critiques the Western Protestant tradition, of which fundamentalism and evangelicalism are part, for its reduction of the human person to the mind. I find Smith’s image of a bobble head appropriate.<sup>15</sup> The bobblehead approach to spiritual formation is captured well even today in a sign posted on the outside of a prominent evangelical church near where I live: “Think Right, Live Right.” While there is certainly truth in the slogan, the preoccupation with “right thinking” has not been able to deliver on its promise. The “take two verses and call me in the morning” prescription has not been transformative for many earnest believers, including me, and at worst it has further wounded.<sup>16</sup>

This is not however only a “body lesson” of the sexually abused. This is a common “go to” strategy for children no matter the trauma, be it divorce, betrayal, abuse, or bullying. Or violence on Cedarwood Road. It is how a child “makes it on their own”. They don’t know any better. They are resource-less. While these survivors’ minds mature into adulthood, and may even be able to rationally put the trauma in a theological perspective with the “God works all things together for good” (Rom 8:28), or “what you meant for evil God meant for good” (Gen 50:20), the neurons remember. Allender very concretely asks, “How will you care for the neurons that hold chemically and electrically the charges of your childhood memory?”

In my first appointment with Scott, I told him four things that had led me to his office that day: (1) Emotionally disconnected, (2) surprising fits of rage seemingly from nowhere, (3) a struggle with sexual sin I couldn’t beat and (4) an obsession with accomplishment driven by an imposter syndrome. Each of these “presenting problems,” as it turned out, was actually a signpost of the life of God. They are photo negatives of the “Land of Promise”; they were my “Egypt”—the oasis and house of slavery. And each one points to the plotline of my body’s story, to its narrative meaning.

So I began the hard work of entering into my story. Allender refers to it as “incarnating into your story.” It is the process of going to the ground, into the dirt of the detail, in contrast to taking a more general 10,000 feet flyover approach, remembering the details of the plot of the story to the degree that the heart is pierced deeply, and intense anger and grief come. This is an imaginative process given the nature of memory. Memory studies have shown that perceptions immediately shape past events. Memory taps our imagination since we don’t remember mere facts, we remember *story*. The story we remember is not “what actually happened,” but how our imaginations have *storied* the past. But this potential “inaccuracy” matters

<sup>15</sup> “We could describe this as ‘bobble head’ Christianity, so fixated on the cognitive that it assumes a picture of human beings that look like bobble heads: mammoth heads that dwarf an almost nonexistent body.” (James K. A. Smith, *Desiring* 42-43).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew J. Schmutzer, “Sexual Abuse,” 73.

little in this process because what is most important is how the story we remember forms the script our body enacts.

According to Allender, a way of recognizing the presence of healing is the dissolution of ambivalence: the presence of a new passionate hatred for evil and the desire to wage war with it on behalf of others. This is transformation of the heart from death to life. It is the result of God's transformative kindness syncing the body with the mind. For me, it is a work that continues.

I have set about the process of naming "the vows" my body made in my early adolescence in order to survive. One of the most significant lessons, given its impact on my marriage and relationship with my kids, is my disdain for intimacy. I have named the fact that when I am in intimate moments, my body screams, "Eject! Eject!" It looks for the nearest exist and leaves. If I'm unable to physically leave, my body makes me cynical of the intimacy. When I look in the eyes of my wife in an intimate embrace, for example, I can't keep a straight face. I start to giggle like a schoolboy. Why? Is it because I haven't thought rightly? I've not yet been fully convinced of an idea? I haven't applied a verse to the situation? No, it is because my body is "dumb," and it needs the help of my mind to name and to grieve the harm it carries.<sup>17</sup>

Through that therapeutic process, I discovered a lesson which has since been confirmed by my study of James K. A. Smith's work as well as that of other phenomenologists, the most important being Maurice Merleau-Ponty on whom Smith depends. Additionally, the work of the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann on the Psalms of Lament has also proved useful. The lesson: *the way to openheartedness is through the imaginative and incarnate naming of the harm Evil has done*. What I didn't know at the start of this process, but I have since learned, is that, first, imagination is the organ of the heart/body – if you want to reach the body you've got to engage the imagination; second, the incarnation demands that as Christ assumed full humanity to save us wholly, we must seek by grace to assume our whole selves—body and spirit—in that redemption; and, third, lament is God's gift to believers of an imaginative, incarnated practice of prayer for the naming, submitting and relinquishing of our bodily wounds. Lament is what Smith calls "the church's performative response" to evil.<sup>18</sup> It is to these issues of anthropology, theology and biblical lament that I now turn.

In the rest of the essay, I will continue to make the case that brokenness is the path to a discipleship of openheartedness by describing three resources from which pastoral theology can draw to foster openhearted discipleship first in ourselves and then in the people we pastor as we follow after "the man of sorrows" who is "acquainted with grief": (1) embodied anthropology, (2) embodied theology and (3) biblical lament.

<sup>17</sup> This description is something like what Smith describes in his introduction when he has to explain using cognition to undermine cognition with the words of Proust: "... it is intellect we must call on to establish this inferiority" (see James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, xiii).

<sup>18</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring*, 194.



## II. THE HUMAN CREATURE – “WE DO NOT MERELY HAVE, BUT ARE OUR BODIES”<sup>19</sup>

My understanding of the human as an “embodied narrative animal” and my inclination of the importance of imagination in the process of healing have been significantly helped by Smith’s recent works.<sup>20</sup> It is not an exaggeration to say that his work has been transformative by opening up a philosophical world of which I had not previously been aware. It was really God’s providence that brought me to engage Smith’s work at the time I did.

In *Desiring the Kingdom* and *Imagining the Kingdom*, Smith draws on a wide range of intellectual resources to make his arguments, from phenomenology, philosophy of religion, and science. Smith is most dependent on the phenomenologies of French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>21</sup> I was unaware of both until reading Smith. And, subsequently, Smith’s introduction sparked my interest in existentialist phenomenology and has led me deeply into Merleau-Ponty’s work. I’ve also become familiar with other more recent work being done on the topic of our body’s role in forming our knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

The primary target in Smith’s work is the “distorted understanding of worldview that dominates current models” of Christian Education, and by extension, Christian formation, which “assumes a rationalist, intellectualist, cognitivist model of the human person.” The problem is “it fails to honor the fact that we are embodied, material, fundamentally desiring animals who are, whether we recognize it or not (and perhaps most when we don’t recognize it), every day being formed by the material liturgies of other pedagogies—at the mall, at the stadium, on television, and so forth.”

Smith does not address the topic, but an obvious implication of his argument is the deformative effect of the pedagogy of abuse and trauma has on the body. Smith argues that “[current models of Christian formation] fail to form us for the kingdom precisely because they are inattentive to the centrality of embodied, material, liturgical practice for such formation.”<sup>23</sup>

In these conventional models the disembodiment of person inherent within them means the elimination of our “temporality.” In Smith’s words, “If humans are conceived almost as being without bodies, then they also

<sup>19</sup> Smith (*Imagining*, 19, n. 44) quoting Alasdair MacIntyre. Originally Marcel.

<sup>20</sup> This section primarily interacts with Smith’s work on phenomenology because the paper was originally given at the 2014 CPT’s Fellowship which focused on Smith’s two books. Jamie was present at the Fellowship and responded to the papers. I am thankful for his input.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception, and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (transl. Donald A. Landes; New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring* 33.



are portrayed as creatures *without histories*.”<sup>24</sup> This is important because an account of being human that cannot explain the way our bodies have memory, cannot then account for the way our bodies influence our living, an influence out of sight of our cognition. Smith’s embodied anthropology supports the thrust of this essay: bodies must be allowed to process what they know in ways that bend them toward God. This account of anthropology and the role of body in both our deformation and formation I find convincing intellectually, but more so, experientially.

Although introducing his “liturgical anthropology” in *Desiring the Kingdom*, it is in *Imagining the Kingdom* where Smith engages the French phenomenologists, specifically Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu, in order to put his “Christian phenomenology”<sup>25</sup> (or a “phenomenology of embodiment”<sup>26</sup>) on firm footing philosophically. He provides an account of the importance of “the kinaesthetic [“bodily basis of meaning”] and the poetic [“imagination”].” These concepts help to recognize and explain the “intertwinement of the body and story as the nexus of formation that ultimately generates action.”<sup>27</sup>

Smith describes how “the body carries a kind of acquired, habituated knowledge or know-how that is irreducible and inarticulable, and yet fundamentally orienting for our being-in-the-world.”<sup>28</sup> An embodied anthropology, according to Smith, “(1) recognizes the nonconscious, pretheoretical ‘drivers’ of our action and behavior . . . (2) accounts for the bodily formation of our habituated orientation to the world; and thus (3) appreciates the centrality of story as rooted in this ‘bodily basis of meaning’ and as a kind of pretheoretical compass that guides and generates human action.”<sup>29</sup>

Phenomenology explains a person’s actions to be the result of unconscious, prereflective motivations or inclinations that are hardly ever brought to the level of conscious reflection. What’s more, phenomenology describes those motivations as emanating from bodily meaning—as opposed to cognitive meaning—acquired through practices and reflected in paradigmatic, but largely unconscious, stories we live by. “Those stories and narratives that prime and orient my very perception of the world tap into the deep wells of my embodied unconscious. I learn these stories with my body.”<sup>30</sup> Smith writes:

Most often, and most fundamentally, there is an unarticulated (and inarticulable) set of dispositions and inclinations that are activated immediately upon perceiving a situation—because that perception is already an evaluation, a “take,” a construal that is “seen” emotionally...

<sup>24</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring*, 47 (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 39.

That emotional perception of a situation is not merely a hardwired, biological reflex; it is an acquired habit.<sup>31</sup>

Smith employs phenomenology to reimagine Christian formation to take sufficient account of the influence of bodily meaning and its attendant elements of story and imagination, on the human being. Smith states:

Having fallen prey to the intellectualism of modernity, both Christian worship and the embodied Christian pedagogy have underestimated the importance of this body/story nexus—this inextricable link between imagination, narrative, and embodiment—thereby forgetting the ancient Christian [and Jewish] sacramental wisdom carried in the historic practices of Christian worship and the embodied legacies of spiritual and monastic disciplines.<sup>32</sup>

Smith uses the term “imagination” to “name a kind of faculty by which we navigate and make sense of our world, but in ways and on a register that flies below the radar of conscious reflection, and specifically in ways that are fundamentally aesthetic in nature.”<sup>33</sup> He says, “I am regularly ‘making sense’ of my world on a register that has nothing to do with logic or even ‘knowledge’ as usually defined.” In this way, Merleau-Ponty surmises, “I navigate my world with an ‘intelligence’ that has nothing to do with intellectualism.”<sup>34</sup>

The implication of this idea is far-reaching. The habitual movement of our bodies in a particular direction forms the way we see reality. The way we reason about the reality we perceive is not objective or unmediated. Our minds do not directly engage the world. Our minds engage the world through our bodies. The body becomes the unrecognized and imperceptible pane on the world and on our understanding of self. If that pane is tinted and warped, then we see a distorted world, but we might never know it. To make matters worse, Christian formation that aims only at the renewal of the mind, however biblical, will prove to be only marginally effective.

We learn five important lessons about embodied anthropology from the phenomenologists like Smith and Merleau-Ponty: (1) Our current model of Christian formation insufficiently accounts for the human being, and is, therefore, ineffective. And this is because (2) humans relate to the world first and primarily bodily not cognitively. Thus, (3) we are formed as much or more by our bodily practices and experiences than by our thinking. This means: (4) our bodies have “know-how” and intelligence that developed precognitively through the doing of things and things done to us and this know-how is both irreducible (it cannot be re-expressed otherwise), and out of the grasp of our consciousness, at least unless we intentionally focus our cognition on it. And (5) the human

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<sup>31</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 51; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

faculty through which our bodies and minds find unity is the imagination because of its ability to speak through our mind to our heart by story. “The way to the heart is through the body, and the way into the body is through story.”<sup>35</sup>

Below, I hope to show that biblical lament gets our bodies involved in processing its story of trauma. And the primary way it does this is through activating our imaginations in prayer.

### III. THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES— “WHAT IS NOT NAMED”

In reclaiming our bodies in theology, Beth Felker Jones has very recently reminded us:

In a world influenced by Plato and Descartes, a dualist concept of what it means to be human has creeping roots buried deep within us. Our default understandings of human being, therefore, are often more Platonic, Cartesian, or gnostic than they are Christian. We speak all the time as though the really important part of who we are is an immaterial, spiritual, or even purely cognitive thing.<sup>36</sup>

Here is how Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it eloquently and forcefully in 1933 when he reflected on the account in Genesis 2:

Even Darwin or Feuerbach would not use stronger language than is used here. Humankind is derived from a piece of earth. Its bond with the earth belongs to its essential being. The “earth is its mother”; it comes out of her womb . . . It is God’s earth out of which humankind is taken. From it human beings have their *bodies*. The body belongs to a person’s essence. The body is not the prison, the shell, the exterior, of a human being; instead the human being is a human body. A human being “is” body and soul . . . What is to be taken seriously about human existence is its bond with mother earth, its being as body.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, it is often Christian doctrine itself that is in fact the problem; remember the aforementioned sign: “Think Right, Live Right.” But the incarnation of Messiah Jesus demands an *embodied* theology.<sup>38</sup> There has been significant work done on the subject in the last couple of decades. And most recently, there’s recognition that the body is a fulcrum

<sup>35</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), loc. 1961–65.

<sup>37</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3* (3; ed. Douglas S. Bax; trans. John W. De Gruchy; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 76–77.

<sup>38</sup> James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1979); Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Beth Felker Jones, *Marks of His Wounds: Gender Politics and Bodily Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Joy A. Schroeder, *Sexual Abuse*,

of brokenness. Beth Felker Jones has made the point well: "The theology of the body is important because real bodies are broken, beaten, raped, tortured, and killed."<sup>39</sup>

I will make the particular point that embodied theology centered on the incarnation of the Messiah in the already-not-yet invites us to name that which we hope to have healed. So the incarnation teaches us something about God and something about ourselves.

*First about God.* In recent years, I have become something of a fan of Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the founder of the modern Moravian movement. The Brethren revival of the late 18th century on Zinzendorf's German estate, called Herrnhut, led to the modern missions movement. It is largely forgotten that both John and Charles Wesley were influenced by Zinzendorf at the early stages of the Methodist movement. About 5 years ago, I became enamored with the Christian history of the Czech lands. I have had the privilege of doing significant ministry there over the course of the last half-decade. Czech has a long history of faith, though that has all but been eroded in the last century from wars and occupations, Nazism and communism. Nevertheless, even today the legacy of leaders like Jan Hus, John Comenius, and Zinzendorf remains; the bronze statue of Hus stands as a centerpiece in Prague's Old City center.

Zinzendorf's Christology has been particularly influential on me. Zinzendorf is both praised and criticized for his preoccupation with the concrete suffering of Jesus. His language, in both sermons and hymns (he composed over a 1000 hymns), borders on the grotesque, with its concrete emphasis on the wounded God—a theme that has been reinvigorated by others more recently. Unfortunately, Zinzendorf has provided little resource to those attempting to rethink theology through Jesus' crucifixion. Scan the indexes of these recent works and Zinzendorf is absent.<sup>40</sup>

In particular, Arthur J. Freeman, in what is the most comprehensive presentation of Zinzendorf's theology in the English language, notes the importance of John 20 for Zinzendorf's "wounds of Jesus" theology. For Zinzendorf, "the significance of the incarnation was continued in Christ's post-resurrection existence. He takes his wounds and his humanity with him to heaven, where he remains wounded for us, the one who loves us with a gentle and patient love. There is no other God than the wounded one. God never leaves the wounds behind."<sup>41</sup> For Zinzendorf, Jesus' suffering forever defines God. The God we worship and serve is the "God of wounds." "The wounds of Christ are his identity."<sup>42</sup> Scott Ellington

<sup>39</sup> Beth Felker Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney, *The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Arthur J. Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf* (Bethlehem; Winston-Salem: Moravian Church in America, 1998), iv.

<sup>42</sup> Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 92.

aptly writes, “God’s suffering is integral to his nature and expressions of his mercy, wrath, forgiveness, and judgment are shaped and qualified by his pathos.”<sup>43</sup>

Glenn Pemberton asks, “Do we envision a God who weeps over us as his heart breaks, suffering with us . . . Do we worship a God incarnate in Jesus, the suffering man of sorrows who knows our grief, or only the Christ in triumphal entry?”<sup>44</sup> His questions reveal an important fact: the degree to which we do envision a God who knows suffering and suffers with us is the degree to which we practice lament. Given where the church is theologically in the West, it is not surprising that the practice of lament has been all but lost.

We must capture a vision of the savior who, in the recent words of Richard Mouw and Doug Sweeney, “suffered for us” uniquely and historically, but who also “suffers with us.” In their book, *The Suffering and Victorious Christ*, Mouw and Sweeney reflect from the Reformed tradition on “divine empathy” in order to offer a “more compassionate Christology.” They state, “we are convinced that we need to give much more attention than our traditions historically have to the ways in which God’s plan of the incarnation arose in large part from his desire to enter into the frailties, fears, and agonies of the human condition in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>45</sup>

Nicholas Wolterstorff painfully and redemptively describes how his grief for his the premature death of his son revealed that the truth contained in the incarnation is the truth of God’s own suffering. Desiring some satisfying answer from God about his suffering, God was silent. Wolterstorff writes, “We strain to hear. But instead of hearing answer we catch sight of God himself scraped and torn. Through our tears we see the tears of God.”<sup>46</sup>

A great mystery: to redeem our brokenness and lovelessness the God who suffers with us did not strike some mighty blow of power but sent his beloved son to suffer like us, through his suffering to redeem us from suffering and evil.<sup>47</sup>

To this end, I have been captured of late by the lyrics of that old Hymn: “Man of Sorrows,” which presents the compassionate Christology of Wolterstorff and Mouw and Sweeney providing the content for a theological reimagination:

“Man of Sorrows!” what a name  
For the Son of God, who came

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<sup>43</sup> Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 186.

<sup>44</sup> Glenn Pemberton, *Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012), 194–95.

<sup>45</sup> Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney, *The Suffering and Victorious Christ*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Wolterstorff, *Lament*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Wolterstorff, *Lament*, 81.

Ruined sinners to reclaim.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we;  
Spotless Lamb of God was He;  
"Full atonement!" can it be?  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die;  
"It is finished!" was His cry;  
Now in Heav'n exalted high.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King,  
All His ransomed home to bring,  
Then anew His song we'll sing:  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

*Now about us.* Gregory of Nazianzus, the fourth-century Greek father has said famously: "What is not assumed is not healed." He said this in response to the Christological debates raging at the time. Against those who wished to deny Jesus full humanity, Gregory argued that to the extent Jesus was human is the extent that humanness can be saved and healed. For if Jesus was only partially human, then only that of which he was a part can be saved and healed. But because he became fully human, all of our humanness can and will be healed.

But there is a dilemma. There is a limit to our healing in this life on two accounts. First, there is a limit to the healing because while Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, we are not. We are becoming divine, in the language of Athanasius, but that work is yet fully realized this side of eternity. The reality of the eschatological overlap of the ages places a limit on the extent of healing in this body in this time. The Apostle Paul points to this reality in Romans 8:23: "And it is not only creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and *for our bodies to be set free.*" There is "bentness" in our bodies that may very well not be straightened until God "makes all things new."

In addition, even if it were theoretically possible to be fully healed, fully saved, fully divine here and now, we have a significant role to play in the process. There is then another side to Gregory's statement: Not only is what is not assumed is not healed, but also *what is not named is not healed.*

Until we *name* the evil and harm done, until we bring to our immediate and direct consciousness what *Evil* has done, and our allying with Evil, as did the first humans (Genesis 3), and until we repent of our cooperation with Evil, we will not experience a level of healing in this life. Dan Allender has said, “You’ll never address the issues of abuse until you have named the abuse . . . you have to name what is true . . . Freedom will grow to the degree that you grieve and are angry about what has happened to you.”<sup>48</sup> Equally expressive of this point is Walter Brueggemann:

It is the key insight of Freud that until there is an embrace of honest helplessness, there is no true gospel that can be heard. Until the idols have been exposed, there is no chance of the truth of the true God. It is telling that these psalms use the words “pit/Sheol/waters/depths,” for in therapy, one must be “in the depths” if there is to be new life. Freud has seen that the utter abandonment of pretense is a prerequisite to new joy.<sup>49</sup>

The benefits of and the condition for naming evil is captured well by M. Scott Peck in his classic work on evil: “To name something correctly gives us a certain amount of power over it . . . Knowing its name, I know something of the dimensions of that force. Because I have that much of a safe ground on which to stand, I can afford to be curious about its nature. I can afford to move toward it.”<sup>50</sup>

The grace and kindness of God when meditated upon in the context of a healing community of faith gives us the courage to move toward the harm Evil has done and name it with blushing detail. The painful process leads to a connection with the person who experienced the wound. Individually, it is that part of our person with whom we’ve spent little time—the “inner boy or girl:” that 5-year-old boy who found his mother dead in the bathtub; that 13-year-old girl who was sexually molested by her uncle for 3 years—that part of ourselves we’ve compartmentalized and have largely only contempt toward. Corporately, the naming of Evil connects us to other communities in our neighborhoods and cities and in the wider world, communities that are under assault by Evil. Grieving over their experience of Evil produces compassion and solidarity.

The connection doesn’t crack open the heart automatically however. This leads me to another theological resource prized by the Desert Fathers of the Eastern Church: the “gift of tears.” Bishop Kallistos Ware writes:

The gift of tears . . . has an important place in the spiritual tradition of the Christian East. The “theology of tears” plays a particularly significant role in the teaching of St. John Climacus, St. Isaac the Syrian, and St. Symeon the New Theologian . . . St. Isaac regards tears as the crucial boundary between the “bodily” and the “spiritual state,” as the point of transition between the present age and the

<sup>48</sup> Dan B. Allender, “The Wounded Heart.”

<sup>49</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Psalms in the Life*, 21.

<sup>50</sup> M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (London: Arrow Books, 1983), 76.



Age to come, which may be entered by anticipation even in this life. The newborn child weeps as it is born into the world; similarly, the Christian weeps as he is reborn into the age to come.<sup>51</sup>

While there is a difference that must be observed carefully and discerned between sensual tears and spiritual tears, according to Ware, there is not a “radical and clear-cut division between these two types of tears.” Ware explains: “Natural or sensual tears may sometimes have a positive and purifying effect . . . Grace cooperates with nature and builds upon it; and so natural tears when purged of sinful self-centeredness and of disordered emotionalism, can lead us to the threshold of spiritual weeping.”<sup>52</sup>

This idea of the “gift of tears” is personally significant. I cannot produce the tears. It’s not that I’m unemotional, something of a stoic personality. In the past, I’ve chalked it up to personality. But I see the emotion coming out sideways: in anger, lust, and a drive to accomplish. I’ve stopped reducing it to a question of personality. I became curious about the mixed messages my body was giving: on the one hand passionate, on the other dead.

My ambivalence around issues of woundedness, as I’ve already noted, is so deep—my heart so calloused by my precognitive tactics of survival—that I am numb. I have often bemoaned to my therapist, “When will the dam of emotion burst? I want to weep. I want to feel.” The tears, while they have come, they have come only in drops. I want a flood. I want restoration and healing. So I wait. But patience is hard fought. I want to live in the kingdom of heaven now, in the words of Augustine, “before the appointed time.”<sup>53</sup>

The “theology of tears” teaches me that they are a gift. They must be received. They are not, however, a gift only for the most devout. They are a basic gift of the Spirit. They are a gift my heavenly Father has and wants to share with me. I mentioned to my therapist the idea of the “gift of tears.” The waiting, he agreed, also says something about just how precious those tears really are. They are not discovered quickly. They aren’t at the surface.

<sup>51</sup> Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 56; cf. also: Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 101; Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 185–90; William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 239–40.

<sup>52</sup> Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 56.

<sup>53</sup> “Since it is necessary in this life that the citizens of the kingdom of heaven should be subjected to temptations among erring and impious men, that they may be exercised, and “tried as gold in the furnace,” we ought not before the appointed time to desire to live with those alone who are holy and righteous, so that, by patience, we may deserve to receive this blessedness in its proper time” (Augustine of Hippo, “Letters of St. Augustine,” in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work* [ed. Philip Schaff; trans. J. G. Cunningham; vol. 1; A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886], 1553–554, emphasis added).

Those tears have been buried deep into the heart. They are connected to something so precious and sacred they will only come with time."

As a liturgy, lament attends to my body, and therefore the heart by placing my body into postures that open it up to receive God's gift. Lament invites God's people to tell the stories of personal and corporate woundedness. Lament engages the heart through imaginatively entering into those stories. The practice of lament fosters bodily grief and by doing so draws out what is deeply buried in the heart. Scott Ellington rightly affirms the necessity of lament for the wounded: "The prayer of lament remains a resource for all who experience a suffering that diminishes the fullness of life . . . lament is first and foremost the province of the foreigner, the widow, the deformed, and the destitute."<sup>54</sup>

#### IV. LITURGICAL PRACTICE OF LAMENT— "EMBODIED IMAGINATIVE PRAYER"

Walter Brueggemann has done much to help us understand the Psalms; nowhere is that truer than with the Psalms of Lament. Brueggemann named the Lament Psalms, psalms of "dislocation" and "disorientation" which reflects something Paul Ricoeur, someone greatly influenced by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, developed in his "interpretation theory." Ricoeur observed that the movement between disorientation and reorientation characterizes human life. What's more, Ricoeur's sympathetic interaction with advocates of the "hermeneutic of suspicion" such as Marx and Nietzsche, but especially Freud, led him to look for a way to hold in tension the opposing hermeneutic of "re-presentation," the approach that recaptures the fullness of meaning in the old realities on the other side of necessary deconstruction. Brueggemann writes, "Ricoeur argues that these two hermeneutics are both essential and must be seen in a dialectic of displacement and recapture."<sup>55</sup> What use does displacement or suspicion have in the life of faith? Brueggemann makes the case that:

It is precisely the dispossession of false and deceptive positions that can lead to the recovery of powerful symbols. Thus, the two works that must both be carried on are (a) the criticism of idols, and (b) heeding the true God who will make all things new.<sup>56</sup>

Dan Allender calls this "disillusionment." This is the necessary first step in repentance. And it is inextricably linked with sadness, grief, and sorrow. Allender writes:

Sadness opens the heart to what was meant to be and is not. Grief opens the heart to what was not meant to be and is. Sorrow breaks the heart as it exposes the damage we've done to others as a result of our unwillingness to rely solely on the grace and truth of God . . . Grief does not regain what was lost, but it breaks the tendency to

<sup>54</sup> Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 191.

<sup>55</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Psalms in the Life*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Psalms in the Life*, 18.

resort to self-hatred to resolve the anguish of the loss. Grief exposes the hardness of the contemptuous heart and replaces it with supple tenderness and vulnerability ... sorrow unto life moves from grief over our own victimization to an acknowledgment of the damage we have done to others as a result of our choice to live dead and dormant.<sup>57</sup>

Brueggemann argues that it is just this displacement that the Psalms of Lament give voice to. And it is a liturgy that can lead us out of false illusion and into openheartedness. Lament is the "Cedarwood Road."

"Lament," Glenn Pemberton defines, "is a structured, controlled language that by its methodical cadence helps restore a modicum of structure in times of disorientation ... Like the ritual actions of a wedding or funeral, these movements of lament enable us to negotiate the liminal space of pain with words that communicate to our God within a controlled setting. In a way, lament itself begins to restore some sense of order in the midst of chaos."<sup>58</sup>

Lament is "the language of suffering, the voicing of suffering."<sup>59</sup> And the semantics of lament is at times uncensored, raw, and very real. Particularly in the sections of imprecation the speech is aggressive, imaginative, and vicious. Brueggemann comments:

This is the voice of resentment and vengeance that will not be satisfied until God works retaliation on those who have done wrong ... While we may think this ignoble and unworthy, it demonstrates that in these psalms of disorientation, as life collapses, the old disciplines and safeguards also collapse. One speaks unguardedly about how it in fact is. The stunning fact is that Israel does not purge this unguardedness but regards it as genuinely faithful communication.<sup>60</sup>

Lament also functions at the level of our imagination more than our intellect. Using poetic verse, engaging memory, and employing evocative and creative language, the elements of lament are the work of imagination. The songs function to evoke and form new realities that did not exist until, or apart from, the actual singing of the song. Thus, the speech of the new song imaginatively recognizes both what is given, and also evokes it, calls it into being, and forms it.<sup>61</sup> Through the speech of lament, the wildness of our imagination meets the level of our hurt.

Finally, Brent Strawn has very recently noted the "therapeutic" nature of the Psalms generally. He reflects on the nature of the Psalms from

<sup>57</sup> Dan B. Allender, *The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2008), 205-06. See also Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 185.

<sup>58</sup> Glenn Pemberton, *Hurting with God*, 65.

<sup>59</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, "If God is Good and Sovereign, Why Lament?," CTJ 36 (2001): 42.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), 55.

<sup>61</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Message*, 55.

both a liturgical and psychological point of view. The liturgical says “from whom no secrets are hid” while the psychological observes “we are only as sick as our secrets.” Combining the two, Strawn suggests that “the biblical psalms are ultimately *therapeutic*. They exist for our healing and for the healing of the world, or yet further, as Brueggemann would no doubt have it, for our healing for the healing of the world.”<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, he writes:

The Psalms witness to a place where no secrets are hid from God, where it is, in fact, *impossible* to hide secrets from God. But the Psalms do not simply attest to such a place: insofar as they function as models of prayer that can be re-uttered—or, in Brueggemann’s terms, “reperformed”—the Psalms themselves *disclose* such a place. In the process of praying these ancient prayers, that is, every time we re-utter and reperform them, the Psalms realize and manifest in us who pray them full disclosure. In this way, the Psalms not only model the practice of disclosure but also become the very way we disclose everything, even and especially our deepest secrets, before God.<sup>63</sup>

In the practice of lament, then, there is a redemptive and circular process of learning, practice, and transformation.

We learn

... how to use imagination to grieve and to hope  
 ... that the God to whom we speak is one of “sorrows, acquainted with grief”  
 ... what is a properly embodied human and faithful reaction to the harm Evil has done  
 ... that the appropriate place is before God in a community who understands God’s kindness

We practice

... imaginative speech in the truthful naming of our harm  
 ... vulnerable address to God in the midst of a community that knows the goodness of God  
 ... physical postures of humility like fasting

We are transformed

... into openhearted worshipers

In Brueggemann’s prescient words: “Such daring honesty, at God’s throne of mercy, is the only route to transformative well-being. That is the secret of the laments that cannot be hid.”<sup>64</sup>

I will illustrate the elements and nature of a lament by providing a brief commentary on Psalm 109. The elements are not static and in their

<sup>62</sup> Walter Brueggemann and Brent A. Strawn, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), xiii

<sup>63</sup> Walter Brueggemann and Brent A. Strawn, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*, xiii.

<sup>64</sup> Walter Brueggemann and Brent A. Strawn, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*, 92.

use vary widely through the sixty lament Psalms in the Psalter. Still, the forms of the lament are recognizable and distinguish them from other types of Psalms.<sup>65</sup> I have chosen Psalm 109 because it, along with Psalm 88, is the most graphic and raw lament in the Psalter. I wish to show the extent of the Bible's imaginative embodied prayer.

#### A. Address (v. 1a)

<sup>1</sup> My God, whom I praise,

The first step of the liturgy of Lament is an address to God. Notice the personal nature of the address: "my God"; the one "whom I praise." This liturgy, far from revealing faithlessness, is an expression of bold faith. The personal address represents the fundamental assumption of Lament liturgy: the problems and disorientation I face in my life, are, in fact, God's problems—it has to do with him and his governance of this world. What is more, the personal nature assumes that the God addressed is "*pro me*."<sup>66</sup> Brueggemann states this eloquently:

[Lament] insists that all such experiences of disorder are a proper subject for discourse with God. Nothing is out of bounds, nothing precluded or inappropriate. Everything properly belongs in this conversation of the heart. To withhold parts of life from that conversation is in fact to withhold part of life from the sovereignty of God. Thus these psalms make the important connection: everything must be *brought to speech*, and everything brought to speech must be *addressed to God*, who is the final reference for all of life.<sup>67</sup>

Lament's first step is a confession of relationship. God you are *my* God.

#### B. Complaint (vv. 1b-5)

do not remain silent,

<sup>2</sup> for people who are wicked and deceitful  
have opened their mouths against me;  
they have spoken against me with lying tongues.

<sup>3</sup> With words of hatred they surround me;  
they attack me without cause.

<sup>4</sup> In return for my friendship they accuse me,  
but I am a man of prayer.

<sup>5</sup> They repay me evil for good,  
and hatred for my friendship.

<sup>65</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>66</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 60.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Psalms in the Life*, 28.

The next step of the Lament is a complaint. The complaint naturally flows from the firm faith of the previous address. “You are my God, so...” The complaint is *indirectly* a protest against God (“do not be silent *anymore*”) and *directly* against a group of antagonists who have harmed the lamenter.

“Do not be silent” reverberates with a sense of abandonment and absence in a time of need. It names the ambivalence felt by a victim in which God is both present but also absent. He is present because it is his world; he is absent because the harm was done. Behind it lay all the questions of presence: “Where were you God?! How could you let this kind of thing happen under your watch?!” The complaint gives space to say what is most deeply wounding, in a world where God is king what happened, should not have happened.

The lamenter, however, devotes the complaint to the crux of the matter: the harm was done by those whom he had showed *love*. The NIV translation captures it well with the concept of “friendship.” The depth and insidious nature of evil is seen in the irony: those who *should* have been loving were those who abused. The wound was inflicted by someone who should *not* be wounding.

The complaint is a place to name the harm done in all its insidiousness: “my stepbrother sexually molested me;” “my father walked out on my family and left me with no hero;” “my sister’s illness robbed me of my childhood;” “my teenage neighbor was shot dead in the street by one charged with the duty to protect.” Those who should have been *for* me were *against* me. The complaint is the most important part of the lament because it is where we bring to God our harm. It’s the space to imagine the depth and extent of the harm and to put it into speech in the presence of the community of faith. We confront God with the details, not in general, but in *all its specificity*.

### C. Requests & Motivations (vv. 6-29)

#### (1) Request #1 (vv. 6-15)

<sup>6</sup> Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;  
let an accuser stand at his right hand.

<sup>7</sup> When he is tried, let him be found guilty,  
and may his prayers condemn him.

<sup>8</sup> May his days be few;  
may another take his place of leadership.

<sup>9</sup> May his children be fatherless  
and his wife a widow.

<sup>10</sup> May his children be wandering beggars;  
may they be driven from their ruined homes.

<sup>11</sup> May a creditor seize all he has;  
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.

<sup>12</sup> May no one extend kindness to him

or take pity on his fatherless children.

- <sup>13</sup> May his descendants be cut off,  
their names blotted out from the next generation.
- <sup>14</sup> May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord;  
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.
- <sup>15</sup> May their sins always remain before the Lord,  
that he may blot out their name from the earth.

(2) Motivation #1 (vv. 16-20)

- <sup>16</sup> For he never thought of doing a kindness,  
but hounded to death the poor  
and the needy and the brokenhearted.
- <sup>17</sup> He loved to pronounce a curse—  
may it come back on him.  
He found no pleasure in blessing—  
may it be far from him.
- <sup>18</sup> He wore cursing as his garment;  
it entered into his body like water,  
into his bones like oil.
- <sup>19</sup> May it be like a cloak wrapped about him,  
like a belt tied forever around him.
- <sup>20</sup> May this be the Lord's payment to my accusers,  
to those who speak evil of me.

The content of this first set of requests will make most church ladies blush. And it is hard to imagine a context of worship today where such pleas to God would be seen as appropriate. But perhaps this is largely the problem. It is necessary to be reminded that the Psalms were the worship book of Israel and so also for the church. In spite of attempts to marginalize or theologize these imprecatory lines from the life of faith, they express a necessary side of our communication with God. They guide the worshiper to put into speech their disorientation. What's more, the graphic and imaginative nature of the pleas give a voice to our body.

The pleas are directed toward God it must not be forgotten. There is a posture of humility and trust, which was set at the opening of the Psalm and continues throughout. And in light of the space created by the trust, the Psalmist can let his imagination run the whole length of his hurt.

(3) Request #2 (v. 21)

- <sup>21</sup> But you, Sovereign Lord,  
help me for your name's sake;  
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.



## (4) Motivation #2 (vv. 22-25)

<sup>22</sup> For I am poor and needy,  
and my heart is wounded within me.

<sup>23</sup> I fade away like an evening shadow;  
I am shaken off like a locust.

<sup>24</sup> My knees give way from fasting;  
my body is thin and gaunt.

<sup>25</sup> I am an object of scorn to my accusers;  
when they see me, they shake their heads.

Two important aspects of the Psalmist's attempt to cause God to act are noteworthy. First, the state of the worshiper is described in the parallel lines of 109:22 with the terms: poor ('āniy), needy ('ebyon), and wounded of heart (leby halal). The terms “poor” and “needy” are synonymous. Put together, they emphasize the depth of the experience. The parallelism with the second line is either developmental or synonymous: either we are to understand them as saying the same thing, or the second line offers a further element. In either case, the point is clear. And in connection to 109:25, the Psalmist is shamed and humiliated. This verse comes close to Jesus' statement recorded in Matthew: “poor in spirit” (Matt 5:5).

The second element noteworthy here is also another connection to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Psalm 109:24 states, “My knees give way from fasting, my body is thin and gaunt.” The translation (and the NIV is not alone) obscures *the focus on fasting* which is in both lines and puts the emphasis of the lines in the wrong place. Literally the lines read: “my knees buckle from fasting, my body thins from the oil [of fasting].” I have added “of fasting,” which is implied. Interestingly, it coordinates with Jesus' teaching about fasting in Matthew 6:17: “put oil on your head” when fasting. The lines are in synonymous parallelism, meaning the second *restates* the first. The focus then is on *fasting* and, particularly, on the length of fasting. The worshiper is registering the fact that he has been fasting over this for a very long time, long enough that he's physically broken down and thin. The point: this guy has been pleading with God over this issue for a long time.

Fasting is a constitutive element of lament. It is perhaps the most bodily element of lament. Fasting is to lament what relaxing, curling up, and lying down is to sleeping. Merleau-Ponty observed that we “invite” sleep that comes to us not by an explicit conscious willing on our part but not entirely without our participation either.<sup>68</sup>

## (5) Request #3 (vv. 26-29)

<sup>26</sup> Help me, Lord my God;  
save me according to your unfailing love.

<sup>68</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 166-67.

- <sup>27</sup> Let them know that it is your hand,  
that you, Lord, have done it.
- <sup>28</sup> While they curse, may you bless;  
may those who attack me be put to shame,  
but may your servant rejoice.
- <sup>29</sup> May my accusers be clothed with disgrace  
and wrapped in shame as in a cloak.

The Psalmists makes essentially one general expressed here and earlier in 109:21: "Help me," "save me", "deliver me." These three imperatives are grounded in his relationship to a God whose lovingkindness is "good." The worshiper holds on to this truth in spite of the truth of his life experience. It is the very reason he offers this lament at all.

#### D. Praise (vv. 30-31)

- <sup>30</sup> With my mouth I will greatly extol the Lord;  
in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him.
- <sup>31</sup> For he stands at the right hand of the needy,  
to save their lives from those who would condemn them.

The structured nature of the lament leads the worshiper to a new orientation, eventually. This is clearly not a straightforward movement. One does not simply go through the steps of the lament and come out of it singing praises. The very content of the lament here speaks against such a mechanical understanding.

Lament is not a five step process through which a person may move at a brisk pace; life is not so simple nor is the relinquishment of pain so easy . . . While the crux of lament is hope over despair, it is not a matter of optimism in which we believe "everything will get better" . . . "the spine of lament is hope."<sup>69</sup>

However slight the grip may become, lament sustains a hold on hope. It moves forward through disorientation to a new orientation, a matured naiveté.

Lament creates openheartedness because it gives a place for our bodies to grieve the harm Evil inflicts. And it keeps the worshiper from cynicism because it fosters an abiding hope. Lament, on the one hand, treats evil *appropriately*. It is realistic about its nature and its affect on both our body and our world. Lament fosters the proper response. On the other hand, lament processes the Evil before and with God and consequently sustains hope and ends ambivalence.

<sup>69</sup> Glenn Pemberton, *Hurting with God*, 72-73.

V. THE HABITUS OF LAMENT—  
"EMPHATIC PRESENCE"

Zion is the most openhearted person in my life. Of course, he is seven. We all started openhearted. It is the quality of being a child—in fact it is surely related to Jesus' statement about the necessity to become childlike to enter into the kingdom. Zion's openheartedness sometimes is breathtakingly demonstrable. Recently, we had some students over for a cookout, and one of them, Ryan Lownsberry (pronounced like "Clownsberry" he once told me when I mis-pronounced it) played with Zion all afternoon. We finally rescued Ryan for time of reflection around the fire. Zion was not very happy about this, even though he was allowed to watch cartoons while we chatted. Right before Zion had to go to bed, Ryan played with him again. But it was short lived; it was late, and there was school in the morning. Zion was undone. He was devastated that the happiness he was experiencing with Ryan had to come to an end. It was the heights of happy to the depths of sorrow in the matter of seconds. So connected. I walked Zion up to his bed as he sobbed, protested, argued. We got his pajamas on and tucked in; still fighting, still undone. I asked him what he was so upset about. He said, "I want to keep playing." I said, "Zion its time to go to bed." "No!" he shouted. I sat with him. Eventually, he was able to talk; he accepted the fact that he was going to bed.

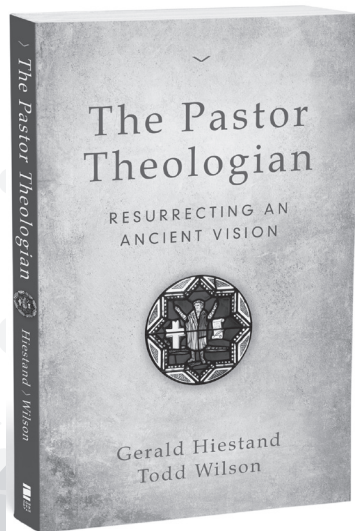
I told him that what he was feeling was totally right. It is very sad that happiness is so fleeting in this life. I told him that God made us to live in perpetual happiness. We were meant to enjoy happiness always. It is what our hearts long for. And yet there is nothing more fleeting in this life than a moment of happiness. Happiness is something that cannot be held. It comes quickly and leaves faster. I told him, "This is *something* to be really sad about." In that moment, his sadness was so right. It was fully human. It was revelatory. I felt sad for him, and I noticed in his sadness my own; a sadness I had never grieved. I too know the reality of the extreme brevity of happiness, but it has not been something over which I've grieved. But I should. And it is why the hope of heaven is so meaningful—to be that openhearted, to be able to experience intense joy and deep sorrow.

Because I have begun to grieve what Evil has done in my own life, I was able to lead Zion through his experience of lament. We lamented what Evil has done to God's good creation. We named it. We brought it to conscious expression and put creative language to it. We felt the sadness of it. And we proclaimed the hope of heaven together. As his father, I grieved with and for Zion.

Here is what this essay all comes down to: God's grief connects him to me; my grief connects me both to God and to others. This is openheartedness. This is *the pattern of life* following in the way of the "Man of Sorrows."

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THE WAY DOWN IS UP: CHARLES TAYLOR,  
JOHN CALVIN, AND SACRAMENTAL  
WORSHIP IN "A SECULAR AGE"

JOSEPH SHERRARD\*

Recent years have seen the rise of a growing diversity within Protestant worship in North America.<sup>1</sup> For most traditions, gone are the days where one could assume that the Sunday morning worship of a downtown Presbyterian church in South Carolina would be largely identical to that found in a similarly Reformed congregation in suburban Southern California. Instead it is safer to assume that these different contexts would produce differing "styles" of worship. Sometimes these differences are the result of a careful consideration of context as pastors and worship leaders attempt to communicate the message of the Gospel to a culture that finds it less plausible than as in previous generations. But worship has not only been changed in recent years because of those who have directed their focus on the culture outside of the church's walls. At the same time many (and sometimes those very same pastors and worship leaders) have reconsidered and reconfigured their gathered worship as the result of a careful study of the church's tradition and practice of worship through the ages.

One result of both this consideration of changing context and study of ecclesial tradition has been a reclamation of the place of the sacraments and "sacramentality" in worship. Congregations in traditions that have historically given sacraments and the aesthetics of "sacramentality" minimal attention have begun practices such as the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper as well as giving thought to the embodied nature of corporate worship. But for many traditions—and perhaps in particular those Reformed Christians who have embraced a more robust understanding of the sacraments and the "sacramental"—this movement has more often than not provided only the vaguest definitions of "sacramental" while also failing to give close scrutiny to the specific resources their tradition brings to this discussion.

Enter James K.A. Smith, chair of Applied Reformed Theology and Worldview at Calvin College, and his recent "cultural liturgies" project.

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Timothy R. Baylor, Forrest Buckner, Rebekah Earnshaw, Jonathan Lett, Jared Michelson, William Simpson, and Mark Stirling for significantly improving this essay through discussion and comments on earlier drafts.

*Desiring the Kingdom* and *Imagining the Kingdom* represent two-thirds of this project, which intends to “communicate... a vision of what authentic, integral Christian learning looks like, emphasizing how learning is connected to worship and how, together, these constitute practices of formation and discipleship.”<sup>2</sup> Implicit in a discussion of “cultural liturgy” is a claim about the kind of thing that “culture” is, something that Smith expands upon from time to time in the course of his project. By “culture,” I take Smith to mean creation and materiality as human beings make use of it, taking the resources of God’s creation and forming, combining, and cultivating them for particular purposes in the world. In *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith makes a particular claim about what kind of thing creation is, proposing a sacramental understanding of the world.<sup>3</sup> In this sacramental understanding, Smith means no more than that “the physical, material stuff of creation and embodiment is the means by which God’s grace meets us and gets hold of us.”<sup>4</sup> In choosing this term, Smith is moving self-consciously against the grain of the conceptual preferences of the greater evangelical,<sup>5</sup> and his own Reformed<sup>6</sup>, tradition, and does so for a number of well-informed reasons. In what follows, I will first examine the influence of Charles Taylor upon Smith, asking what particular concerns fund the proposal of a sacramental understanding of the world, giving particular attention to Taylor’s critique of John Calvin. Next I will examine John Calvin’s own thought to understand better the way in which worship, idolatry, and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are understood within Calvin’s own theology. Finally, Calvin’s thought will be evaluated and in particular its usefulness for Smith’s project and in illuminating other concerns related to the concepts discussed.

### SMITH, TAYLOR, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MATERIALITY<sup>7</sup>

Smith’s presenting concern for an understanding of the sacramentality of the world is the importance of the embodied nature of worship. “Behind and under and in all of this is a core conviction, an implicit

<sup>2</sup> James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 139–154.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 141.

<sup>5</sup> There are, of course, many notable exceptions within the evangelical tradition.

<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, there are particular reasons within the Reformed tradition for eschewing the language of “sacramental.”

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that there is more than one way to an affirmation of the material in modern theology. The Radical Orthodox project, with its presentation of the “suspension of the material,” and its polemic against the Scotist turn in theology, is another path. Indeed, Smith has engaged with this way forward in two important publications [James K.A. Smith, ed., *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); James K.A. Smith, ed., *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005)]. See also Hans Boersma’s *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). While the concerns presented in these publications are related to Taylor’s own work, for the purposes of this study we will need to constrain our study to the argument we find in Taylor’s work.

understanding that God inhabits all this earthy stuff, that we meet God in the material realities of water and wine, that God embraces our embodiment, embraces us in our embodiment.”<sup>8</sup> We can think of this conviction in two, concentric ways. In the broader sense Smith is working with the framework of the “social imaginary” that he finds compelling in the work of Charles Taylor. In the narrower sense Smith is concerned with the kind of implications that flow from foundational doctrines such as the incarnation and the resurrection.<sup>9</sup> Without the conceptual piece of the importance of the materiality of existence and worship in place, there is the very real possibility that the the inertia of modernity’s intellectual conditions would move Christians away from taking seriously the important claims Smith makes.

As I have noted, Charles Taylor provides some valuable pieces of the intellectual framework of Smith’s project, particularly the concept of the social imaginary as a way of making sense of how human persons are formed and inhabit the world, and as a partial account of the nature of Christian corporate worship. What is of note concerning Taylor’s account of the social imaginary (particularly as we consider Smith as a thinker within the Reformed tradition whose work is being appropriated by a wide range of Protestant evangelicals) is that for Taylor the social imaginary is one aspect of an account of the emergence of “A Secular Age” which lays a fair share of blame for the new contested conditions of religious belief at the doorstep of the Protestant Reformation and specifically John Calvin.

In *A Secular Age* Taylor tells the story of how we in the West moved from “a society in which it was impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.”<sup>10</sup> Taylor’s account of how this new kind of society emerged steers clear of the popular simplistic accounts of the advance of “secularism.” Instead, Taylor traces the conditions of modern belief and unbelief back to a series of interconnected but distinct events which, more often than not unintentionally, created new understandings of the self, the self in community, and the observable and unobservable world. This complex story is told at length in *A Secular Age* and also in Smith’s introduction to and summary of that work, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on one significant contributor to Western society’s movement toward “a secular age”: the Protestant Reformation and in particular John Calvin.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 140.

<sup>9</sup> “There is a performative sanctioning of embodiment that is implicit in Christian worship, invoking the ultimate performative sanctioning of the body in the incarnation—which itself recalls the love of God that gave birth to the material creation—its reaffirmation of the resurrection of Jesus, and looks forward to the resurrection of the body as an eschatological and eternal affirmation of the goodness of creation” (Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 140).

<sup>10</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.



## TAYLOR'S CRITIQUE OF JOHN CALVIN

For Taylor, Calvin's theology, and particularly his theology of worship and idolatry, is a significant contributor to the "disenchantment" of the natural world which took place in Western society around the time of the Reformation. The movement from the "enchanted" world of the pre-modern era to the "disenchanted" world that is definitive of the Western mind is the move from a world in which the natural world is understood to be an arena in which all kinds of spiritual and "magical" activity took place—"spirits, demons, and moral forces."<sup>11</sup> The enchanted world is a world of "charged" things, and "charged things can impose meanings, and bring about physical outcomes proportionate to their meanings."<sup>12</sup> Taylor gives examples of how this was imagined in the pre-modern world: demon possession, the influence of gods and goddesses such as Aphrodite, holy relics, the Eucharistic Host, etc.<sup>13</sup> Taylor's description of relics and the Host in the pre-modern age is particularly notable:

Power ... resided in things. For the curative action of the saints was often linked to centres where their relics resided; either some piece of their body (supposedly), or some object which had been connected with them in life ... And we can add to this other objects which had been endowed with *sacramental* power, like the Host, or candles which had been blessed at Candlemas, and the like. These objects were loci of spiritual power; which is why they had to be treated with care, and if abused could wreak terrible damage.<sup>14</sup>

Of particular note here is Taylor's use of the word "sacramental," a use that emphasizes how "we meet God in the material realities of water and wine, that God embraces our embodiment, embraces *us* in our embodiment."<sup>15</sup>

To inhabit this kind of world—a world that also mediated God's presence through its "natural"<sup>16</sup> and social realities<sup>17</sup>—is to live in a world

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<sup>11</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 30-37.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 32, emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 140. Note the similarity to Smith's description in *Desiring the Kingdom*.

<sup>16</sup> "The natural world they lived in, which had its place in the cosmos they imagined, testified to divine purpose and action; and not just in the way which we can still understand and (at least many of us) appreciate today, that its order and design bespeaks creation; but also because the great events in this natural order, storms, droughts, floods, plagues as well as years of exceptional fertility and flourishing, were seen as acts of God, as the now dead metaphor of our legal language still bears witness" (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25).

<sup>17</sup> "God was also implicated in the very existence of society (but not described as such—this is a modern term—rather as polis, kingdom, church, or whatever). A kingdom could only be conceived as grounded in something higher than mere human action in secular time" (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25).

where “one could not but encounter God everywhere.”<sup>18</sup> But as we well know, that world no longer exists. And among the contributing factors in the creation of the new, disenchanted world, is the theology of John Calvin and the societies formed in the wake of his thought and the social imaginary in which it is embedded. Taylor understands Calvin’s “disenchanting” impulse to emerge from two complementary sources: God’s ultimate sovereignty in the work of salvation and the accompanying danger of idolatry. With respect to the fact that “God’s honour and glory is paramount,”<sup>19</sup> Taylor writes that because of this “we disenchant the world; we reject the sacramentals; all the elements of ‘magic’ in the old religion. They are not only useless, but blasphemous, because they are arrogating power to us, and hence ‘plucking’ it away ‘from the glory of God’s righteousness.’”<sup>20</sup> Summarizing Taylor’s argument (while also noting that it is not an uncontroversial rendering of Calvin), Smith writes, “If anything of salvation is under our control, then God’s sovereignty and grace are compromised. This leads Reformers like Calvin to reject the ‘localization’ of grace in things and rituals, changing the ‘centre of gravity of the religious life.’”<sup>21</sup> The centrality of God’s sovereign activity in creation carries with it an anaphylactic to idolatry. Thus Taylor writes, “We must reject everything which smacks of idolatry. We combat the enchanted world, without quarter. At first, this fight is carried on not because enchantment is totally untrue, but rather because it is necessarily ungodly. If we are not allowed to look for help to the sacred, to a ‘white’ magic of the church, then all magic must be black.”<sup>22</sup>

What Taylor’s account identifies in Calvin is a nervousness about and perhaps even resistance to the importance of materiality in worship. And it is important to note that in interpreting Calvin this way, Taylor is in line with other serious interpreters of the Genevan Reformer and Reformation history more generally. Carlos Eire’s *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* makes similar claims about Calvin’s theology and its effect upon Western society. Eire also identifies in Calvin a significant break with the medieval conception of the world, and locates the source of this break in two principles which guided Calvin’s theology of worship: *solī Deo gloria*—similarly to Taylor’s own analysis of Calvin—and *finitum non est capax infiniti* (“the finite cannot contain the infinite”).<sup>23</sup> Eire argues that embedded deeply in Calvin’s thought is

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25. Of course we would want also to say that in one sense it is impossible not to “encounter God everywhere.” But Taylor’s statement refers to the fact that it was almost impossible for the pre-modern man or woman to conceive of their world but in relation to God. And this is certainly not the world that we inhabit in modernity.

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 78.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 79.

<sup>21</sup> James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 38–39.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> “Calvin’s attack on Roman Catholic ‘idolatry’ is a condemnation of the improper mixing of spiritual and material in worship—an affirmation of the principle *finitum non est capax infiniti*. It is also an indictment of man’s attempt to domesticate God and to rob him of his glory—an affirmation of the principle *solī Deo gloria*” (Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against*

a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the material realms. While Eire does not follow his argument to the same conclusions that Taylor makes about the advent of the secular age, he nonetheless believes that this move by Calvin is a significant innovation in the history of ideas.

Thus for Eire, just as for Taylor, Calvin is given an inauspicious place in the West's movement from the pre-modern social imaginary to the modern, secular world and the contested nature of modern belief. A world in which materiality is viewed with suspicion by the spiritually serious, a world in which *finitum non est capax infiniti*, is a world well on its way to the kind of unbelief that had previously been unimaginable. Taylor calls the process of evacuating the material of spiritual significance "excarnation." For Taylor, excarnation is understood as "the transfer of our religious life out of bodily forms of ritual, worship, practice, so that it comes more and more to reside 'in the head.'"<sup>24</sup> In Taylor's estimation, Calvin's religion is at the beginning of this movement of excarnation. Before we turn to Calvin himself, the following quote from Smith in *How (Not) to Be Secular* reminds us of how problematic this account of the world and God's relation to it is:

We might describe this as "deistic" religion—if it didn't look so much like contemporary Protestantism. And we might be tempted to identify this with the "liberal" stream of Protestantism—if it didn't sound like so many "progressive" evangelicals. Taylor sees this [excarnation] as an open door for exclusive humanism and atheism; it is a pretty straight line from excarnation to the vilification of religion—which raises important questions for Christianity in the new millennium."<sup>25</sup>

If indeed this not just a description of contemporary Protestantism, but a description of a Protestantism that finds its roots in the theology of John Calvin, then Taylor's argument represents a significant criticism of the Reformed tradition and raises serious questions about Calvin's ongoing usefulness for those who live in a secular age.

#### CALVIN: THE LORD'S SUPPER, IDOLATRY, AND THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST

The argument thus far has painted a bleak portrait of John Calvin as an unintentional harbinger of modern secularism. According to Taylor, Calvin is a necessary, though not singular, figure in the process of "excarnation," the movement of religious life from embodiment and materiality to the mind and the mind alone. Smith, however, is not in agreement with this analysis of Calvin—he notes at multiple points in various works the possibility that Calvin has been misread, whether by

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*the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 197-198).

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 613.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *How Not to be A Secular*, 58-59.

his immediate predecessors or by Taylor himself.<sup>26</sup> In what follows, I will allow Calvin speak for himself to the issues that Taylor and Eire have raised so that Smith's hesitations about their account can be evaluated according to Calvin's own thought. For the scope of this paper, it will be necessary to limit the discussion. I will not argue that there is in fact continuity between Calvin and the pre-modern, medieval world which came before him. Nor will I attempt to defend the Reformed tradition which followed Calvin of the claims which Taylor makes against it. Instead, I will examine how Calvin understood the relationship between God and the world, with particular attention given to a particular object of Taylor's criticism—Calvin's understanding of the sacraments, and in particular the Lord's Supper. How does Calvin understand God's activity and the presence of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper? What informs Calvin's understanding? And what picture does this give us of the way that Calvin understood God's presence and activity in the world?

Perhaps the best way forward is to understand what Calvin identified in Roman Catholic religious practice as idolatrous, and in particular what he thought was idolatrous about the Mass. Though Calvin dealt with the issue of idolatry and the Mass throughout his theological career, we can locate three distinct summaries of his thought in "The Necessity of Reforming the Church,"<sup>27</sup> "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly, and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion,"<sup>28</sup> and chapters 17 and 18 of Book IV of the *Institutes*.<sup>29</sup> I will focus on the *Institutes* because there we find his critique of the Mass in clearest connection to his own doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

Calvin states two central concerns with the Roman Catholic understanding of the Mass. The first concern, common in Protestant critiques of Roman Catholicism, is focused upon the Mass as a sacrifice, or in Calvin's words as "a kind of appeasement to make satisfaction to God for the expiation of the living and the dead."<sup>30</sup> Calvin's second concern, again common in the Reformation period, is that the Mass is idolatry, a concern which Calvin describes at various points in Book IV, chapter xvii. But what is distinctive about Calvin's understanding of idolatry in comparison to many of his Reformation contemporaries is how he consistently connects his reflections on idolatry with Christ's ascension. For example, in a section where he takes up the issue of the adoration of the Eucharistic Host, Calvin writes:

Those who have devised the adoration of the Sacrament have not only dreamed it by themselves apart from Scripture, where no

<sup>26</sup> See for example Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 39 n.10.

<sup>27</sup> *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. and trans. J.K.S. Reid (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 184-216.

<sup>28</sup> *John Calvin: Tracts and Letters, Volume 3*, ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 360-411.

<sup>29</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1359-1448. Hereafter referenced as *ICR*.

<sup>30</sup> *ICR* IV.xviii.1 (1429).

mention of it can be shown ... but also, with Scripture crying out against it, they have forsaken the living God and fashioned a God after their own desire. For what is idolatry if not this: to worship the gifts in the place of the Giver himself?"<sup>31</sup>

What is remarkable about this critique is that it is grounded upon the importance of Christ's ascension. Calvin continues:

Scripture itself also not only carefully recounts to us the ascension of Christ, by which he withdrew the presence of his body from our sight and company, to shake from us all carnal thinking of him, but also, whenever it recalls him, bids our minds be raised up, and seek him in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. According to this rule, we ought rather to have adored him spiritually in heavenly glory than to have devised some dangerous kind of adoration, replete with a carnal and crass conception of God.<sup>32</sup>

For Calvin, the ascension is not only an event that takes place in the witness of Scripture but also serves as a kind of rule that superintends a proper understanding of worship, which by implication inoculates against humanity's idolatrous tendencies.

The ascension is a theme that runs throughout Calvin's thought on the Lord's Supper. It determines how he understands the nature of Christ's presence at the meal and thus the nature of the communion that takes place in the sacrament. For Calvin, the Lord's Supper parallels the movement of our union with Christ: his descent and our ascent with him. Elsewhere in the *Institutes*, Calvin writes against those who hold to some form of bodily presence in the elements: "They think they only communicate with [the body of Christ] if it descends into bread; but they do not understand the manner of descent by which he lifts us up to himself."<sup>33</sup> Central to true worship, then, is this movement of elevating the heart and mind to heaven where the ascended Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Without that movement, worship, and in particular the worship that takes place at the Lord's Supper, becomes idolatry as it fails to lift attention to the true object of worship—by which is to be understood not simply "God," but specifically the risen Jesus who is clothed in our humanity—by focusing attention merely on the elements.

Does this confirm Eire and Taylor's accusations? Has Calvin evacuated materiality of its meaning, locating Christian faith merely in heaven, and by implication the mind and the mind alone? Is Calvin guided by the philosophical principle *finitum non est capax infiniti*? While we can certainly understand the claims of Taylor and Eire, particularly within their narrative of the journey from pre-modernity to modernity, closer attention to Calvin's thought and its subtle contours demonstrates that their argument falls short. To begin with, there is a fundamental misconception of what is guiding Calvin's thought at this juncture. While *solī Deo gloria* may be a fitting description of a guiding principle in

<sup>31</sup> ICR IV.xvii. 36 (1413).

<sup>32</sup> ICR IV.xvii. 36 (1412-13).

<sup>33</sup> ICR IV.xvii. 16 (1379).

Calvin's thought, Eire's cognate concept of *finitum non est capax infiniti* is not. The failings of the concept *finitum non est capax infiniti* have been pointed out by a number of scholars who have given sustained attention to Calvin's christology.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Heiko Oberman suggests that a more accurate summary of Calvin's thought actually inverts this claim: "We not only cannot be satisfied by the '*non capax*' thesis, we also have to go much further, coming to a complete inversion: '*infinitum capax finiti*.'" <sup>35</sup> Calvin's thought at this juncture is not predetermined by an abstract philosophical principle. Instead Calvin's concerns about the relation between the spiritual and the material in the ordering of the communion which takes place at the Lord's Supper and his corresponding emphasis upon the ascension of Jesus Christ are based upon his careful construction of the union of Christ's two natures and in particular upon the *extra Calvinisticum*.

Recall the following statement made by Taylor about Calvin: "What he can't admit is that God could have released something of his saving efficaciousness there into the world, at the mercy of human action, because that is the cost of really sanctifying creatures like us which are bodily, social, historical."<sup>36</sup> The alternative to this, one imagines, is an understanding of the Eucharist which posits the "givenness" of Jesus' body and blood in the elements of the Eucharist over and against Calvin's so-called immaterial spirituality. But a close reading of Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper reveals that Calvin is not in fact governed by the impossibility of the material mediating spiritual realities, but rather by a consideration of the hypostatic union and the integrity of Christ's two natures. Central to Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper in the *Institutes* (and central in the Reformed disputes over the Lord's Supper with his 'Lutheran' contemporaries) is a concern about how an understanding of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature damages the integrity of the hypostatic union. Calvin's concern about the kind of understanding of the Lord's Supper which Taylor appears to be advocating is not first and foremost that it gives human agents control over salvation, but that it conflates the two natures of Christ by way of a particular rendering of the *communicatio idiomatum* in which some attributes of the divinity of Christ are improperly communicated to the humanity. For Calvin this improper communication of attributes makes Christ's humanity something other than truly human and thus fails to honor the concrete reality of Jesus' bodily presence—on earth during his ministry and now in heaven as he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Taylor and Calvin are both concerned with how it is possible to speak of God's continuing activity in creation, with Taylor seeing in Calvin's thought a downplaying of materiality that has deleterious consequences. Calvin also understands that it is important to be able to speak of and

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 61-100; Heiko A. Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21/1, 43-64.

<sup>35</sup> Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," 62.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 79.



recognize Christ's activity in the world, not only in the event of the incarnation but after the resurrection and the ascension. But, in his analysis, the Lutheran proposal with which he was contemporary—and by extension the proposal that could be extrapolated from Taylor—proves fatal to the integrity of Christ's human nature by attributing to the humanity the properties of the divinity, a proposal which makes Christ's humanity something other than fully *human*. "As if that union compounded from two natures some sort of intermediate being which was neither God nor man! ... But from Scripture we plainly infer that the one person of Christ so consists of two natures that each nevertheless retains unimpaired its own distinctive character."<sup>37</sup>

How then does Calvin maintain God's continuing activity in the world? To begin with we must note that Calvin's sacramental thought is robust and he does not hesitate to affirm the presence of Christ at the Supper:

Therefore, if the Lord truly represents the participation in his body through the breaking of bread, there ought not to be the least doubt that he truly presents and shows his body. And the godly ought by all means to keep this rule: whenever they see the symbols appointed by the Lord, to think and be persuaded that the truth of the thing signified is surely present there.<sup>38</sup>

Following Calvin's logic of the hypostatic union and of Jesus' ascension, we cannot say that the elements become body and blood—Christ's body and blood are in heaven, at the right hand of the Father. But we can nonetheless affirm that the materiality of the Supper is an essential means of grace in the Christian life, a means that is mediated irreducibly through materiality. "The Lord's Table should [be] spread at least weekly for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually. None is indeed to be forcibly compelled, but all are to be urged and aroused... All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast."<sup>39</sup> Far from evacuating the material of meaning, Calvin's theology seeks to affirm the material as a means of grace while properly ordering the relation between the two in relation to other doctrines such as the hypostatic union.

Moreover, Matthew Meyer Boulton has argued convincingly that essential to Calvin's pastoral work in Geneva was the creation of a way of Christian formation which far from ignoring the material, involved the Christian in a "suite of practical disciplines."<sup>40</sup> Life in Geneva was to be ordered in such a way that God's presence, through spiritual disciplines, was constantly inscribed in the lives of the faithful, reminding them of His presence, character, and mercy.

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<sup>37</sup> ICR IV.xvii.30 (1402).

<sup>38</sup> ICR IV.xvii.10 (1371).

<sup>39</sup> ICR IV.xvii.46 (1424).

<sup>40</sup> Matthew Meyer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 221.



Calvin argued that in Reformed Geneva, worship services should be frequent, and should include the Lord's Supper at least weekly; prayer should be both continual and punctuated by a daily office and a weekly day of prayer on Wednesdays; psalm singing should be pervasive, in church, in home, and in the fields; catechesis should be rigorous and grounded in both the home and the Sunday services; moral and spiritual life should be accountable, ultimately overseen by the city's consistory; and engagement with Scripture ... should be the discipline that founds and forms all others.<sup>41</sup>

This kind of spirituality is, in its own way, material in its attention to the body. As Smith himself notes, Calvin's practices resonate with the kind of formation for which *Imagining the Kingdom* argues, a formation that "tap[s] into our incarnate significance" and "pluck[s] the strings of our embodied attunement to the world."<sup>42</sup>

Beyond the irreducible importance of the material in Calvin's sacramental theology and the importance of spiritual disciplines as postures which facilitate a receptivity to the Spirit's work, there are also underdeveloped aspects of Calvin's thought which can be explored further. Calvin's understanding of the relation between the material and the spiritual in the Lord's Supper, as we have already noted, is guided by his christology. A distinctive element<sup>43</sup> in Calvin's christology is his claim that the humanity of Christ did not enclose or restrict his divinity, but that even while he was in the flesh Christ continued to reign in heaven. "Here is something marvelous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!"<sup>44</sup> This description of the two natures of Christ, which Willis neatly summaries as the idea "that the Eternal Son of God, even after the Incarnation, was united to the human nature to form One Person but was not restricted to the flesh,"<sup>45</sup> later became known as the *extra Calvinisticum*.

In the same way that the ascension guides Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, the *extra Calvinisticum* allows Calvin to conceive of Christ's continuing activity and power in the world while also protecting the integrity of his human nature. In their studies of the *extra Calvinisticum* both Willis and Oberman have noted how the doctrine also implies "*etiam extra ecclesiam*"—Christ's active rule not only over the Church but over all of creation. Thus, for Calvin, Christ's place in the economy of salvation is not limited simply to his role as the Mediator, but

<sup>41</sup> Boulton, *Life in God*, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 159.

<sup>43</sup> Distinctive with respect to his contemporaries. E. David Willis has demonstrated convincingly that at this juncture Calvin's position resonates with Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria (Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, 26–60).

<sup>44</sup> *ICR* II.xiii.4 (481).

<sup>45</sup> Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, 1.

extends to Christ's active kingship as he sits as the ascended one at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, Oberman says of Calvin's thought: "The function of the King extends beyond that of the Mediator insofar as the majesty and power of God extends beyond the *iustificatio impii*. God's concern is not only over the rule of the hearts of the faithful, but also, in wider scope, the rule of the whole earth."<sup>46</sup> Thus the doctrine of the *extra Calvinisticum* informs Calvin's reading of Scripture in such a way as to place Jesus Christ and His continuing work at the very center of history. Calvin's sermons on 2 Samuel are evidence of this in his preaching and theological imagination.<sup>47</sup> The *extra Calvinisticum* preserves an understanding of God's presence and activity in the world as Jesus rules providentially over human history, preserving his church.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

My argument began by noting an important aspect of Smith's cultural liturgies project. A sacramental understanding of the world gives a way of affirming the importance of materiality in an account of the Christian life. It also explains how men and women are formed, and can make use of the material in the unique kind of formation that takes place in corporate worship. I then noted Charles Taylor's account of the loss of this understanding of materiality and detailed how he assigns blame to John Calvin for this loss. Next, I examined Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, giving particular attention to the role of the ascension and by implication the union of Christ's human and divine natures. I finished my evaluation of Calvin's thought by noting the importance of the material in Calvin's thought, and the way the *extra Calvinisticum* helps to explain how God continues to be at work in creation. What conclusions can we draw?

First, we must simply note that Taylor's account of Calvin is lacking. This is not in any way fatal to Taylor's larger argument about the advent of the modern secular age, the contested conditions of modern religious belief, or the haunted nature of the immanent frame. But the way which Taylor included Calvin as a part of this larger narrative fails. There is a danger in the kind of grand, meta-narratives of which *A Secular Age* is a kind. They are important and necessary kinds of intellectual work, and *A Secular Age* still lays claim to being one of the most important books of the early twenty-first century, but in giving this kind of geography of the wilderness of modernity Taylor's account of Calvin has the very real danger of labelling Calvin's theology as the badlands when it may in fact be an oasis.<sup>48</sup>

Second, and more importantly, there are very real and robust resources within Calvin's theology for an account of the importance of the material in the Christian life and its practice. While Calvin is clearly against "mixing" the spiritual and the material in worship, this does not

<sup>46</sup> Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," 47.

<sup>47</sup> Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," 46.

<sup>48</sup> A similar argument is made by Laura Smit in "The Depth behind Things': Toward a Calvinist Sacramental Theology," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, Smith and Olthius, eds., 205-227.

mean that he refuses the possibility of a relation between the two. In fact, Calvin continually affirms that they *must* be related to one another, but simultaneously affirms that this must be done in coordination with other doctrines—in this case, the hypostatic union and the ascension. Calvin's understanding of the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* is demonstrative of other resources within Calvin's thought which provide a framework for God's continuing activity within creation.

Third, we would do well to listen closely to the reasons for Calvin's rejection of the kind of account of materiality which the Roman Catholic Church of his time, and those who are sympathetic to Taylor today, might attempt to construct upon his thought. Calvin perceptively identifies the dangers of idolatry as created things become confused with their Creator. Additionally, there is possibility that the "localization of grace" in certain means of salvation might lead to the Church to understand itself as wielding the keys of the Kingdom in a way that is too loosely connected to the ascended and active Jesus Christ. This is not to say that Calvin's position is not without its own perils. Reformed Christians must ask themselves hard questions about how Calvin's robust sacramental theology failed to reproduce itself in subsequent generations. But the arguments Calvin made were well-considered and pastorally appropriate to his context.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, Calvin's reasoning with respect to the relation of the material and the spiritual is guided by a perceptive clarity of thought that is typical of his work, and therefore helpful for those addressing similar issues in the context of modernity. In his rejection of an improper mixing of the spiritual and the material, we find Calvin thinking theology out from its living center, the person of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is to draw our gaze upwards because that is where Jesus is now, his humanity and divinity united together at the right hand of the Father. In doing so, it fixes our eyes on the only place where we can find the "promise of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith,"<sup>49</sup> the incarnate Son and his finished work of redemption. Moreover, Calvin's understanding of the sacraments generally and the Lord's Supper specifically is supplemented by a robust pneumatology worked out in the application of the promises and benefits given in Jesus Christ. "The sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, the inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in."<sup>50</sup> There is a compelling Trinitarian grammar and logic to Calvin's thought that is of a whole with his doctrine of God and his understanding of union with Christ.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> ICR IV.xiv. 1 (1277).

<sup>50</sup> ICR IV.xiv. 9 (1285).

<sup>51</sup> For two (somewhat different) accounts of this, see Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The language of a “sacramental understanding of the world” is anachronous to Calvin, and we might find Calvin hesitant to adopt it. This is not because the concerns of such a project are unknown to Calvin, as I hope I have demonstrated, but because the terminology obscures that a sacrament should point us to the only place where we can find assurance and trust in God’s promises: the person of Jesus Christ. Those promises *can only be* mediated through the material, but for Calvin they can only find their meaning in the ascended Christ. Thus for Calvin, you cannot begin by affirming materiality as a way of moving toward transcendence. The way up is not down. Instead, we can only affirm the material by fixing our gaze upon the ascended Lord. The way down is up.

KINGDOM WORSHIP: JAMES K. A. SMITH,  
ROBERT WEBBER, AND WESTERN  
CIVILIZATION

BY MATTHEW WARD\*

To the American church's never-ending (and appropriate) obsession with worship renewal, Jamie Smith's *Cultural Liturgies* series adds some interesting breadth and depth. Believing that the Christian faith is more than "a set of ideas, principles, claims and propositions that are known and believed,"<sup>1</sup> Smith calls on church leaders to step beyond the categories of form and content to see worship as the thick, formative practices through which churches make and become disciples of Jesus Christ. Rather than isolate the intellect in Christian "disciple education,"<sup>2</sup> Smith sees the whole experience of Christian worship as the necessary counter to the cultural liturgies of consumption and hedonism in which we are immersed every day. He uses words such as "formation" and "imagination" and "gut" and "native" and "second nature" and "habit" to encourage us to think beyond the didactic model of worship used in so many evangelical churches.<sup>3</sup> He wants church leaders to approach Christian formation from a new perspective that "understands human persons as embodied actors rather than merely thinking things; prioritizes practices rather than ideas as the site of challenge and resistance; looks at cultural practices and institutions through the lens of worship or liturgy."<sup>4</sup> Those principles are best engaged in corporate *worship*.

Within my own, Baptist, context, "Worship has not traditionally been one of the strengths of Baptist local church practice."<sup>5</sup> Worse than this, "the denomination which gives its ministers maximum freedom in liturgical practices is the same denomination which offers minimum

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<sup>1</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Cultural Liturgies, 1; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 32.

<sup>2</sup> "From most expositions of the Christian worldview, you would never guess that Christians worship!" (Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 64).

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 18, 57, 57; James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Cultural Liturgies, 2; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 93, 83, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 35.

<sup>5</sup> David S. Dockery, "The Church, Worship, and the Lord's Supper," in *The Mission of Today's Church: Baptist Leaders Look at Modern Faith Issues*, ed. R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B&H, 2007): 37-50, at 37.

training in liturgical principles.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there are some who would assume that Baptists *have* no liturgical principles let alone the ability to discourse about them, and there are many who think that Baptists will thus always be at a significant disadvantage in all discussions of the church’s worship. That’s serious. And frustrating. And I lived it for more than a decade of full-time music ministry. And that made me think of Robert Webber.

Like many young worship leaders, I first encountered Webber through *Worship Leader* magazine, of which he was an editor. A *popular* theologian (to a fault, if you read his erstwhile critics), Webber introduced an entire generation of upstart and aspiring ministers to the *Didache*, Hyppolytus, the catechumenate, and so much more. He spoke to us on a level that even fresh seminary students with little theological background could understand. His *Ancient-Future* series pursued four goals: “the recovery of a *Christus Victor* view of the gospel, the restoration of worship as praise for God’s saving deeds in history, the recovery of the healing and nurturing ministry of the Eucharist, and the ordering of the church’s life around the great feasts and fasts of the Christian year.”<sup>7</sup> He wanted us to move “from information to formation” and “from program to narrative”<sup>8</sup>—very much the same kinds of things that Smith has proposed.

But that is not why I include Webber in this article. I am a committed free churchman in a Southern Baptist church. I believe strongly in my tradition’s understanding of ecclesiology, of which worship is a very important part. Yet, in 1982, Webber left his Baptist upbringing to join the Episcopal Church because of worship. He mourned that “Christianity was no longer a power to be experienced but a system to be defended” and that the basic truths of mystery, worship, sacraments, historic identity, ecclesiastical home, and holistic spirituality “were not adequately fulfilled for me in my Christian experience” in his Baptist church.<sup>9</sup> Over the course of 40 books, Webber pled with Baptist worship leaders to overcome the shortcomings of our tradition by adopting a more historical-liturgical approach to worship. And I struggled with that challenge. Ultimately, I earned a PhD in Free Church Theology specifically for the purpose of joining his and other dialogs about the principles of worship, even publishing a book to prove that the earliest English-speaking Baptists formed their tradition around very clear principles of worship. In summary, I am adding Robert Webber as a second dialog partner in this article because he said many of the same things Smith has more recently written, and he specifically called on the Free Church tradition to respond. Let

<sup>6</sup> Thomas R. McKibbens, “Our Baptist Heritage in Worship,” *Review and Expositor* 80 (1983): 67.

<sup>7</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 162–63.

<sup>8</sup> See the chapter titles in Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of a New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church* (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 15, 24.

us then turn our attention to the intersection of Webber's *Ancient-Future* and Smith's *Cultural Liturgies*.

### BEING HUMAN TAKES PRACTICE: A LITURGICAL CHRISTIANITY

Before I respond to Smith or Webber, let me summarize the basic elements of their concern about worship. First, they both believe that the evangelical model<sup>10</sup> of pedagogical worship falls woefully short of what God intended. To them, the proof is in the pudding. Where Webber explains, "The faith's aim is to make Christians radically different persons—persons who no longer live for self, but for God and others—and they will not be different persons merely as 'isolated' individuals. They can become different only in a community that is different,"<sup>11</sup> Smith observes, "Isn't it the case that, though many Christians in North America gather for worship week in and week out, we don't seem to look very peculiar?"<sup>12</sup> Both see the intellectualization of worship (which Webber traces to the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy<sup>13</sup>) as the primary culprit of this failure. Smith makes it clear that "our bodies are essential to our identities"<sup>14</sup> as well as to our dispositions and decision-making. Together these form our subconscious, and until the church chooses to engage it, Christians will never be radically changed.

Pedagogical worship fails because it fails to respect the formative power of our society's cultures. Smith points to the mall, the university, and the stadium as example loci of a culture that not only teaches certain behaviors, but also prioritizes ways of looking at the world. They effectively shape human "hearts and imaginations not by providing a set of rules or ideas, but by painting a picture of what it looks like for us to flourish and live well."<sup>15</sup> Not only has the church failed to counter the culture, it has actually ended up "mimicking it, merely substituting Christian commodities."<sup>16</sup> Webber points out some sociological implications, but he focuses on the culture's impact on worship practices, particularly in music, environment, and efficiency. He draws the necessary and disturbing

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<sup>10</sup> There is actually quite a fierce debate whether or not Baptists should be considered "evangelicals;" I am not getting involved in that debate here except to say that Baptist failures to educate church leaders on free church liturgical principles have meant that those leaders have had to learn from evangelical sources, sources like Robert Webber. Consequently, when Jamie Smith offers complaints against the broad evangelicalism, I believe those apply to Baptists. However, I also believe that the appropriate Baptist *response* must be very different than that of the rest of evangelicalism, something I hope to demonstrate in my conclusion.

<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp, *People of the Truth: The Power of the Worshiping Community in the Modern World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 208.

<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Maturity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 15, 119.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 103.



conclusion: "My concern is that culturally driven worship will nurture a culturally formed spiritual life."<sup>17</sup>

Smith and Webber both conclude that the corrective to these failures is a reassessment of the real outcome of Christian worship, nothing short of Christian formation itself. Smith proposes, "Becoming a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding but of becoming part of a different community with a different set of practices,"<sup>18</sup> practices that are caught, not taught, practices that must be repeated until habitualized, practices that demonstrate the church as a counter-culture. To this, Webber summarizes, "The work of the church in forming the spiritual life of the new disciple is to train the new Christian in the practice of living in the pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup>

Both anticipate the evangelical retort that such a work sounds like "discipleship," and both consider that a case-in-point for their argument. Smith answers very simply, "Worship and the practices of Christian formation are first and foremost the way the Spirit invites us into union with the Triune God. *Worship* is the arena in which we encounter God and are formed by God in and through the practices in which the Spirit is present—centering rituals to which God makes a promise (the sacraments)."<sup>20</sup> While Webber is a bit more precise in his boundaries for Christian worship, both believe that this formation takes place in weekly worship and in the rhythm of the Christian year. Smith even cites Webber in the section in which he concludes, "The practices of Christian worship over the liturgical year form in us something of an 'old soul' that is perpetually pointed to a future, longing for a coming kingdom, and seeking to be such a stretched people in the present who are a foretaste of the coming kingdom."<sup>21</sup>

To move toward this goal, both Smith and Webber encourage church leaders to design worship services that engage the whole person, not just the mind. Webber often uses the word "narrative;" Smith uses "imagination;" both intend the same idea. Webber exhorts, "We do not understand or verify a story by standing outside it and seeking to analyze or defend it. Rather, we understand stories by becoming a part of them, experiencing them as participants."<sup>22</sup> Webber is very clear that the story of Christ, and *only* the story of Christ, must be "proclaimed, recalled, and enacted every time we worship."<sup>23</sup> Smith calls those "thick" practices of worship "liturgies" and describes them as "compressed, repeated, performed narratives that, over time, conscript us into the story they 'tell'

<sup>17</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 106.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 220.

<sup>19</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 89.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 152, emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 159.

<sup>22</sup> Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 90-91.

<sup>23</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 41.

by showing, by performing.”<sup>24</sup> A good film or even a novel penetrates us much “deeper” than any monograph or lecture ever could.

#### A VISION OF THE GOOD LIFE: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

That brings us to the actual proposals offered by Smith and by Webber as to what such formative worship would look like. Webber had a few more books in which to develop his ideas, so we will start with him. Webber roots all biblical worship in a specific event. For Jews, it is the Exodus, celebrated in the Passover. For Christians, it is the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, celebrated in the Lord’s Supper.<sup>25</sup> He summarizes, “The basic structure of worship from the New Testament appears to be a twofold emphasis on the Word and Lord’s Supper, attended by prayer and praise.”<sup>26</sup> The service of the Word engages the people in the self-revelation of God in the Bible; the service of the Table engages the people in the work of Jesus Christ.

To organize this worship experience, Webber proposes a buffer before and after these two elements. A formal “gathering” at the beginning of worship buffers the glorious, healing presence of God in Word and Table from the dislocations of life. It is a time of praise, wonder, confession, and the assurance of forgiveness. Churches can take this journey in song, prayer, or readings, as long as the congregation understands the destination. He places a second “buffer” between the Word and Table, a time often called “the prayers of the people,” and encourages churches to see the service of the Table as a response to the Word. The Lord’s Supper is far more meaningful than an evangelical “invitation” “when we see it as a response of commitment to the relationship of the covenant that God offers through the proclamation of the gospel of Christ in his Word.”<sup>27</sup> A formal “dismissal” buffers the encounter with God by directing it into the world through a benediction and commission.

In many ways, we can view Webber’s proposal as a simple answer to the quest of Gregory Dix and other structuralists in their comparative studies of formal liturgies.<sup>28</sup> It is a brilliant endeavor that engages every Christian tradition, for even the staunchest free churchman would say, “The liturgical practices established by Christ and the apostles are liturgical practices normative for Christians of all time.”<sup>29</sup> If we have a simple, flexible, translatable, cross-cultural, and *apostolic* model for Christian worship, we have a solution to so much of the discord of American Christianity. Indeed, Webber always saw as his goal “to recover the universally accepted framework of faith that originated with the

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 109.

<sup>25</sup> Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 102.

<sup>26</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 55.

<sup>27</sup> Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> See Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster: Dacre, 1945).

<sup>29</sup> Malcolm B. Yarnell, III, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 147.

apostles, was developed by the Fathers, and has been handed down by the church in its liturgical and theological traditions.”<sup>30</sup>

Of course, Baptists have no need to be afraid to say “liturgical.” In plain usage, it simply refers to the structure and organization of a church’s corporate worship. Smith often uses liturgy as a synonym for worship, and I did the same in my book.<sup>31</sup> Even if someone were to balk at the connotation of the word to imply pre-planned and repeated, should I not respond that Baptist worship can be, shall we say, predictable? (Webber, for example, regularly challenged the baptistic anti-liturgical mindset via “the invitation.” Serving my fourth church in my third state, I can vouch that Baptists have a very clear invitation liturgy.) Baptists should have no trouble with the use of the word “liturgy” to describe worship services. However, there is a second meaning of the word: the formal, published liturgies of various denominations. *Those* liturgies function as authorities (as, for example, the Preface of the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* clarifies). That *is* a problem to the Free Church tradition, and we will keep that in mind as this article progresses.

Jamie Smith takes a similar approach in his vision of Christian worship, but focuses more on the elements rather than the structure thereof, particularly in how they write a counter-narrative to the cultural liturgies around us. Worship begins with an invocation, gathering, and call, something that reminds us “of our utter dependence, cutting against the grain of myths of self-sufficiency that we’ve been immersed in all week long.”<sup>32</sup> It consists of song, a full-bodied expression in unity; a reading of law, which “signals that our good is not something that we determine or choose for ourselves;”<sup>33</sup> confession, a reminder that all is not well with the world; baptism, an integration into a new body politic; prayer, a recognition that God is interested and concerned with our realities; Scripture, our new constitution; Eucharist, an experience of forgiveness and reconciliation in the mundane; and offering, the promotion of an alternative economy.

There are two significant differences between Smith and Webber and one important agreement that will propel this article to its conclusion. The first difference has to do with Smith’s emphasis on counter-narrative. He goes to great lengths to explain how worship can and should offer us a different vision of the good life. Indeed, this seems to be his highest priority (his “liturgical hermeneutic” if you will), which is how he can find ample space for an invocation, law reading, and offering in his outline for Christian worship, though none of those explicitly appear in New Testament descriptions of corporate worship. Webber, not being quite as technical, seems to place his liturgical hermeneutic in the phrase quoted above, “developed by the Fathers,” and simply offers elements of worship as found in the patristic liturgies after his considerable work of harmonizing them.

<sup>30</sup> Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24; Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), 18.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 169.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 175.

The second difference has to do with the dichotomy of form and content in worship. Smith believes that the evangelical emphasis on content alone has turned the form of worship into a “disposable husk” that can be adjusted *ad infinitum* as long as the kernel of the gospel message remains intact. He makes the point that both form and content matter, but he goes beyond that to insist that form and content are in fact *inseparable*. The form itself shapes the content of worship through its connection with our imagination.<sup>34</sup> Webber, on the other hand, embodies the attitude that Smith rejects (“The primary factor in worship concerns not the structure, nor the style, but the content”<sup>35</sup>), but let me explain his point. Yes, the form itself shapes the content, but the form is also itself shaped by culture. You would have noticed my titular reference to Western Civilization; this is the main reason. The Reformed liturgies promoted by Smith (and even Webber when you peel back the layers) are inherently Western. That is a significant accusation that steps far beyond the confines of these pages, and all I can do is point you toward the growing body of literature on ethnodoxology.<sup>36</sup> But Webber’s point is that a quest for both the content *and* form of worship inevitably leads an American or European author to promote a form basically shaped by Western European culture and civilization. He’s not comfortable with that (and neither am I). This is why Webber built his proposal for worship around what he believed to be a supra-cultural event, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

That said, Webber understood that his primary audience was conservative American evangelicals, which leads to one final area in which Smith and Webber agree: the need for the church to rediscover the historic written liturgies. Webber was clear that this includes both the ancient liturgies and those of the Reformation; his “Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future,” co-authored with Philip Kenyon in 2006, took as ecumenical a tone as possible.<sup>37</sup> Smith refers to these resources as the “historical riches of the church’s worship” and includes a table summarizing the elements of Roman Catholic, Lutheran (ELCA), Anglican, United Methodist, and Presbyterian (PCUSA) liturgies in support.<sup>38</sup> Webber was very happy with his Anglican environment and regularly promoted the *Book of Common Prayer* for use in worship. Smith does not promote a

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 168-69.

<sup>35</sup> Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> Ethnodoxology is the study of (and appreciation of) worship diversity throughout the world’s cultures. A place to start is the website for the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, <http://worldofworship.org> (last accessed 18 Feb 2016). Many of their ideas were recently compiled in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library, 2013), some of the highlights of which are freely available at <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/archive/ethnodoxology> (last accessed 18 Feb 2016).

<sup>37</sup> Robert E. Webber, “Preconditions for Worship Renewal: New Attention to the Biblical and Historical Sources,” *Evangelical Journal* 9, no. 1 (1991): 9; Robert E. Webber and Philip Kenyon, “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future,” <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/sepember/11.57.html> (last accessed 13 Nov 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 152, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 170-71.

single liturgy in these volumes, although he very well could in a future volume (based on his accounts of Calvin's Geneva and references to *The Worship Sourcebook*; it would not be hard to imagine him taking a similar approach to that of Bryan Chappell in *Christ-Centered Worship*<sup>39</sup>).

Both Smith and Webber are comfortable in the world of published liturgies, though in a way that opens the door for engagement with the Free Church tradition. Let's start with Smith:

Worship leaders and planners (and those who teach both) need to be adept in their reflection on that logic of practice that eludes our grasp—precisely so that they can plan worship that invites the rest of us into that *habitus*-forming practice with confidence and trust, because many of the rest of us will not be able to 'think about it' like those engaged in worship leadership. For the sake of the community of practitioners, worship planners and leaders need to take on the responsibility of reflexive evaluation of our practices in order to ensure that the imaginative coherences of worship are consistent with the vision of God's kingdom to which we are being habituated.<sup>40</sup>

Webber takes the same approach, treating written liturgies much in the same way that a Baptist would treat a hymnal: as a useful but non-binding resource. It is about principle, not repetition; he exhorts, "The recovery of ancient practices is not the mere restoration of ritual but a deep, profound, and passionate engagement with truth—truth that forms and shapes the spiritual life into a Christlikeness that issues forth in the call to a godly and holy life and into a deep commitment to justice and the needs of the poor."<sup>41</sup> In conclusion, although my two dialog partners propose published liturgies as resources, neither seems obligated to recognize them as authorities on the level of Scripture. That seems like a very appropriate note on which to inject a Free Church point of view.

#### FREELY DESIRING AND IMAGINING: FORMS OF WORSHIP IN THE FREE CHURCHES

Obviously, "free form" is an oxymoron, so it would be helpful to run through a quick primer on the Free Church tradition (as even most free church members no longer really know the foundations of their ecclesiologies). We usually identify a free church as one which recognizes

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 154–57. Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). Chappell proposed to seek worship practices based on the gospel, but really only explained the common elements of Luther's, Calvin's and Westminster's liturgies before settling on a Reformed liturgy connected with his seminary.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 187.

<sup>41</sup> Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 109. Elsewhere he adds, "The ancient process does not need to be treated legalistically and translated into our post-Christian culture in a wooden and mechanical way. Let each local congregation catch the spirit of the ancient model and listen to how the Spirit leads them to apply the model in their cultural setting." *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 53.

no hierarchy among churches, which acknowledges the Bible (primarily the New Testament) as its sole authority for faith and practice, and which prioritizes the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Those are useful marks, but it has proved difficult for their church leaders to craft a coherent theology of worship from them. I propose that those identifying marks are actually expressions of deeper principles at the heart of the Free Church tradition. Those principles give me a foundation upon which I can engage both the *Ancient-Future* and *Cultural Liturgies*, and so they are indispensable for this discussion. In summary, there are four basic principles at the heart of the Free Church tradition: Christocentrism, the coinherent work of Word and Spirit, fidelity to the biblical order above human invention, and the believers' church.<sup>42</sup> I will subsequently develop them in greater detail, but those principles are more robust in theological discussion than the expressions most people associate with free churches. Indeed, I will argue that those principles are so robust as to make the Free Church tradition uniquely qualified to engage and filter the many good suggestions made by both Smith and Webber. I will even be so bold to say that Baptist worship fell on hard times precisely because Baptist educators stopped training our church leaders on those principles, forcing those leaders to borrow indiscriminately from our evangelical brethren.<sup>43</sup> That never needed to be the case; the Free Church tradition has much of value to contribute to the dialog of worship renewal.

*Christocentrism.* As Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of God's revelation to man as well as our Mediator to God, a free churchman should always begin any discussion of worship with and through him. Any gathering for worship must be a celebration of the resurrection and victory of Christ-Savior and Christ-God. If the Christian life is to be lived in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thankfulness and for his glory, then how much more a gathering of Christians on Sundays. This focus on Jesus, born of our relationship with him, is our primary filter for interpreting and applying suggestions for worship such as Smith's and Webber's. To begin, we should resonate soundly with Webber's attempt to shape worship around Word and Table, understood as Christ speaking to us and then us coming to Christ for forgiveness and reconciliation. The simplicity of that pattern of worship will aid us greatly in later discussion. We should also resonate with his call to mold the church year around the life of Christ and break the hold of the secular calendar on our emphases in worship. While free churches will have some reservation about extrabiblical elements of the "church year" proposed both by Webber and by Smith (but more on that below), we should readily confess that our desire to avoid the traditional church calendar has resulted in our assimilating the secular calendar;

<sup>42</sup> There are several variations of this list. I am working with the framework developed in Yarnell, *Formation of Christian Doctrine*. He summarizes these principles (106), but the entire book is a development of their source and outworking.

<sup>43</sup> Webber makes a useful accusation here: evangelical worship has become dead and ritualistic because those leaders shaped their understanding of worship around practices they inherited from the culture instead of the other way around; because they built principles on practices, they could not but help institutionalize those practices. I am certain Smith would concur. See Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 100.



many Free Churches spend more Sundays celebrating their American identity than they do the events of the life of Christ.

The other important trend that Christocentrism stabilizes is a healthy approach to what might be called sacramentality. For example, Southern Baptist John Hammett pokes fun at what he calls the Baptist doctrine of “real absence” in the Lord’s Supper (“Wherever else Christ’s presence may be found, don’t look for it here!”).<sup>44</sup> A sad byproduct of intellectualized worship has been the codification and quantification of worship; if it cannot be understood, it cannot be experienced. Webber is certainly not alone in feeling that there is no mystery in Baptist worship services. But that has not always been the Baptist understanding, and it certainly does not need to be. An early and very dogmatic English Baptist leader named William Kiffin had such a powerful understanding of the presence of Christ that he could say, “Doubtless he that cares not for Christ in the Word, Christ in the promise, Christ in the minister, Christ in the water, Christ in the bread and wine, Christ sacramental; cares as little for Christ God, Christ flesh, Christ Emmanuel.”<sup>45</sup> Jesus *is* himself a mystery who came to reveal a mystery; he defies analysis and structuralization; he breaks through analytical walls by which we try to categorize him. True Christocentrism protects against the doctrine of real absence, and it also protects against the definition of “sacrament” that most free churchmen fear, that grace can be manipulated through a physical process of worship. Why? Because Christ-Savior is Christ-God who cannot be manipulated or misled. The Christ of the universe is the Christ of the Bible, and he does not operate *ex opere operato*.

I believe that a free church’s response to Webber in both of those areas must be to pattern our worship around the good news of salvation—not worship that is “gospel-centered” but truly gospel-driven. By keeping the whole of salvation history in our worship services, we keep the emphasis on the revelation of God in Christ and immerse the congregation in our relationship with God in Christ. Consider this summary of the biblical message (where “CHRIST” is shorthand for the entire Christ event):

#### Creation–Fall–CHRIST–New Creation–Consummation

See how easily that applies to a church’s order of worship. A call to worship acknowledges the presence of God and celebrates his good works, but soon we must confess our fall, which leads us to the dominant element of the service, a celebration of the life, sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The result of the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit causes us to reflect on our new identity in him, and our looking forward to the consummation of all things gives us the urgency and energy to be about Christ’s continuing work on earth. That looks like an outline for a gospel-driven, fully principled, culturally flexible worship service that can teach and form and glorify God. And it also addresses an

<sup>44</sup> John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 281.

<sup>45</sup> William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: n.p., 1681), 42–43.



important Free Church concern with published liturgies, which will be a focus of the next section.

*Word and Spirit: Biblical Order above Human Invention.* I am going to combine the second and third principles of the Free Church tradition in this article: the coinherent work of Word and Spirit, and fidelity to the biblical order above human invention. In the context of corporate worship, there is a great deal of overlap in the two. Free churches are quite concerned about human inventions (so much so that they tend to overlook their own). “Because I said so” will not resolve many debates in Baptist churches, although “because the Bible says so” often does. In their estimation, a published liturgy is a human invention. Trying to argue, as Webber does about the *Book of Common Prayer*, that a particular liturgy is filled with much Scripture and therefore acceptable will never impress; a principled free churchman will unapologetically respond, “Then we will start with that Scripture and end with that Scripture.” Even the publication of a liturgical outline is beyond Free Church tolerances. That is precisely what the Westminster Assembly attempted in the 1640s: replace the strict and comprehensive *Book of Common Prayer* with a *Directory* that simply gave guidelines and basic structure for worship. But the Baptists of that day would accept no prescription of any kind. They knew that imposing rules for prayer was only one step away from imposing a prayer book, and they defiantly “with the Apostle freely confess, that after the way which they call heresy, worship we the God of our Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets and Apostles.”<sup>46</sup>

I imagine that you might be thinking, “Silly Baptist, aren’t you yourself suggesting a structure for worship to be used in other free churches? Aren’t you contradicting your own principles?” Well, yes and no. I am suggesting a structure of worship just as I am suggesting principles by which free churches “do church,” but there is a big difference between suggesting and imposing. The Westminster Assembly though claiming to suggest actually attempted to impose, and as a result those early Baptists would have none of it. But Smith and Webber are merely suggesting, which is why I say that is the primary point of contact through which our dialog can take place. Smith and Webber have suggested structures and elements of worship for consideration. Free churches should not only appreciate that, they should be challenged by it. But that by which we evaluate these suggestions is the biblical order and nothing else. Not tradition, not culture, not expediency, not expertise, not charisma. That is why the only things I could ever suggest as a free churchman must be immediately connected to the biblical order.

As a result, there are several elements to Smith’s and Webber’s suggestions that raise the proverbial red flag. Let’s start with the so-called church year. We know that Jesus was born, He was presented in the Temple, He was tempted in the wilderness, He triumphantly entered Jerusalem, He shared a last supper, He was betrayed and crucified and buried, He rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and He sent the

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<sup>46</sup> *The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (London: n.p., 1644), Article LII[I].

Holy Spirit. But where do we get the dates for Christmas or Epiphany? Where do we get the seasons of Lent or Advent? Not from the Bible. They are human inventions, biblical extrapolations designed for the increase of Christian devotion. I personally believe that Webber makes a convincing argument in favor of his use of the church year. Daily, weekly, and annual cycles that immerse us in the life of Christ are far superior to the secular alternatives currently placed on church calendars. But they are human inventions and must be subject to careful and continuous evaluation. Of particular concern to free churches is the relationship between the church year, liturgical colors, and vestments, but I will address that below. Other concerns include the implied theological directives inherent in the calendar (such as preaching the doctrine of the Trinity on Trinity Sunday<sup>47</sup>), as well as the saints days and feast days that have trickled in to some of Webber's suggestions. A free church can choose—voluntarily and intentionally—to use the church year for the many benefits to discipleship and devotion. My church does. But we use it as a tool, and we are never afraid to modify or suspend it as necessary to accommodate where we believe the Spirit is leading. In other words, “because the calendar says so” can never have the same value as “because the Bible says so.”

A similar concern must be raised about prayers. Both Smith and Webber suggest specific prayers in their works, and they suggest resources that suggest specific prayers. I imagine that most free churchmen would take that for what it is: a suggestion intended to help a church improve its public prayer life. The concern relates to that prayer's use and efficacy. In the Free Church perspective, giving someone a prayer (a human invention) rather than teaching someone to pray invokes all manner of alarm. Passionate arguments can and have been made that the prayers in the *Book of Common Prayer* and *The Worship Sourcebook* are superior to those offered in Baptist churches. I do not necessarily want to defend potentially lazy practices (“bless the gift and the giver” does not suggest great devotional preparation), but I do want to ask what that really means. What makes a prayer “superior”? Does the language of a prayer book impress God more than that of the old deacon who prays for the safety of “our boys fighting overseas”? Of course not. There is no definition of “superior” that could have anything to do with the spoken words of a prayer. (And if someone says that a superior prayer is more edifying to those who hear it, I would respond that such a person is probably praying for the wrong reason.) Prayer is about the heart. A free church should know and appreciate that truth intensely well, and its leaders should desire far more to cultivate pray-ers than to hand out prayers.

That emphasis on the heart leads us to the other half of the principle pair, the coinherent work of Word and Spirit. In years past, church leaders wrote and imposed liturgies because they believed that the common

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<sup>47</sup> This in no way defends those free churches which never preach those doctrines built into the church year. The church year, as it is practiced in many Protestant churches, is well-designed and extremely useful. I simply caution that pastors should take their preaching cues from the Bible, utilizing the church year insofar as it helps them lead their congregations—intentionally, not slavishly.

people needed help to worship. Common people could not worship effectively or rightly on their own; they needed a written guide, and they needed someone to lead them through that guide. On the one hand, that problematically has led churches to evaluate the efficacy of worship by the accuracy of its performance, but even more importantly it has separated Christian churches from all of their rights and blessings of a relationship with God in Christ. Free churches in principle should never relinquish their greatest right: to worship God as they are led directly by Word and Spirit, without any kind of hierarchical human mediation. The Spirit is God's gift to the churches, and all churches have the same access to God in worship through the same Spirit (but more on local church autonomy in a moment).

While I do believe that many Baptists and others in the Free Church tradition are rightly accused by Smith and by Webber of approaching worship as an activity of a brain on a stick, I also believe that such an accusation would never have been levied had those churches remained true to their principles. Their tradition, as the next section will elaborate, is rooted in the commitment that every church member be a born-again disciple of Jesus Christ, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Baptists could and should have a great trust and expectation of the work of the Holy Spirit drawing Christians into a relationship with the Word Incarnate and illuminating them by the Word Inscripturate. In short, everyone in the Free Church tradition should believe very strongly that their local church, as the body of Christ, fully has the mind of Christ and the Spirit of Christ. They do not need "help" to worship. Indeed, any human suggestion in worship would by definition be inferior to anything given in the biblical order.<sup>48</sup>

This coinherence, rightfully understood, protects both against legalism and spiritualism. Yes, the Word is our rule, but the Word teaches us our freedom in the Spirit. The Spirit sets us above the rules of men, but the Spirit never sets us against the Word. That is why a free church can and must consider all "suggestions" made in the Spirit of God through the Word of God. And those are the only kinds of suggestions I should consider making in this context. Our prayer is more about our spirit than our word; our worship is more about our spirit than our action; our spirits are enlivened and restored by the Holy Spirit; the ministry of the Holy Spirit is witnessed to and testified by the written Word of God. And every single local church has full rights and privileges therein with respect to worship.

This does mean that the accusation that many free churches use less Bible in their services than other traditions is quite serious. Worship in a free church should ooze scripture. It also means that free churches which use a primarily intellectual model of worship do so in violation of the

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<sup>48</sup> This is why I try hard to restrict my suggestions to those with an obvious biblical source. If someone should suggest it unnecessary for me to tell a church leader what he could read for himself in the Bible, I would agree and be very satisfied. God did not leave worship leadership in the hands of a small group of musical or theological elite. He gave its right and responsibility to all of His children.

principles that made their tradition viable. Mental engagement is not the same thing as spiritual transformation, and no human can go unchanged by an encounter with the living God. It equally means that free churches which place a low priority on intentional worship planning also violate those principles. The freedom claimed in the Free Church tradition is rightfully theirs, but it comes with great responsibility. More than any other tradition, we have unilateral right to investigate any resource for use in worship (which, by the way, includes every song), and we believe wholeheartedly in our Spirit-led ability to evaluate that resource. The fact that many free churches fail to exercise this right makes us a poor dialog partner, and I would desire to remedy that.

*The Believers' Church.* The final ground principle of the Free Church tradition, the believers' church, ties all of these considerations together in such a way that should make free churches very interested in what Smith and Webber have to say. In my opinion, Webber's most underappreciated claim (one that Smith has argued for in a fresh way) is the power of corporate worship to shape a disciple. The very experience of worship apprentices an attendee in the way of life proposed by that church. Webber focuses more on the intellect than Smith, and Smith expresses a deeper appreciation for the cultural narrative, but both insist on the formative power of the worship experience. Of all church traditions, free churches should *appreciate* this. We accept no hierarchy of churches, only partnerships. Every Christian church stands with equal accountability before God which means that we have absolute responsibility for our actions and decisions as a church. Consequently, in the Free Church tradition, we have the autonomy to make the decisions to organize worship gatherings as we see fit—to act on Smith's and Webber's claims. To treat our worship with anything less than the most careful and comprehensive consideration (to abdicate that responsibility by passing it off to a manmade book or, worse, not thinking about it at all) is a mistake of the gravest kind.

There is a second layer of "freedom" in the Free Church tradition: in addition to no hierarchy between churches, there should be no hierarchy within a church. The idea behind the phrase "believers' church" is that only born-again Christians are accepted into local church membership. Every member should thus understand grace, forgiveness, mercy, and humility. Each is a sinner saved by grace, each has received an equal wage from the vineyard owner, no one is superior in the sight of God. This is why many in the Free Church tradition have reacted so negatively to the lay/clergy division latent within the historic liturgical traditions. Vestments, enhanced as they may be by seasonal colors, have always been used to distinguish those allowed to lead in worship. The written liturgy itself is based on the idea that a local church cannot worship properly on its own and that there are few in that congregation who should be allowed to lead through that liturgy. Finding no rule for these practices or principles in the New Testament, free churches have worked to avoid them. The fact that some free churches have fallen into their uncritical use speaks volumes to our failure to educate our leaders in the principles that have made our tradition viable. As I said before, I believe there is a place for the church year and even these manmade liturgies in a free church's

worship, when they are used intentionally, freely, and critically as a tool to enhance worship and not to elevate one individual or group within the congregation.<sup>49</sup>

That said, the connection that Smith and Webber have made between corporate worship and discipleship should resonate soundly with every free church. Free churches hold the Great Commission at their core, making disciples their primary Christ-given task. As their members go about their lives, they evangelize, bringing friends and acquaintances into the life of the church. Eventually, one of these makes a profession of faith in Christ, and that new believer is baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and soon after brought into church membership. The lifelong journey those church members make together toward Christlikeness is what we call discipleship. There is an element of responsibility on the part of the individual to remain committed to the process; there is an element of responsibility on the part of the church to provide a healthy environment for the process; there is an element of responsibility on the part of the Spirit to empower and guide the process. In the Free Church tradition, church leaders should understand that they have no authority over the Spirit, over the individual, or even over the church (only Christ has that). What they *do* have is stewardship over the environment of discipleship. Both Smith and Webber have challenged us to use every moment we have as a gathered church intentionally for discipleship—from someone's arrival on campus to his exit, every moment is an opportunity, and many of those opportunities are missed.

Smith and Webber make two observations that should really drive this importance home. First, both invoke the cultural illustration of the athletic venue, and Smith also mentions the shopping mall. Everything about our experience there is designed to impress upon us a way of life. Indeed, everywhere we go and everything we do immerses us in a "cultural liturgy" that is at odds with our vision of discipleship. How can we ever counter that immersion if we are unintentional with the moments we have in our churches? Second, corporate worship is one place where Christ has promised a special presence of the Holy Spirit (I'm not sure I'm comfortable with Smith's description as "hot-spot," but I understand he means that in the sense of "a conduit of the Spirit's transformative power"<sup>50</sup>). It is one place where we have divine assistance overcoming those cultural liturgies. For a free church to neglect this opportunity of formative and even transformative encounter is unwise at best and irresponsible at least.

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<sup>49</sup> For example, consider the raised platform in a church. It can be an invisible fence designed to isolate and elevate the leaders from the congregation, or it can simply be a tool designed to improve visibility. That is a matter of intent. The difference between a platform and a vestment is anyone can ascend to the platform at any time. For that reason, I do not see how vestments can be used without violating this principle of the believers' church, and that makes me very wary of any liturgy that leans heavily on their use. But to be fair, I should point out that the use of titles in some free churches seems to have become a *de facto* vestment.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 148, 135.

I have spent a lot of time in this article acknowledging the accusations of Smith and of Webber; now let me draw some of these threads together in defense of my tradition. Even our less-structured approach to worship has formed a distinct and sometimes vibrant identity. Imagine what we could be with a little more intentionality! Older Baptists are bound to other revivalists through a common hymnody; younger Baptists are bound to other evangelicals through their common song base. The weekly song service (as many call it) has formed hope and trust and love into church members, and a strong preaching ministry has engaged hearts and minds over the full counsel of God's Word. I am every bit as satisfied with the "track record" of worshippers in free churches as compared with that of those in more elaborate liturgies promoted by Smith and by Webber. Smith, for example, used the fictional story of Alex who was able to offer powerful forgiveness due to his weekly experience of liturgical confession and absolution.<sup>51</sup> I have seen that illustration played out countless times among my Baptist church members; they didn't need a liturgy to understand forgiveness. The truth is that the mass exodus from the Free Church tradition to the liturgical traditions predicted thirty years ago by Webber never happened. If Smith will use "results" in his evaluation of free worship, must we not do the same for the liturgical traditions? Smith celebrates "the accrued wisdom of the church catholic" by identifying the common structure of five major liturgies—liturgies used by five denominations for whom recent membership declines have been nothing short of catastrophic.<sup>52</sup> Use of an historic liturgy is not the simple solution to the struggles of Christianity in America, and it would be a mistake for free church leaders to think otherwise. A greater appreciation of the importance of worship, not only in the life of the church but specifically in the journey of discipleship, a greater intentionality in its structure, a greater reliance on Word and Spirit—those are steps toward solving the problem identified by Smith and by Webber. Those are steps every church, at least every free church, can take immediately.

In closing, I exhort Baptists and others in the Free Church tradition to listen carefully to men such as Jamie Smith and Robert Webber. No Baptist church should dare say that "we have arrived" in the perfect form of God's worship; every Baptist church should continuously evaluate itself by the Word of God in the Spirit of God. And the Free Church tradition is uniquely positioned and equipped to consider and engage the suggestions of these men. If we do so within the framework of and not in lieu of our guiding principles as an ecclesial tradition, we can be made stronger and more faithful to our calling as God's church. These principles have clear and powerful application even in the realm of corporate worship, and it is time that free churches reengage them. Through my reading, I was challenged by an old exhortation, "I believe the Baptists to hold to a distinct position among other Protestant sects; that they entertain sentiments, which, if carried into practice, must render them somewhat peculiar, and that they are perfectly capable of establishing their own

<sup>51</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 184-85.

<sup>52</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 169-71.

usages, and of adapting their modes of worship and rules of discipline to the principles which they believe. They need borrow from no one.”<sup>53</sup> I pray that this article offers another step in the realization of that belief.

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<sup>53</sup> Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1857), 147-48.





## BOOK REVIEWS

R. Kent Hughes and Douglas S. O'Donnell. *The Pastor's Book: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Pastoral Ministry*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. 592 pp. \$45.00.

The genesis of this book reaches back to the early 1980s, before Kent and Barbara Hughes published *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (1987). That book chronicled crucial lessons that Kent had learned planting a church in southern California. Despite optimism from a strong call, gifted core group, favorable social demographics, and financial support, the ministry languished. Meanwhile, just down the road another evangelical church was mushrooming, the pastor of which can still be heard on national Christian radio offering insight for living. The ensuing discouragement is something about which Kent has been candid:

My long-established world of bright prospects and success had melted around me. I was in the darkest, deepest depression of my life. My memory of this time is of a gray, horizonless sea. A faint light falls from a threatening sky and I am treading water alone, sinking. Soon, I will be below the surface. Melodramatic, to be sure! But that is how I felt. I wanted out (p. 19).

Coming out of these ashes, Kent turned his attention to another definition of ministry success and another kind of encouragement, both of which were trenchantly God-centered. A crucial part of this story, however, is not developed in *Liberating Ministry*. Kent turned his attention to the Great Tradition in order to mine Christ-centered resources for building pastoral ministry. And that leads us to the book under review, which is an outgrowth of Kent's *ressourcement* project, aimed at bringing the most eminent standards of evangelical Christianity to bear upon the services, practices, and ordinances of the local church. The outcome is a delightfully detailed go-to manual of 592 pages that offers wisdom on each of these subjects.

Full disclosure: I am a biased reviewer. Having served under Kent for years at College Church in Wheaton and having followed my friend Doug O'Donnell in my current ministry post, I am favorably disposed to this book. I hope, however, that rather than being a liability, this will enable me to offer an added dimension of insight.

This volume does not suffer from superficiality, a common defect among books that employ the word “comprehensive” in the title. Yes, it is broad. On a macro level it covers “Christian Gatherings,” “Parts of the Worship Service,” and “Ministerial Duties.” Below each of these headings is a litany of lessons, principles, examples, treatises, protocols, selections of poetry, and liturgical outlines. Its *Teutonic Gründlichkeit* is evidenced in a detailed table of contents, which unfolds for eight full pages. But superficial it is not. In addition to substantive analysis of a given subject, it also provides a host of resources (including sample homilies for marriages and funerals) in the appendix.

O'Donnell is the ideal person to coauthor this book. Because he reflects Kent's inclinations and ethos more than anyone, he preserves a portrait of God-centered worship that genuinely elucidates the heartbeat of Kent's four-decade legacy. This personal familiarity enables O'Donnell to retrieve illuminating quotes from Kent's past, such as the following:

I have come to see that while all of life is worship, gathered worship with the body of Christ is at the heart of a life of worship. Corporate worship is intended by God to inform and elevate a life of worship. In this respect, I personally view how we conduct gathered worship as a matter of life and death (p. 29).

Given the commitment of this volume to God-centered ministry, it is a bit surprising that O'Donnell begins chapter one with Kent's biography. One might have expected him to initiate the book with a reflection on the beauty and supreme worth of God, especially since Doug is such an evocative writer and quite capable of stirring the heart and theological imagination. This is but a small critique. Kent's story belongs near the front. Not only is it interesting, it serves a crucial purpose of setting up the God-revering ethic that follows through subsequent pages.

Our authors are clear about the limits of this book: “We wanted to center on pastoral tasks we have thought a lot about and that we feel are often neglected or overlooked, especially by the younger generations of pastors” (p. 17). These tasks are mostly liturgical in nature, such as Sunday worship, annual services, weddings, funerals, public prayers, the use of creeds, hymns and songs, baptism, and communion. They also cover pastoral counseling and hospital visitation. Finally, they acknowledge the importance of such topics as calling to ministry, personal character, family life, and preaching by offering a “Books for Further Reading” section replete with such resources.

With *The Pastor's Book* sitting on my desk for the last month, I have opened it numerous times. Each time I have been impressed by its insight. I expect to open it again. In fact, I think I'll add it to the small collection of books that permanently reside within my reach.

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Bryan Chapell. *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 320 pp. \$15.99.

Many evangelical churches today fear the word “liturgy,” since it conjures up notions of Catholicism or ecumenism, and thus they neglect to establish patterns in their services that might communicate essential theological truths. What these churches often miss is the importance of repetition in the life of the believer, and the worship service is not excluded. Churches would do well to heed Bryan Chapell’s advice in *Christ-Centered Worship*. Repetition in worship is actually good and instructive, especially repetition that can be established within the redemptive-historical purview of the Bible like Chapell has done in this book. The sacraments are not repetitive because the gospel is not repetitive. We repeat them only to find that they are just as refreshing as in the first. According to Chapell, neither should worship services seem repetitive if the gospel is communicated so clearly as to be discerned even in the structure of the service. For Chapell, the gospel must be foremost if a church is to have Christ-centered worship.

*Christ-Centered Worship* is divided into two parts, “Gospel Worship” and “Gospel Worship Resources.” In the first part, Chapell lays out his general thesis, that the gospel should have priority not only in the planning of worship services but especially in the structure of the services. Structures tell stories, and thus gospel understanding is embedded and communicated in the worship patterns of the church (p. 17). The pattern in view is the liturgy of the church, and Chapell aims to show that churches tell the gospel story by the way they worship (p. 19).

This thesis is evaluated against the history of church tradition, beginning in Rome (Catholic) and extending through the Reformation period (Luther, Calvin, Westminster) and into the present age (Rayburn). Thus Chapell spends several chapters looking closely at the general structure of historical liturgies of worship services across two millennia. In addition, Chapell analyzes the “Liturgy of the Upper Room,” or the services in which the Lord’s Supper is presented to parishioners. The result of this dialogue with ancient practices is the discovery that worship patterns unite several centuries of Christians who worship similarly. The goal of reviewing past liturgies is to see that the designers had loftier goals than satisfying personal preferences. And so it is essential to communicate the gospel priority of worship since that priority is 1) scriptural, and 2) inherently non-individualist.

As Chapell concludes his historical analysis, he proposes a structure for worship that is based on the arc of the gospel storyline and “represents” Christ’s story (p. 116ff.). The essence of Christian worship is a re-presentation of the gospel, and thus congregations share the story of the progress of the gospel in their lives, week after week. In this way, “This progress of the gospel in our lives is the cause of our worship and the natural course of it” (p. 116). In parallel to the redemptive pattern of grace in the life of the believer, the following structure emerges, which Chapell entitles “Christ-Centered Worship” (p. 118, 141):

Recognition of God's Character (Adoration)

Acknowledgment of Our Character (Confession)

Affirmation of Grace (Assurance)

Expression of Devotion (Thanksgiving)

Desire for Aid in Living for God (Petition and Intercession)

Acquiring Knowledge for Pleasing God (Instruction from God's Word)

Communing with God and His People (Communion)

Living unto God with His Blessing (Charge and Benediction)

Part 2 is a list of resources that churches can use when planning their services according to the structure above (pp. 157-304). There is a short explanation of each part of the service, followed by long lists of scriptural and/or written readings/prayers/hymns that can be used within each part.

Chapell's emphasis on the gospel in liturgical practice is commendable and refreshing for several reasons. Chapell's historical analysis is very helpful, if not revealing, and definitely instructive. Church leaders, pastors, and professors must draw upon the past to instruct the present. Refusing to hear the voices of past historical practices, traditions, interpretations, customs, etc. is negligent at best, if not naïveté and arrogance. I also appreciated the point Chapell makes at the conclusion of his historical review. He states that if a Christian with no knowledge of historical liturgy looked at the progress that these services have in common (Adoration, Confession, Assurance, Thanksgiving, Petition, Instruction, Charge, and Blessing), he or she would probably think that it reflects the progress of the gospel in the life of an individual (pp. 98-99). Therefore, modern churches that tend to neglect this pattern unwittingly denigrate the importance of the gospel of Christ.

One element of disagreement comes in chapter 8, "Christ's Story," in which Chapell reviews several patterns in Old and New Testament texts where his gospel structure is modeled (pp. 102-115). Aside from Isaiah 6, these patterns are so broad—meaning that they cover such large swaths of Scripture—that a gospel-centered structure is not easily discernable. In fact, it seems forced in some of his examples, like Romans 11-15 and Revelation 4-21 (pp. 110-11). In addition, Chapell states on numerous occasions that he is not implying that the biblical authors conscientiously set out to establish a gospel message in the structure of their worship, so much so that one begins to wonder if Chapell actually believes that what he is writing is true! (I counted six times where Chapell makes this disclaimer in this chapter alone: pp. 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 111.) Chapell's section on "Gospel Sensitivity" should be enough to establish his point. He states that "because [God's people] have experienced his love, [they] love what and whom he loves—and their worship of him naturally includes expressions of such love" (p. 112). The heart of Christian worship is love for Christ. Therefore, believers express their love for God in Christ

by responding to the way that he has expressed his for them (the gospel) in their worship liturgies. And so out of love for him Christians worship, “extolling his greatness, confessing our weakness, seeking his goodness, thanking him for his grace, and living for his glory” (pp. 112-13). This pattern is something that is discernable throughout the biblical witness. It does not need to be forced broadly into some of the texts that Chapell outlined earlier. It is enough to state what logically flows from his thesis: “Our worship has a gospel pattern not because we are coerced into such ritual but because our hearts are so compelled to love Jesus” (p. 113).

This minor disagreement aside, Christ-Centered Worship is tremendously helpful in advocating theologically rich worship that is informed and shaped by the gospel. It is a doxological tour de force, and I commend it wholeheartedly to teacher, student, pastor, and layman alike.

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Trygve David Johnson. *The Preacher as Liturgical Artist: Metaphor, Identity, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ (Lloyd John Ogilvie Institute of Preaching Series Book 2)*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2014. 222 pp. \$25.00.

Scholars and thoughtful pastors continue to spill ink in an effort to help preachers flourish in the task of faithfully proclaiming the gospel week after week. While there is no dearth of books that promise rejuvenation to tired homiletics or propose creative preaching practices, the church is in dire need of a paradigm that can guide modern preachers in the task of proclaiming the gospel amidst the postmodern cultural milieu. In his groundbreaking work, *The Preacher as Liturgical Artist*, Trygve Johnson proposes that we move beyond traditional metaphors for preaching and instead create a new metaphor that can guide modern preachers in their role of creatively and imaginatively preaching the gospel.

Johnson argues that “homiletic identity is shaped by the metaphors associated with the preacher,” and that our particular cultural moment requires a fresh homiletic identity (p. 28). A preaching metaphor “creates concepts” and “directs the perception, experience, and performance of our lives” (p. 28). Metaphors create perceptions of reality, shape behaviors and practices, and drive the way we “perform” our lives. For Johnson, possessing a solid metaphor for preaching is paramount in the pastoral task of navigating through postmodernity.

Before proposing his own metaphor, Johnson first explores the two predominant metaphors for preaching in the church today: The Preacher as Teacher and the Preacher as Herald. The Preacher as Teacher metaphor finds its origin in the rhetorical approach to preaching advanced by Augustine which seeks to convince people of Christian truth through the power of rhetorical skill and persuasion. While there is much to

commend in this metaphor, it lacks creativity and imagination, relies almost exclusively on the preacher's skill as a public communicator, and trumpets rationalism. The Preacher as Herald metaphor, rooted in the work of Karl Barth, envisions the preacher as a messenger for the King, diminishing the role the preacher plays in the communication of God's Word and dismissing rhetorical skill as a preaching strategy. Moreover, this approach ignores the preaching style of Jesus, who used an array of rhetorical devices and creative methods to communicate truth (p. 119). Johnson explores the deficiencies of these metaphors in great detail while effectively arguing that there needs to be a fresh metaphor that can guide the homiletical endeavor in our postmodern context.

This is where the metaphor of The Preacher as Liturgical Artist comes in. For Johnson, this metaphor incorporates the best of the Teacher and Herald metaphors while forging a new way forward. Grounded in the life and work of Christ, the Liturgical Artist metaphor is actively Trinitarian, recognizes the creativity found in the "vicarious humanity" of Christ, and encourages preachers to embrace an aesthetic approach to preaching. Johnson believes that preachers are artists who have a role to play in faithfully, creatively, and imaginatively reiterating the gospel (p. 134). The Preacher as Liturgical Artist, according to Johnson, is "not the tortured Romantic notion," but instead views the preacher as "a skilled artisan who absorbs a tradition and whose skills are grounded" in God's ongoing work of creation (p. 135). He summarizes, "By grounding preaching in the grammar of the Trinity and . . . within the vicarious work of Christ, preachers are freed to be creative agents, working with rhetorical dexterity amidst a shifting culture . . . preachers are consequently freed up to proclaim the gospel in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts" (p. 144). In the context of the church's liturgy, the preacher must work together with other liturgical artists that "together honor God and lead people into his presence" (p. 176). Therefore, "the preacher as an artist finds the fullest expression of freedom within the constraints of the liturgy of Christ's body, the church" (p. 177). As Johnson concludes his work, he writes, "This project puts the preacher's identity squarely in relationship to Jesus, his creative work and life, and the ongoing work of his people . . . the preacher is freed to use all the gifts of humanity as gifts redeemed for artistic expression within the context of the church" (p. 182).

Trygve Johnson has put forward a prophetic and visionary preaching metaphor that will sustain preachers in their task of proclaiming the gospel afresh in the church today. He argues well for this metaphor, which I believe has the potential to impact the landscape of preaching in evangelical churches across the globe. I was particularly pleased to see Johnson's passion for engaging the artistic dimension of preaching, as the role of aesthetics in Christian formation has generally not touched upon the homiletical task. Johnson's sustained theological reflection on the ministry of the church exemplifies the model of the pastor theologian; he not only brings theological realities to bear on ecclesial realities, but actively contributes to theological discourse on preaching. Moreover, his identification of metaphor as a central driving force in preaching practice possesses implications across a vast array of ministry tasks which pastor



theologians may want to explore. As a preacher myself, I have benefitted greatly from Johnson's metaphor, and in fact, have begun to come to the preaching task with renewed excitement, imagination, vision, and energy. This is certainly a book that pastor theologians for whom preaching is a central ministry task or interest should add to their library.

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Marva J. Dawn. *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. xi + 316 pp. \$24.00.

Although a tad dated, there is little in this book that is not relevant for the church in the West today. In line with works like Os Guinness' *Dining With the Devil* (1993), Dawn describes many of the profound changes brought into the world by the technological revolution (along with the Boomer generation's emphasis on authentic "experience" and Postmodernity's emphases on subjective and relativistic epistemologies) before showing how these changes have seriously—and in many instances, deleteriously—impacted the church.

If progress is essentially defined by the technological revolution as *bigger, faster, stronger, more efficient, more entertaining*, and if the church has uncritically adopted this technological zeitgeist, then this well explains why so many of our churches have embraced marketing strategies (where we try, for example, to jazz up our worship services to be more entertaining and/or do things like publicize upcoming sermons series) aimed at making churches bigger quicker by appealing to congregants' desires for instant gratification and treating them first and foremost as consumers. Although Dawn grants the pure motives that frequently accompany pastor's and worship leaders' embrace of these strategies (we want to be relevant, keep congregants, and win converts!), she pointedly demonstrates how these same strategies can – and, in many instances, *have* – subtly eclipsed the church's assignment to praise God and nurture Christian character. Services designed to entertain or elicit emotional responses or provide instantaneous affects 'militate against the formation of Christian character' (p. 9) while placing the 'I' instead of the Transcendent 'Other' at the center of (what we now, showing our hand, call) our worship 'experiences'.

Dawn writes to combat this situation. She has four goals: "to reflect upon culture for which we want to proclaim the gospel; to expose the subtle powers that beckon us into idolatries and that upset the necessary dialectical balances in the Church's life and worship; to stimulate better questions about if, why, and how we might be dumbing faith down in the ways we structure, plan, and participate in worship education and in worship itself; and to offer better means for reaching out to people outside

the Church" (p. 11). In order to achieve these goals, Dawn describes and critiques the "Culture *Surrounding* Our Worship" (Chapters 2-4), the "Culture *of* [Our] Worship" (Chapters 5-7), the "Culture *in* Our Worship" (Chapters 8-10), and how our worship is to be "*For the Sake of the Culture.*" A plethora of topics, including types of music, preaching, the use of historic confessions, the importance of memory, iconography and more are touched on meaningfully and practically. Dawn's central conviction throughout the work is that "we ought not to, and do not need to conform to our culture's patterns, but that the Christian community must intentionally sustain its unique character and just as intentionally care about the culture around it in order to be able to introduce people genuinely to Christ and to nurture individuals to live faithfully" (p. 11).

Interacting throughout the work with a multiplicity of insightful and seminal works, such as Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) and Christopher Lasch's *Culture of Narcissism* (1979), Dawn's book is exceptionally well researched and written. Her observations are both penetrating and hard-hitting. In the present reviewer's opinion, Dawn worries about all the right stuff as it touches on our communal worship practices: the elevation of the individual over the community; the centralization of the consumer over the Lord; the psychologizing of the Gospel into therapy; the loss of a proclamation in word, song, and ritual of a story taken to be objectively true instead of merely a way of subjectively enhancing one's own life; finding a balance between old and new; and the like.

If a critique must be offered of this work, one might quibble with the subtitle, "A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time." Although theologically grounded throughout, the work does not offer a systematic or biblical-theological exposition of the topic of worship in interaction with the biblical text. Instead, incisive cultural commentary is brought to bear on the practice of Christian worship at every turn. This is the book's shining strength. In light of this, perhaps a more accurate subtitle would have been something like: "A Reflection and Call to Deep and Transformative Worship in a Superficial Age," or maybe, "A Critical Appraisal of Worship in This Urgent Time."

Whatever one makes of this critique, Dawn's book will doubtlessly resonate with pastors and theologians alike who yearn for a prophetic critique of what *has* happened in many of our worship spaces, and what *should* happen as we seek to keep God as the Subject and Object of our worship and as we seek to grow in faithfulness to Jesus not as isolated individuals but as *communities* of disciples. This book is most highly commended.

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Marva Dawn. *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. vii + 377 pp. \$22.00.

Given the torrent responses to *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* (1995), Dawn offers this sequel. Her intent is not so much to offer new or sustained theological arguments, but to elaborate on questions arising from her first book by offering a "sampling of responses, advances, [and] new ideas from all those discussions" (p. 6). Even with this aim stated, Dawn nevertheless manages to pull her ruminations (and not a few sermons) together into coherent shape over six sections, thirty-one chapters, of her book.

As with *Reaching Out*, Dawn begins in Part I of her sequel with cultural criticism, focusing in this work on postmodernity, the dangers of a dumbing and numbing media presence in our lives (especially television), and consumerism. Parts II-VI then variously show how genuine worship—that is, worship which emphasizes the centrality of God and his sacred story/Scripture (Part II), building community (Part III), character formation (Part IV), and making choices and facing challenges while keeping these emphases in mind (Parts V and VI)—guards and equips the Church from succumbing to the harmful characteristics of the aforementioned cultural influences.

Once again in kind with *Reaching Out*, Dawn's central contribution in this work resides in her keen and pervasive cultural critique as it applies to dangerous trends in the North American Church. Dawn wrote this book some sixteen years ago amidst the heyday of the "worship wars" and many church's love affair with the "successes" of Willow Creek. But her insights seem no less relevant for this fact. Specifically, as Dawn establishes the radical loss of historical time, individualism, and various consumerisms (material, relational, emotional) of the current age, she wants us to stop turning our worship services into evangelistic crusades and/or services that are simply catering to what people "want". Both of these tendencies are dangerous, and may prove deadly for the future of the church.

In the first place, turning our worship services into evangelistic services or "seeker services" is a major category mistake, Dawn argues, because while the latter may have validity, the two are not the same. Worship's end is the glory of God, designed *as worship* for the ongoing formation of the disciple amidst an eschatological community of disciples. Evangelism's end is winning disciples. Thus, properly understood, whereas evangelism is the means by which people are to be drawn into worship, worship is *not* the means by which people are to be drawn in to be evangelized. Instead, becoming enfolded in the God-centred, Word-centred, death-to-the-old-self and being-formed-in-the-new worship of the local church is the end of evangelism. Put otherwise, what happens on Sunday morning must not be tailored to unbelievers, even while being sensitive to their potential presence. Why? Because the Church at worship is not a "vendor of religious services and goods" but a "body of people sent on a mission" (p. 121, quoting George Hunsberger). To start pretending or acting

as if worship is for the purpose of evangelism—and to start throwing off age long traditions and ritual in order to shape the services in this direction—is to slip into a marketing mindset that enshrines the spirit of advertising, a rather dangerous modality for the church! As Dawn insists while quoting John Kenneth Galbraith, we must think about it: “the basic purpose of advertising is to get people to buy something they don’t need” (p. 123). Thus, if one accepts McLuhan’s dictum that the “medium is the message,” the church’s embrace of “advertising” to win converts (and or keep parishioners) is a most dubious modality indeed, for it conveys the message that the church is *selling* something to be consumed and that this something is, at the end of the day, “something people *don’t* need—a superficial, magical God” (p. 123).

A similar problem obtains with turning our worship services into events that cater to disciple’s tastes and desires. In short, we play directly into the hand of all that is most alarming about our current cultural climate while severing the followers of Jesus from some of the Church’s most longstanding and powerful means of grace. To offer just one example of many, in our television and image saturated age, the image takes precedence over the word. Correspondingly, because images are incapable of logical argumentation, but play on emotion and the elicitation of instant impressions, people’s patience for rational argumentation diminishes in favor of nebulous feelings of well-being until one’s happiness becomes the sole goal of one’s existence. Naturally this loss of patience and capacity to follow an argument in favor of a life of instant and un-abating happiness militates against a faith that is reasonable, cruciform, and calls for the subordination of (ever-shifting) feelings to truth. In rearranging our services to be more appealing, therefore, or to simply try to engender good feelings in parishioners in the here and now, is to collude with forces that are damaging to the faith. As Dawn articulates it: it is to play our hand to a population who has been conditioned to hunger for “strong sentiments for their own sake and not as a response to spiritual truths” (p. 90). We feed the “ceaseless consumption of novelty” (p. 90, quoting Colin Cambell). We facilitate the eclipsing of “the object of Christian belief ... by interest in the subjective act of believing” (p. 91, quoting Craig Gay in “Sensualists without Heart,” p. 30). Most perilously, in exchange for a faith rooted in the past and buoyed by hope for the future, we collude with “our culture [which] invites us to locate the sum total of human happiness here and now and in the consumption of the fruits of the technological economy” (p. 92, again quoting Gay). We are implicitly divorced, in other words, from all that is most enduring, sustaining, and important. The net danger, suggests Dawn by appeal to Alexis de Tocqueville’s prophetic take on the American situation as whole, is that, if the church continues down this road, its members will “finally become so engrossed in a cowardly love of immediate pleasures that their interest in their own future and in that of their descendants may vanish, and that they will prefer tamely to follow the course of their destiny rather than make a sudden energetic effort necessary to set things right” (p. 93). Not only *will* this happen, concludes Dawn, but it *is* happening, as can be seen in our worship—which is, again, why she wrote this book:

For *two of the symptoms* [de Tocqueville] *named concerning society are now manifested in churches conflicts over worship*—namely, (1) *lack of concern* about the future, for many churches throwing out their heritage do not recognize that deep discipleship for the long haul cannot be built on worship not rooted in the deeper wisdom of the larger Church as it has been immersed in the splendor of God; and (2) *a tame following of the present course* in that congregations are not willing to expend the “sudden energetic effort necessary to set things right” by building genuine community and working on the worship issues in a way that asks the right questions (p. 93, emphasis original).

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Life Together*. New York: Harper Collins, 1954. 122 pp. \$8.99.

The American Evangelical church is a fragmented mess. In large part, this plight stems from technological advancement. Now, technology helps us fit more things into an already crowded day. As such, we are *overbooked* and *over-tired*. There is little time and even less energy to enjoy true Christian community. Today's climate offers scant opportunity to love our fellow disciples (John 13:35). There is even less of an opportunity to love our neighbors (Matt 22:39). Our chaotic culture isolates us from one another. This isolation hampers the church's mission. The church needs to restore genuine community. In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer provides a blueprint for such a task.

In the opening chapter of *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer discusses the nature of Christian community. For Bonhoeffer, Christian community comprises a group with Jesus Christ in common (p. 21). It is nothing more, nothing less. It is a community that is a spiritual reality not a human ideal. He believes that problems occur as individuals misunderstand this difference. In human communities, individuals look at what *is* and dream of what *might be*. Then, they go about shaping the community into their own image of this ideal. In contrast, the Christian community receives its shape from Jesus. Christians *enter* the community of Christ—they do not *renovate* it. Thus, it is a community made for participation not improvement (p. 37). This community focuses on Christ, and as it does, He provides the substance of its “unity” (p. 39).

Bonhoeffer contends that communal life focuses on Christ. The day begins with morning worship. It continues as a day of prayer-filled work. It concludes with evening devotions. For Bonhoeffer, this fellowship is a constant communion, not a periodic gathering. In describing this constant communion, he offers helpful strategies for corporate worship. He discusses the order of worship for morning devotions. He offers

advice on mid-day prayers. Then, he describes how families should spend evenings practicing forgiveness and reconciliation. He reminds his readers that church begins with the family and not the weekly gathering of the saints.

After discussing communal life, Bonhoeffer moves to the time that Christians spend alone. He advocates the spiritual disciplines of Bible meditation, prayer, and intercession. He believes these disciplines strengthen the individual. Since the individual is part of the community, these practices strengthen the fellowship too. For Bonhoeffer, the health of the community reflects the health of the individual. Healthy individuals make healthy communities. And healthy individuals practice Bible meditation, prayer, and intercession.

For Bonhoeffer, healthy fellowships serve others. In contrast, sick fellowships stay embroiled in internal power struggles. These two perspectives affect one's living out of the doctrine of justification. Healthy fellowships exhibit justification by grace. Sick communities concern themselves with self-justification.

In Bonhoeffer's thinking, Christian fellowship reaches its goal in confession and communion. He draws a sharp contrast between sin and confession. Sin isolates the believer from the community. Confession draws the Christian deeper into the fellowship. Sin leaves believers in the darkness. Confession calls believers into the light. In this atmosphere of authenticity believers "break through to the cross" (p. 113). A place where pride goes to die and humility learns to live. To Bonhoeffer, this communion around Christ is what Christianity is all about. And it is this fellowship that all communities should imitate.

In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer provides six characteristics of genuine community. Before restoring genuine community, the contemporary church must first recognize it. What does this genuine community look like? First, genuine community holds one thing in common—Jesus Christ. It does not concern itself with trivialities. It is the church *of* Jesus Christ, nothing else.

Second, genuine community is a perpetual experience not a slot on a calendar. The church is the church *all* day, *every* day. It is not just a corporate meeting on Sundays. Bonhoeffer reminds us that church is not something we *do*. It is something we *are*.

Third, genuine community depends on the spiritual vitality of each member of the fellowship. Thus, healthy churches are groups of maturing disciples of Jesus.

Fourth, genuine community lives out of grace not law. This way of living manifests itself in loving ministry. It edifies the community and serves the outside world.

Fifth, genuine community combats sin's desire to isolate individual believers. It promotes grace and acceptance. It invites sinning individuals to come out of the darkness and into the light.

Sixth, genuine community transforms its members. It does this by fostering an environment of humility, empathy, and love. In essence, genuine community produces Christ imitators.



Genuine community, as Bonhoeffer's understood it, is God's prescription for the sick contemporary church. Fellowships that take this medicine will rediscover the centrality of Christ. They will also better reflect God's glory into the shadowy places of this fallen world. This illumination will result in a deepening love for both God and neighbor. For Bonhoeffer, enjoying genuine community is experiencing a foretaste of God's Kingdom on earth. The contemporary church would do well to listen to Bonhoeffer on this subject.

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Graham Greene. *The End of the Affair*. Introduction by Michael Gorra. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. 160 pp. \$10.82.

Graham Greene's short novel, *The End of the Affair*, chronicles the adulterous relationship between the perennially jealous and dissatisfied Maurice Bendrix and his lover Sarah Miles. At first pass this might not seem like fertile soil for a story about God's redemptive love—indeed a distinctly Augustinian story of God's redemptive love. But anyone familiar with Greene's "Catholic" novels will be aware of how effectively Greene is able to mine the messy complexities of life—even our mortal sins—with a view to God's redemption.

The setting is England, World War II. The plot unfolds in series of flashbacks, principally told through the first person account of Bendrix. Greene's narration is masterful here, and the time-shifting between scenes is an effective means of carrying the story forward. The novel opens in the middle of the narrative, with Bendrix perplexed as to why Sarah has abruptly abandoned him after a German rocket attack in which they were both nearly killed. The only conclusion he can reach is that she has left him for another lover. (The idea that she has left him to return to her husband never crosses his mind.) Bendrix eventually hires a private investigator to identify Sarah's new attachment. This leads to the procurement of Sarah's journal, in which Bendrix discovers that the other lover is none other than God.

The power and beauty of the book is found in Bendrix's reading of Sarah's diary. Here we encounter Sarah's surprising and, indeed, tortuous journey into faith. Sarah's conversion has come on the heels of what she thinks might be the miraculous resurrection of Bendrix from the dead. The rocket attack had left Bendrix lying prone and seemingly lifeless in the rubble. Sarah is sure he is dead. She returns to their bedroom and prays to the God she doesn't believe in that God would save him; that if he does, she will give up Bendrix forever. Into the room walks Bendrix, and thus begins the end of the affair. But for Sarah, it is just the beginning of her affair with God.

In truth, Sarah's affair with God had already begun before the rocket attack. Sarah loves Bendrix, but is dismayed by her lack of capacity to



assure Bendrix of her love. This despair cracks open the door of Sarah's soul to the possibility that just maybe there might be a love that transcends the weakness and vicissitudes of human frailty. Just prior to the rocket attack she writes in her journal:

Sometimes I get so tired of trying to convince him that I love him, and that I will love him forever....I know he is afraid of the desert that would be around him if our love were to end, but he can't realize that I feel exactly the same....What could one build in the desert? Sometimes after a day when we have made love many times, I wonder whether it isn't possible to come to an end of sex, and I know that he is wondering too and is afraid of that point where the desert begins. What do we do in the desert if we lose each other? How does one go on living after that?

He is jealous of the past and the present and the future. His love is like a medieval chastity belt: only when he is there with me, in me, does he feel safe. If only I could make him feel secure, then we could live peacefully, happily, not savagely, inordinately, and the desert would recede from sight. For a lifetime perhaps.

If one were to believe in God, could he fill the desert? (p. 72)

The question of God haunts Sarah like a specter. She has come to the growing realization that she cannot make Bendrix happy, no matter how much she loves him and gives herself to him. And she has come equally to realize that he can never make her happy. As Sarah looks at Bendrix lying in the rubble, she recalls, "Even the half-happiness I gave him was drained out of him like blood. He would never have the chance to be happy again," (pp. 75-76). The best they can offer each other always falls short, and is doomed to end with the inevitable arrival of death. And it is here, in her dissatisfaction with her own capacity to make Bendrix truly happy that Sarah is compelled to pray for Bendrix's happiness apart from her.

Give him a chance. Let him have his happiness. Do this and I'll believe. But that wasn't enough. It doesn't hurt to believe. So I said, I love him and I'll do anything if you'll make him alive, I said very slowly, I'll give him up for ever, only let him be alive with a chance... (p. 76).

Sarah does not go easily into faith. She regrets immediately the vow she has made and tries numerous means to get out of it. Yet for reasons that even she herself cannot at first quite understand, she clings tenaciously to her wavering belief in God. Her diary reveals a conflicted soul, longing for the warmth and comfort of "corrupt human love," yet clinging to the hope that there is a God of love and happiness that somehow stands above all of her inabilities to love and be loved.

And it is here we see Greene's Augustinian genius. Sarah is not drawn to God simply for want of her own need of love; even more desperately she longs for Bendrix to know and rest in a love that she herself cannot

provide. Sarah clings to faith in large measure because she has come to believe that God is the only hope for Bendrix's happiness. "You were there, teaching us to squander, like You taught the rich man, so that one day we might have nothing left except this love of You. But You are too good to me. When I ask You for pain, You give me peace. Give it to him too. Give him my peace—he needs it more" (p. 99). For Sarah, to lose faith in God is to lose faith that Bendrix can ever be happy.

And thus it is Sarah's love for her adulterous lover that drives her to belief in God, and this in turn, to chastity.

Michael Gorra, in his excellent introduction to the novel, captures the remarkable irony of Greene's seminal insight: "Sarah Miles does enjoy [sex] and, and without guilt, but still finds herself surprised into a faith in God that enjoins her from ever again sleeping with her lover Bendrix.... At the same time, the book suggests—and for its date, scandalously—that she has been led to that belief by sex itself. Erotic experience has brought her to a state of grace. Or as the cover of *Time* would say, in a story on the novel's publication, 'Adultery can lead to sainthood.'" And as scandalous as it seems, *Time* was right.

Sarah has come to realize that her love for Bendrix can only be justified and completed in God's love for Bendrix. Sarah's is the shadow love, the corruptible and incomplete love. The best she will ever be able to give Bendrix is a "half-happiness." It is because she truly loves Bendrix that she casts him upon the love of God, trusting—praying—that God will give to Bendrix what she can only falteringly approximate. Sarah has come to realize that love, if it exists at all, begins with God, and must, in the end, return to God. This is Greene's greatest achievement in the novel.

Greene has captured, in the form of a novel, Augustine's true and basic insight that all human longing is—at its root—a longing for union with God. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you," the great African Bishop once prayed. For Augustine, this basic insight is true of all desire, but perhaps even most true of sexual desire, for sexual desire is typologically related to our spiritual desire for God in Christ. Augustine saw the "corrupt human love" of sexual union as a prefiguring of the incorruptible love of God. And so, for Augustine, "It is of Christ and the Church that it is most truly said, 'And the two shall become one flesh.'" The temporal earthly marriage is but a shadow of the heavenly eternal marriage. And the joy of sexual union between a man and woman is but a foretaste of the joy that awaits the wedding supper of the Lamb. However much the Christian tradition has at times been uneasy about sex, the best of the Christian tradition has always known that sex points beyond itself to the glorious inheritance of the saints. As one of Steinbeck's characters said, "There's a capacity for appetite that a whole heaven and earth of cake can't satisfy." But Augustine reminds us, along with Greene, that what can't be satisfied with cake (or sex) can be satisfied with Christ. Sarah has come to realize this not only for herself, but even more deeply for Bendrix.

*The End of the Affair* is a profound, multi-layered book about the complexities of faith and doubt and love and happiness. There is more to Greene's novel than Augustinian typology; the epistemology of belief is another major theme, and in this respect Greene is perhaps less successful

(see the excellent analysis of Gorra in his introduction). Yet insofar as Greene's book is an apologetic for the way that finite human love points to, is justified, and completed, only in the infinite love of God, *The End of the Affair* must be judged an outstanding success.

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Melanie C. Ross, *Evangelical Versus Liturgical? Defying a Dichotomy*.  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. ix+149 pp. \$17.00, paperback.

Melanie Ross has provided us with a very promising work addressing what some have called the "worship wars." In this short volume, Ross deals most directly with a perceived dichotomy between "liturgical" and "evangelical" worship services. Her work is relevant to current church discussions on worship style given the dual trend of liturgical attraction and contemporary style among younger believers. In the Foreword, Mark Noll notes,

"The result of her pioneering effort is a challenge to scholars of liturgy to recognize that 'free churches,' which may be inert to traditional or formal liturgical studies, nonetheless can possess responsible (if unconscious) liturgical traditions. Along the way it shows that these churches have often developed insights about worship that formally trained liturgical scholars need to appreciate, and that these churches deserve a place at the table in liturgical study more generally" (p. x).

We have worship music-oriented movements such as Passion and Hillsong music, which are duplicated all over North America on any given Sunday. And we have the emergence of many new Anglican churches (and others) which attract young people and offer a more historic version of Christian liturgy. These two impulses would seem to reflect a rather pervasive dichotomy in worship style. However, Ross argues that the dichotomy is not so pervasive, and is not necessary, if believers from both high and low church traditions can learn to consider one another more justly.

Ross is assistant professor of liturgical studies at Yale Divinity School and the Yale Institute for Sacred Music. This book is a kind of practical distillation of her doctoral thesis, with most of the technical jargon replaced with highly-readable prose. Her work begins by introducing the problem and leading the reader through a discussion on the historical origins of evangelical worship styles. Though Charles Finney is often thought to be paradigmatic of this style, with his threefold *ordo* of warm-up, sermon, conversion, Moss suggest that George Whitefield may be a better model of evangelicalism. His approach brought together believers of diverse backgrounds (an ecumenical vision) united around the "New

Birth.” Along the way Ross is critical of liturgical scholars like James White who seem unfairly prejudiced against evangelical worship styles.

The next section presents the first of two church case studies. This one focuses on a nondenominational megachurch in Milwaukee called Eastbrook church. It is a fascinating and extremely diverse congregation with a rich combination of spiritual fervor and theological depth. The story of this church (and the other one in case study #2) make for interesting reading. In this case, she uses the chapter to reflect some on the role of theological difference in shaping liturgical preference. Some churches defy the dichotomy between pragmatism and ecumenism, but Ross wants to note that theological differences between liberal and evangelical Christians pose a greater threat to unity than worship style.

The next section discusses the relationship between scripture and liturgy. For Ross it is not the case that liturgical churches are more biblically sophisticated and nuanced while evangelical churches are more hermeneutically immature. Rather, evangelicals make their own nuanced and sophisticated contributions to biblical and theological interpretation. To show this she brings together some interesting discussion partners: Aiden Kavanagh, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Gordon Lathrop on the liturgical side, John Webster and Kevin Vanhoozer on the evangelical side. Readers will enjoy the resulting sparks.

In the next section Ross addresses the criticism of Gordon Lathrop that some aspects of (what he calls) the “frontier tradition” look more gnostic than Christian. Ross disagrees with this assessment, and looks to the work of Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness* (1998), for a more favorable assessment of evangelical thought. This section also contains a comparison between the Fourth Gospel’s relationship to the Synoptics and evangelicals’ relationship to the ecumenical tradition. Ross finds parallels between John’s Gospel and evangelicals, such as an emphasis on personal faith, de-emphasizing hierarchical offices, and the prioritization of Christology (pp. 92-98). All of this serves the goal of showing “that nonsacramental Christianity is one faithful way of embodying the shared confession of faith” (p. 99). Ross certainly values sacramental liturgy. But she advocates for a “both-and” model rather than an “either-or” one.

The second case study looks at West Shore Evangelical Free Church in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. This church also defies the dichotomy of liturgical verses evangelical. The church serves about 2500 people a week. The pastor has a PhD in theology from Cambridge, and the congregation serves the local community in numerous ways. They have a coherent theological model that guides their church—“Becoming like Jesus: Head, Heart, Hands, Knees, Feet.” It’s another example of a lively evangelical church with a rich theological rationale for its worship and ministry. Ross concludes, “West Shore stands as a powerful reminder that the full range of worshipful responses to the gospel cannot be specified in advance” (p. 124). These examples show that evangelical churches have something to offer the liturgical tradition. Ross is not arguing that such churches should be merely tolerated as permissible, but that they actually contribute to our worship theology and practice.

This is an especially important book for anyone who thinks that high church, historic liturgies are best. And all the more important if one supposes that approach to be the most biblical, theological, and formative for a Christian community. Her research clearly demonstrates that there are evangelical churches that do not use the ecumenical *ordo* (word, bath, table, prayer), but who are nonetheless thinking deeply about their worship gatherings. These evangelical churches care very much about biblical and theological faithfulness and depth. They also care very much about shaping the lives of their members in a Christ-like direction. This is the real strength of the book. Though thoroughly immersed in the study of the Church's historic liturgies, Ross does not argue that evangelicals need to become more like the "liturgical" churches. She wants evangelicals to appreciate and know liturgical theology, but she doesn't prescribe the ecumenical form for everyone. She actually shows how evangelical churches can be faithful and intelligent in crafting worship services that still reflect evangelical roots. Ross believes that the church can do better, in finding common middle ground, than the false dichotomies of liturgical/evangelical will allow. Her work is a positive contribution toward that end.

Pastors, and others who lead in worship, should be intentional and thoughtful in preparing worship services. Listening to wisdom from the past and learning from good contemporary models is always a fruitful endeavor. This work will help church leaders think well about worship, and lead to richer worship services.

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Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 232 pp. \$22.95.

Charles Taylor's book *Modern Social Imaginaries* may be best understood as a prequel to his major work, *A Secular Age*. The latter, much larger work represents Taylor's programmatic treatment of secular thought in terms of history, development, and scope. *Modern Social Imaginaries*, smaller and easier to digest, speaks to the popular ideologies of modernity that gave rise to the concept of secularity. And it is Taylor's focus on the "popular" that makes this work so interesting. Consider his term "imaginaries:" they are "...the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative motions and images that underlie these expectations" (p. 23). Social imaginaries differ from social theory. This is important, because Taylor concentrates on "ordinary people" and how they "imagine" their social surroundings, which is "not often expressed in theoretical terms." To clarify, social imaginaries are transmitted in more than just social theory texts, and are expressed also in stories, legends, images, and (for the contemporary) film, television, and podcasts. So this work is helpful

not only for the cultural theoretician or even a genealogist of thought, but also for people who wish to understand more fully the current cultural milieu like clergy-people, politicians, or advertisers.

Taylor joins thinkers like John Milbank, David Bentley Hart, Louis Dupré and others in assessing a common thread in modern social imaginaries: a tendency toward metaphysical flattening. For Taylor, this flattening of the imagination concomitant with the migration of value from transcendence to the individual (immanence) redefines human conception of the moral. No longer is the modern ethical imagination formed by notions of virtue and patterned by cosmology, hierarchy, or even through various modes of mediated relationships; now, the good is democratized because each individual possesses “direct access.” Whereas past imaginaries followed a sort of cosmological hierarchy where access to the ultimate good was indirect and came by way of mediation (via shamans, priests, kings, political rulers, etc.) the modern person claims direct access. According to Taylor then, what counts as the “ultimate concern,” *ontic* primacy, the sacred, has significantly changed with the advent of modernity. And Taylor is not alone in this assessment. He fits into a rich cohort of thinkers and projects that trace the moving target of ultimate concern through epochs. Take for example John Milbank, and his analysis of secularity through social theory and its implicit metaphysics, or sociologist’s Bronislaw Szerszynski’s genealogical analysis of the changing location of the holy from nature to the transcendent realm of the divine to the individual and ultimately toward human technology in his work *Nature, Technology, and the Sacred*. Others include William Cavanaugh’s *Migrations of the Holy*, which follows the shift from individuals to communities; Dominic Erdozain’s new book *The Soul of Doubt*, which is much like Taylor’s overall project in that it seeks to discover the religious roots of doubt and secularity. And in his recent work *Beyond Secular Order*, Milbank asserts that modern metaphysical flattening is a precursor to the flattening of biblical exegesis, which yields only one, strict and literal meaning of holy texts.

Taylor’s contribution to this rich conversation about this shift in thought engages recent, popular examples. He reveals that for moderns, unlike premoderns and medievals, the *ontic* primacy of a transcendent sphere has been unhitched and moved from the vertical to a horizontal axis. The first and most obvious consequence of this shift is that the divine is either denied or ignored, or perhaps just one option among many. Contemporary ecclesiological life reveals the shift as well with phrases like “church shopping,” “marketing,” or “target audience,” along with the advent of “spiritual but not religious” modern/postmodern person that holds deeper-than-materialistic beliefs, yet who also denies the requisite formative community of belief (church community, or organized religion) or even a set of prescribed rituals and symbols.

Another difference that Taylor points out between premodern and modern social imaginaries involves the concept of time. Moderns have abandoned the premodern view of time’s verticality, mediation, and social embeddedness in favor of linearity and endless progressiveness. The object or destination of this progress is not exactly defined. It seems to change



with each generation like a moving target. In this way, the modern social imaginary resituates time away from past contingencies like authority, tradition, and older forms of *polis* like the church and toward the perceived advances of individuals in terms of happiness.

Taylor's analysis is a helpful addition to the conversation about modernity's effect on culture. His prose is approachable as he addresses the following cultural realities: individualism, market-driven trends, progressivism, and the retreat from the necessity of religion. Following this analysis history and calculus that has produced the current world, while giving insights for critique. Finally, readers will find in *Modern Social Imaginaries* a helpful starting point for engaging Taylor's larger magnum opus—*A Secular Age*, a landmark text which is also a worthwhile read.

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Bob Kauflin. *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008. 303 pp. \$17.99.

Bob Kauflin is the Director of Sovereign Grace Music and also currently serves on the pastoral staff of Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville. For years Kauflin has been lending his veteran voice to discussing all things worship related over at his blog, [www.worshipmatters.com](http://www.worshipmatters.com). This excellent and helpful volume is divided into four sections. After establishing the profile of a faithful worship leader in the first section, Kauflin turns his attention to a theology of worship in Part Two. Here Kauflin works out an extended definition of the faithful worship leader's task as one who "magnifies the greatness of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, skillfully combining God's Word with music, thereby motivating the gathered church to proclaim the Gospel, to cherish God's presence, and to live for God's glory." Not a bad definition at all. The third section of the book digs into "healthy tensions" local churches face in the actual mechanics of leading worship. Part Four concludes with some wise reflection on the worship leader's relationships—from church, to worship team, to senior pastor.

In profiling the right kind of leader, Kauflin asserts that the worship leader's greatest challenge is "what you yourself bring to the platform each and every Sunday. Your heart" (p. 21). We can lead others in worship and still be worshipping something else in our hearts. Kauflin's practical wisdom and years of experience are evident in his candid discussions about skill and musical gifting. Moses "didn't pass around a sign up list" when he began the construction of the tabernacle (p. 34), and yet even the greatest of skillsets needs to be kept in its proper place. Music is able to affect our emotions and make us more receptive to a song's lyrics, but it can also be used to make shallow lyrics sound deep (p. 95). Kauflin's two chapters on music (12 and 13), along with his chapter on worship planning, (23)



are packed with wisdom for worship leaders and their teams—offering creative rehearsal tips, along with advice about team dynamics and even handling song suggestions.

From his own experience, Kauflin is driven to conclude that worship leaders “rarely read theology books” (p. 29). This is probably why his volume is as thick on doctrine as it is praxis. Kauflin’s theology is rich, even if distinctly Reformed and Complementarian (which some readers will appreciate more than others). While he does add a charismatic (or “continuationist”) flourish here and there—particularly in chapters on God’s presence (10), the Holy Spirit (16) and expressiveness in worship (21)—his encouragements are biblically grounded, theologically measured and carefully stated. Things do get a bit confusing when Kauflin challenges the very notion of a “worship leader” in Scripture (p. 51), noting that “the term worship leader didn’t exist” before 1980. He later tells us that “the pastor is the worship leader” (p. 54). But these minor oddities give way to his compelling passion, which is to see authentic worship driven by a right knowledge of God. He calls on worship leaders everywhere to resist the chronic tendency to “favor devotion over doctrine” (p.168). Instead, this order “needs to be reversed, without losing either” (p. 168).

Great theological balance is evident in Kauflin’s discussion about divine presence. For instance, while God may choose to “localize” a sense of his presence in our worship experiences as we are made “more aware of it,” God is never more or less present (p. 139). Kauflin’s theologically-capable explanation of transcendence and immanence are a good antidote toward curbing some of the overly casual trends in modern worship. To his credit, he refrains from taking direct pot-shots at the seeker-sensitive movement. Yet it’s clear that Kauflin’s understanding of worship is driven by a robust ecclesiology. He sees worship as activity designed “for the people of God joined together in a specific locality through the blood of his Son and the power of his Spirit” (p. 201). Congregations need to receive a balanced theology from their worship singing, and toward this end Kauflin suggests the “twenty-year rule.” If someone was born in your church and grew up singing your songs over the course of twenty years, he asks, “how well would they know God?” (p. 119).

Chapter 15, “To Proclaim the Gospel,” is the real theological heartbeat of the book. Here Kauflin pictures the cross as the place where “perfect judgment and perfect mercy kissed” (p. 134). Our songs of gratefulness for the Gospel, furthermore, are a key way that Christianity distinguishes itself from other faiths. Kauflin draws our attention to the heavenly throne room in Revelation 5, where the Lamb is worshiped as “worthy” for being slain. Kauflin observes: “It seems that heaven itself never moves on from the cross” (p. 77).

*Worship Matters* is the first of two volumes, and it targets the worship leader. A second volume (*True Worshipers: Seeking What Matters to God*, Crossway, 2015) is geared to congregants. While I agree that the main audience is indeed worship leaders and pastors, it’s clear that worship team members, lay leaders, and even younger seminarians could greatly benefit from this work. Given the growing popularity of educational degrees in worship ministry, *Worship Matters* might even be considered as a possible

college or seminary text. Kauflin's style is smooth and easy to read, and his ample Scripture and subject indices at the end, along with a brief annotated bibliography, are just added bonuses. Perhaps a more detailed table of contents would increase the appeal and accessibility of this volume. Even if one does not share all of Kauflin's theological particulars or completely resonate with his definition of worship, I cannot imagine any worship leader or pastor not being helped, challenged and encouraged by the insights, solid principles, and poignant reminders contained in this book. I thoroughly enjoyed Kauflin's work, and would heartily recommend it as a top-tier resource for growing in our understanding of the church's worship.

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Nigel Yates. *Liturgical Space: Christian Worship and Church Buildings in Western Europe 1500–2000*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2008. 199 pp. \$19.98.

In their busy attention to so many things—church administration, budgets, sermon preparation, committee meetings, needy individuals, let alone their own families—pastors often overlook one of the most basic aspects of congregational life, namely the place and space wherein they gather for worship and ministry. Sometimes meeting places are matters of expediency. A new church plant meets where it can afford to or perceived to be strategically located. These are of course legitimate concerns. But beyond matters of expediency, questions remain: does the meeting place facilitate the kind of ministry that is desired? How does it do so? And beyond such functional questions, what kind of message does the place and space communicate?

Contemporary Christian worship often focuses on the effective facilitation of the worship experience. Here, multimedia technology assumes a central role (projectors, film screens, flat screens, lighting, sound systems). Again, these are legitimate concerns, but they carry their own implicit value system. In many ways, the technology is an extension of the Protestant emphasis on the Word, a Word now often communicated in song and image as well as the sermon. It has little to do with a sacramental dimension to corporate worship, unless one wishes to argue that the worship experience is itself sacramental or even iconographic.

In his survey of the styles and strategies of church space through time, Nigel Yates shows how implicit and explicit theological values shaped the construction and use of church buildings. As the subtitle indicates, the focus of Yates' survey is that of Western Europe from 1500 to the present. The American church story is not included in this survey, although the reader can easily perceive analogous dynamics in American church architecture. This is an account of Western European church

architecture, with a particular emphasis on the church experience in the British Isles, with its mixture of Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Independent Church traditions. The major questions that such a survey focuses on are the respective roles of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist and that of preaching. How different theologies placed differing emphases on these areas of corporate worship went a long way in determining the ordering, reordering, destruction and construction of church buildings.

For those new to the study of church architecture, the first chapter is a solid and illuminating introduction. The first worship spaces were homes (see Acts 12:12, 16:40, 18:7) and borrowed buildings such as lecture halls for evangelistic purposes (Acts 19:9-10). The legalization of Christianity presented the need for larger worship spaces, which introduced the adoption of the basilica, a secular building untainted with pagan associations and useable as a place for the non-sacrificial (of animals that is), preaching-oriented character of Christian worship. The basilica becomes the standard model of Church architecture for a millennium. Closely related to the Roman basilica is the style known as Romanesque, with its characteristic curved arches and domes. This became the standard style of Eastern Orthodox architecture to this day, and found in Western church architecture throughout the Christian era into the present. Early medieval technology largely determined what was possible in terms of large architecture, and the Romanesque reflects that technology and engineering. The centralized planning and the large domes also provided the opportunity to express heaven on earth; the dome, with the image of Christ the Almighty in its center, surrounded by mosaics and icons of Old and New Testament saints, presents to worshippers a palpable image of the Heavenly Kingdom.

In the Western Church Yates identifies two developments that had a profound impact on the design and construction of church buildings. First was the rise of different types of celebrations of the mass—High Mass and Low Mass, and the development of private masses especially for the dead. Transepts were added to afford the addition of chapels and altars, giving rise to the characteristic cross-shaped churches still existing today. Secondly was the importance of the sermon as a means of encouraging lay piety. Yates portrays the typical medieval mass as that of the clergy in the chancel and the laity in the pews with little contact outside of certain moments in the mass and the preaching. This gave rise to the development of the basilica outline, now subdivided in naves, chancels, transepts and chapels.

"It is not possible to understand the attitude of the Reformers to public worship and its architectural setting without also understanding their objections to the theology, liturgical practice and private devotions of the late medieval western church" (p. 7). Thus begins Yates' account of the Reformation and its contribution to Western church architecture, a familiar account told from a Protestant perspective but informed by and sympathetic to Roman theology and practice. Protestant church design in the ensuing years becomes a tale of the relative value placed on the Word and Sacrament. Early Lutheran and Anglican churches sought a balance.

Calvinist and Independent churches placed the emphasis on the Word and this on accessibility to preaching. Within Protestant bodies Yates accounts for the relative impact of rationalist and pietist influences, and documents how these historical communions navigated these differences and how church liturgy and design reflects these influences. The book contains outlines and comparisons of liturgical developments as well as images, photographs and illustrations of church design.

More than a mere architectural history, however, Yates advances two of his own theses. The first is that the Tractarian or Oxford Movement that would so shape the Anglican Communion in the second half of the nineteenth century had liturgical and architectural predecessors; the “ecclesiologists” as he calls them did not invent their re-appropriation of medieval practices whole cloth. This of course has a lot to do with the rise of neo-Gothic architecture with its characteristic pointed designs, expansive space, increased use of stained glass, and the prominence of the altar. Secondly and related to this is Yates’ contention that the Gothic revival took much longer to gain ground in Britain and beyond than is usually argued. Both are somewhat in-house scholarly debates of church and architectural historians, but for those interested in church history are interesting matters to consider.

The book pursues church design innovations into the present, but as indicated above, because of its European focus the book has little direct bearing on American church design except as this is imported from the Old World. For anyone considering a visit to Great Britain or the Continent this book would serve as a wonderful guide for visits to various sites.

For those new to the subject, the value of this book would have been enhanced with a glossary. Architectural and liturgical terminologies are employed without definition, which may detract from full engagement with the arguments of the text. Church floor plans are provided with some labeling, but a basic model of Romanesque, Classical, and Gothic building designed clearly labeled would be helpful for the novice. A Guide for Further Reading is provided, and this is a very helpful resource for those who want to pursue these matters further. The books listed under “General Survey,” “The Legacy of the Pre-Reformation Church,” and “Liturgical Renewal and Church Design in the Twentieth Century” are particularly relevant. To these texts I might add the following. Jon M. Sweeney, *Beauty Awakening Belief: How the Medieval Worldview Inspires Faith Today* (Morehouse, 2009), a brief introduction to Gothic architecture that also explains how church design engenders a particular experience of God. Peter and Linda Murray, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art* (Oxford, 2004), an inexpensive resource for understanding all aspects of Christian art and architecture. William A. Dyrness, *Senses of the Soul: Art and the Visual in Christian Worship* (Cascade, 2008), another brief and non-technical book which focuses on how contemporary Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox styles of worship are expressed and how style and substance are integrally related. Finally, David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place* (Oxford, 2004), a more scholarly but nonetheless readable survey of different styles of design and practice both reflect and shape Christian

spirituality. The fifth chapter, "Competing Styles: Architectural Aims and Wider Setting" is most relevant to this discussion, but the whole book sets out to expand the scope of contemporary theological consideration.

Reading Yates' text or any of the others mentioned here would help pastors and worship leaders give more considered thought to the matter of how space affects experience and how function and form are inter-related and can enhance each other.

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Mark Galli. *Beyond Smells and Bells: The Wonder and Power of Christian Liturgy*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2008. 142 pp. \$15.00.

As a Southern Baptist pastor I am about as far away as I could be from Mark Galli's intended audience, those in or exploring Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches. I have never been a member of a church that worshipped through the liturgy or followed the liturgical calendar. Yet I benefitted from this book in a number of ways. While it did not convince me to embrace liturgical worship, it did lead me to a deeper appreciation for why so many Christians do practice liturgical worship. I was encouraged by its emphasis on the biblical basis of worship and how each element of the liturgy contributes to a robust understanding of the gospel. I even found myself considering how my Baptist church could incorporate some of these high-church prayers and emphasize the different times on the liturgical calendar so that our weekly and yearly worship would not only be more explicitly gospel-centered, but more in tune with the church of which we are all a part in Christ.

Mark Galli, currently a senior managing editor of *Christianity Today* and member of an Anglican congregation in the greater Chicago area, formerly an Anglican pastor, writes to explain how the liturgy shapes us to be like Christ, with the goal of leading people to participate in liturgical worship. Over fourteen chapters he explains the basic outline of the liturgy, the purpose of the liturgical calendar, and the counter-cultural relevance of the liturgy. Weaving together Scripture, personal illustrations, and a few quotes from theological and liturgical works, Galli makes the case that sustained participation in the liturgy helps us meet God, learn the core doctrines of our faith, and experience community together. Above all, Galli stresses the transforming power of the liturgy, including chapters on how the liturgy changes our sense of time, our sense of place, our imaginations, and how we keep one foot in this world while awaiting the fullness of the kingdom. He closes the book with three appendices aimed at people wholly new to the liturgy, explaining terms and dates and charting some of the differences and similarities across traditions.

*Beyond Smells and Bells* is an introductory work, and Galli succeeds with a non-technical and engaging style. He touches on important doctrines related to liturgy, Word, and Sacrament, but he doesn't delve

deeply enough to scare anyone unfamiliar with those doctrines. Galli is also persuasive. Readers unfamiliar with the liturgy, or newly introduced to it, will find a compelling argument for why liturgical worship is important and worthwhile. However, much of what Galli says about liturgy is true of worship in general. As a pastor of a non-liturgical church I couldn't help but think again and again that what I just read applied to any gospel-centered worship service. All true worship begins with the triune God as he has revealed himself to us in his word, and all true worship leads us to focus on his transforming grace. All true worship draws us out of ourselves and our culture and leads us to true community before God. All true worship brings order our lives and makes sense of our time, place, and vocation. All true worship engages us body and soul, teaches us the faith, and inculcates an authentic sense of mystery and transcendence. Galli emphasizes the importance of repetition in the liturgy and the historical precedent for it, and he also comments on the drawbacks of many contemporary churches seeking to be "relevant" in their worship, but he never makes an explicit case for why liturgical worship should be preferred and practiced over non-liturgical worship. This is not necessarily a failing of the book. Galli is clear about his intended audience, and I was left with a clearer sense of the biblical and practical nature of the liturgy. Yet I was never convinced that liturgy is the only way, or even the best way, to worship.

I would recommend *Beyond Smells and Bells* as a resource that pastors in liturgical traditions could give to their congregants or visitors. Those who read it in that context would most likely have a deeper grounding and appreciation for liturgy after reading this book. I would also recommend it for non-liturgical pastors and students who want an introduction to a tradition with which they are unfamiliar. I believe those who read it with spirit of charity, whether liturgical or not, will be encouraged to worship our triune God.

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Robert E. Webber. *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003. \$20.00.

*Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999. \$14.00.

*Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004. \$13.06.

*Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*.

Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008. \$20.00.

*The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*.

Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006. \$17.10.



While worship has finally been recognized as worthy of robust pastoral theology, one pastor theologian developed this topic for more than 30 years before his untimely death in 2007, and his fingerprints are all over what is often called the “worship renewal” movement. Any pastor who wants to get a broad and solid foundation in all of the issues related to a church’s worship would do very well to get to know this wonderful author, Robert Webber. Webber wrote more than forty books, and I propose his final series, the Ancient-Future titles, as an adequate summary of his major contentions. A companion document, “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future,” co-authored with Philip Kenyon in 2006, is readily available online and offers a brief summary of his goals.

One review is not long enough to summarize and critique five books, so instead I will take this space to give Webber’s background, explaining why his perspective is so compelling and useful, a very brief overview of each title, and some positives and negatives about Webber’s contributions. Webber was born in 1934 to fundamentalist Baptist missionaries in the Belgian Congo. They returned to the States at the beginning of the War, and Webber went on to earn degrees from Bob Jones University, Reformed Episcopal Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary, and Concordia Theological Seminary. He joined the faculty of Wheaton College in 1968 and experienced a turning point when preparing for the Reformation Day sermon in 1972. He decided that the Reformation was a “tragedy” in that it led to the separation and isolation of most of the world’s Christians, and soon after he officially joined the Evangelical Episcopal Church. In 1999, Webber founded the first school devoted entirely to the study of worship, the Institute for Worship Studies, and the following year took over the M.A. in Worship and Spirituality at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Webber’s books can be grouped into three “eras.” His books in the 1970s and 80s focused on the relationship between evangelicalism and the wider Christian church, highlighted by *Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Maturity* and *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church*. The 90s saw his focus shift specifically to worship and recorded his most well-known works, *Worship Is a Verb: Celebrating God’s Mighty Deeds of Salvation*; *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction*; *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship*; and his award-winning *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*. Finally, the founding of his institute marked the third stage of his works, including the five books in focus of this review. During this time, Webber also became an editor and regular contributor to *Worship Leader* magazine, through which many worship leaders (including me) became familiar with his ideas. If you want to read someone who has been on the forefront of this movement for a very long time from an evangelical perspective, Webber is your author.

In my article in this journal, I summarized Webber’s priority, which is to encourage renewal in modern churches through a recovery of the ancient beliefs and practices of worship and discipleship. Rejecting the model of the church based on rationalism and individualism, Webber proposes an ecclesiology of community and counterculture, seeing the



church as the continuing incarnation of Christ in the world. In the ancient church, discipleship was "immersed participation," namely rehearsing and experiencing the entire gospel story every meeting, rather than didactic. He argues there is no place for considerations of the church as business or entertainment, as a watchdog or chaplain. The church is the body of Christ in and to the world. That disciple-building, which works itself out in the world, takes place in corporate worship.

Consequently for Webber, "worship renewal" has very little to do with drums and environmental projection and everything to do with a complete reevaluation of the church's identity and vision. He develops that evaluation under five primary categories: belief system, evangelism and discipleship, the Christian year, spirituality, and worship. I will briefly summarize those topics in chronological order of publication.

*Ancient-Future Faith.* According to Webber, the primary critique of most evangelical churches is their rootlessness, a faith and practice that they seem to make up as they go along. In corrective, Webber argues, "Our calling is not to reinvent the Christian faith, but, in keeping with the past, to carry forward what the church has affirmed from the beginning" (p. 17), namely a faith in a Person, not a book. He maintains, "Christianity is not an I-It relationship but an I-thou personal relationship with the center of the universe" (p. 46). The early church did not build their faith on worship, Scripture, theology, education, or social action, but the knowledge that "Christ became one of us in order to destroy the power of evil and restore us and the world to God" (p. 66). He downplays the rational, pragmatic, and individualistic view of modern Christianity for the metaphysical and communal approach of the early church, which he describes throughout the book, because a faith based on moralism and factualism will never lead to spiritual transformation on the level expected by God. In summary, Webber believes that true renewal will happen when we reconsider the ancient rule of faith contained in the ecumenical creeds and ancient liturgies.

*Ancient-Future Evangelism.* According to Webber, a second major critique of evangelicalism is its tendency to compartmentalize the Christian life, having separate movements that emphasize evangelism, discipleship, spirituality, revival, and social action. In contrast, the early church approached the Christian life holistically in community, believing, "Conversion is not merely embracing an intellectual idea; it is taking one's place within the body of people who confess Christ and seek to live out the kingdom of Jesus" (p. 39). That body was and should be today shaped by "a tradition of worship, discipleship, Christian formation, and vocation that is rooted in the teaching and practices that go all the way back to Jesus and his disciples. New Christians do not enter into a community that reinvents the Christian faith for every generation" (p. 63). Evangelism should be seen as integration into community, and its primary purpose "is to train the new Christian in the practice of living in the pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (p. 89), basing his approach on the belief that the church "is not a mere collection of individuals, a human entity, but in a mystical way it is a real and actual experience that connects

with the Son and the Spirit" (p. 155). That union is manifest most clearly when a church gathers for worship.

*Ancient-Future Time.* Webber argues that the rootlessness of evangelicalism is also caused by its calendar; most evangelical churches are shaped far more by a secular calendar than anything of Christ. But Webber expects something more; "I wanted something that ordered by life into the pattern of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and coming again" (p. 23). Webber finds such a pattern in the traditional church year: Advent, a time to pray for God to break into our lives; Christmas, a time to celebrate the Incarnation; Epiphany, a time to pursue union with Christ; Lent, a time to identify with the death of Christ; Holy Week, a time to celebrate victory; Pentecost, a time to be open to the Holy Spirit; and Ordinary Time, a time to be the church in the world. He exhorts church leaders to let this annual cycle of the life of Christ drive each church's schedule, not the empty holidays promoted by the secular culture. Webber argues that this is the answer for those Christians who are discouraged by "a church shaped more by culture than by the biblical and early church principles of God's community" (p. 150).

*The Divine Embrace* (Ancient-Future Spirituality). According to Webber, a third major critique of evangelicalism is its rationalism and loss of mystery. Christians do not want an intellectual relationship with God but a spiritual union that transforms lives. He finds that in Jesus Christ: "The exercise of Jesus' will to always do the will of the Father is the key to our participation in God. Like Jesus, we participate in God by submitting our will to the purposes of God perfectly modeled for us and even already accomplished for us by Jesus" (p. 41). Webber walks through a history of spirituality, ultimately rejecting intellectualism, experientialism, and legalism for a life-affirming contemplation of and participation in the mystery that is Christ in us. For many evangelicals today, their spirituality is something they do (quiet times, Bible studies, and discipleship programs); Webber counters that true spirituality is found in a relationship that God has created with us through Jesus Christ. This has always been intended by God to be experienced in the community of each church, baptized into mystical union with God, sharing an embodied spiritual life. Webber exhorts, "So our goal is never to become spiritual but to live out the spirituality we have in Jesus through the choices that spring forth from continually living in God's embrace affirmed in baptism" (p. 207). God intends that to be shaped and guided by the community of faith in its gatherings for worship.

*Ancient-Future Worship.* In this, the culmination of his desires for the church, Webber proposes a full program for the corporate worship gathering. He argues that worship must do God's story by remembering the past and anticipating the future. As in other books, he traces how worship services have devolved into their current didactic or enthusiastic forms, appealing that the way to recover the fullness of worship is to return to the forms of the ancient church: "We remember God's saving deeds and anticipate his vision, his final rule over all creation" (p. 109). He proposes a four-fold pattern of worship focusing on the service of the Word and

the service of the Table, buffered from the dislocations of life by a call to worship and a commissioning. In that pattern, the emphasis is on God who mysteriously communicates to us “through visible and tangible signs such as gatherings of people, the words of Scripture, and the material reality of water, bread, and wine” (p. 135). Read in conjunction with his other books, Webber’s proposal for a church’s worship addresses each of the major critiques he has observed of evangelicalism.

Let me be clear that I wholeheartedly endorse this series to pastors, worship leaders, and all church members who have any interest in worship renewal. Webber’s writing style is easily engaged at a popular level; he approaches each work with the assumption that his audience does not have a background in worship studies, church history, patristics, or comparative theology. Every section you read leaves you more knowledgeable about the church, more in love with God, and more hopeful for the future. They require a willingness to learn—Webber introduces a lot of names and concepts—but anyone interested in this topic likely does not expect the solution to be simple!

Webber’s enthusiasm and optimism, a characteristic that has always endeared him to me, creates a few technical problems that may bother some readers. So eager to explain and broadcast his proposals, Webber tends to oversimplify and overstate complex historical developments, making bold proclamations about matters that are in fact still under debate among experts in those fields. Reviews of Webber tend to complain about his reliance on secondary sources and his cherry-picking of just those works that support his contentions. I am more than willing to forgive that significant concern because these aren’t intended to be seminary texts, and Webber’s primary points are accurate. Many evangelical churches have abandoned the riches of church tradition for reliance on pragmatism and rationalism, and that has led to some very peculiar and unfulfilling models of worship.

My primary concern with Webber’s works has to do with his underlying proposal: that a church *must* embrace the ancient traditions in order to be renewed in its worship and discipleship. That is simply untrue. Where Webber’s proposals are irreplaceably useful is where he points out their connection with the biblical witness. The ancient traditions are rich with biblical meaning and steeped in a biblical worldview, and that makes it an invaluable mirror for modern evangelicals to use. But eternal, cross-cultural value is found in the Bible, not tradition; there are plenty of extrabiblical elements in those traditions, and where they are in conflict with Scripture they must be discarded. As a result, a church does not have to go down the Ancient-Future road in order to experience the renewal that every church desires; the resources we need are the Word and Spirit. That is very important to me speaking from the Free Church tradition, as my earlier article reflects. Being a Free Church is not mutually exclusive from experiencing worship renewal! Nonetheless, every reader will find in these books a wide range of challenges that his or her church carefully consider, starting with Webber’s primary thesis that a church’s corporate worship should be their primary driver of spiritual formation. As long as a reader can critically engage Webber’s sources and arguments without

uncritically embracing his conclusions, these books offer a wonderful introduction to a critical and timely matter of pastoral theology.

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Walker Percy. *Love in the Ruins*. New York: Picador, 1971. 403 pp.  
\$14.18.

First published in 1971, *Love in the Ruins* was the third novel by Walker Percy, an influential Southern writer and winner of the National Book Award. It is a passionate, messy, confusing narrative – necessarily so, since it is told by Dr. Tom More, a mentally troubled psychiatrist living in the town of Paradise, Louisiana. Dr. More has lost his young daughter to cancer and his wife to an affair; has attempted suicide and spent time in a psychiatric ward; is a raging alcoholic; and is psychotic, experiencing frequent delusions and hallucinations. The line between reality and delusion in the narrative is therefore blurred. Readers must evaluate what's really happening (including whether a character Dr. More repeatedly describes exists outside his own mind).

As the novel begins, Dr. More believes the world is mere hours from an apocalyptic crisis; not a physical catastrophe but rather a “psychic” one, “an unprecedented fallout of noxious particles that will settle hereabouts and perhaps in other places as well” (p. 5). These particles will “rive the very self from itself” (p. 5). They will therefore exacerbate what More has come to see as the fundamental, and unique, human problem. While animals are pure organism, and angels are pure spirit, humans are simultaneously both. Because of this, they experience fleshly desires but can also engage in abstract, higher thought. Over-emphasis on the spiritual side results in “angelism,” a condition in which a person thinks only in abstract thought and is therefore disconnected from the real bodily life around him and capable of committing atrocities (p. 328). But over-emphasis on bodily desires results in “bestialism,” a focus only on one’s natural drives (including sexual desire). The uniquely dual nature of humans means that the outer, social self can ‘fall’ from the inner, secret self (p. 36).

Dr. More’s grandiose plan (for which he confidently expects to receive a Nobel prize) is to restore people to themselves, to “weld the broken self whole.” He asks, “What if man could reenter paradise...and live there both as man and spirit, whole and intact man-spirit, as solid flesh as a speckled trout...yet aware of itself as a self!” (p. 36). Dr. More longs to bridge the chasm that “has rent the soul of Western man ever since the famous philosopher Descartes ripped body loose from mind” (p. 191). He believes this inner division of mind and body is responsible for the terrible fractures within society. “The world is broken, sundered, busted down the middle, self ripped from self and man pasted back together as a

mythical monster, half angel, half beast, but no man" (p. 383). *Love in the Ruins* is set in a time of racial tension, as wealthy white people perpetuate racism and local black residents attempt forcibly to seize control of white properties. It is also a time of political fracturing between conservatives and liberals.

But Dr. More has discovered how to do heal the inner break that leads to these societal breakdowns. Religion is not the ultimate answer. Though Dr. More appreciates religion (he is himself a lapsed Catholic), he sees Christ's sacrifice as ineffective in achieving reconciliation. The solution he's invented is a small device called the More Qualitative-Quantative Ontological Lapsometer, so named because it can both measure and mend the "lapse" of the outer self from the inner self. Simply swiping it across one's forehead will unite the mind and body in wholeness, inoculating people against the imminent psychic catastrophe of noxious particles. Individuals are beckoned (in Johannine terms) to use and benefit from the Lapsometer: 'Drink this drink and you'll never want a drink' (p. 211).

If all this sounds ludicrous and confusing, it's because it is – and I think Walker Percy intended it to be. What *Love in the Ruins* does masterfully well is to describe the broken, fractured condition of the individual and the world, and the passionate human longing for relationship, connection, and meaning within the fallen world. It also describes some of the various human attempts to make sense of the world, provoking the question of which attempts are effective and how they might fit together. Percy uses Dr. More's psychotic musings and pseudo-religious, pseudo-scientific ideas to probe some of the key boundary markers within our experience — those between body and spirit, religion and atheism, sanity and insanity, objectivity and subjectivity, and religion and science. Mad Dr. More blurs the lines between science and religion. His goal of quantitatively measuring emotions and states of mind, and his metaphysical declarations on the basis of these measurements, confuse and repel his medical colleagues. But More's mash-up raises the question of what is quantifiable and what is not, what is the proper role of religion, and what is the proper role of science. And Dr. More is himself a picture of the very divisions he describes: he loves rigorous scientific thought, yet is driven by his fleshly passions for women; he's drawn to belief in God, but has an ambivalent relationship with religion.

In the end, Dr. More's madness raises the question of whether the "sane" individuals in the novel are really any more effective than he is in their attempts to deal with the fallen condition of the world. And perhaps the bizarre story line of *Love in the Ruins* is not quite so far from reality as we might think. It is intriguing to ponder the similarities between the psychotic, promiscuous, charismatic Dr. More, with his Lapsometer and his small but devoted band of supporters, and the equally bizarre, promiscuous, charismatic L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, offering his devoted followers salvation through his E-meter and his many levels of secret knowledge.

How might the world be healed and united from its fallen, fractured condition? It's a question many seek to answer, and a question *Love in the Ruins* forces us to ponder.

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Alan Jacobs. *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography*. Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 2013. 256 pp. \$18.95.

Perhaps the greatest success of Alan Jacobs's biography of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) is his own facility with the English language. Thomas Cranmer's masterpiece rivals Shakespeare in beauty and influence. Few contemporary authors do justice to this work, however, not for lack of expertise, but for lack of ability in the language Cranmer himself mastered. Jacobs succeeds where many others have failed. And thank goodness. This is a delightful book. Beginning with Cranmer in his library at Croydon, Jacobs weaves a compelling tale that carries us through nearly five centuries of turbulent history and sends us around the globe into a communion of nearly 80 million Christians worldwide.

This is a delightful book, but not without its problems. Jacobs's strength as a writer and his expertise as a literary critic leave him occasionally exposed as an historian. There are a few critical mistakes (Cranmer attended Cambridge, not Oxford!), which will no doubt be corrected in future editions. But the problem runs deeper than the occasional factual error. Jacobs appears to depend on predominantly Anglo-Catholic historical scholarship, which shapes his approach to Anglican history and his understanding of the Book of Common Prayer. This is particularly clear in his assessment of the revisions of the 1552 BCP (pp. 49-51). Contrary to the recent, magisterial work of Diarmaid MacCulloch, assessed and affirmed by others, Jacobs takes up the view that Cranmer likely favored the 1549 edition over the more thoroughly reformed version of 1552. Likewise, Jacobs concludes that the 1552 rite for Holy Communion is Zwinglian, with a strictly memorialist doctrine of the eucharist. While this is a possible interpretation, it has rarely been understood as such by reformed Anglicans and is by no means universally supported, not least of all by Hooker, to whom Jacobs refers.

There is no agenda on Jacob's part, but there is a tacit dependence on Anglo-Catholic scholarship that shapes his approach. Jacobs is careful never to identify himself with any of the various strands of Anglican tradition. While often deferring to Anglo-Catholic historiography he is quick to critique Anglo-Catholic teaching and presuppositions. And though he never states his own bias, his description of Queen Elizabeth I may contain a hint of self-disclosure. He writes, "She was an evangelical, but a moderate one, and willing to tolerate a good deal more of the time-



honored practices than many of her advisers" (p. 58). Elsewhere, Jacobs has described himself as a "high-church evangelical," a description that seems to fit him well. In his historical analysis, however, he too often defers to the Anglo-Catholic reading of Anglican history in a way that marginalizes the story an Evangelical or reformed Anglican might otherwise tell.

Part of the problem here is related to the scope of Jacobs's work. This is a biography of the Book of Common Prayer. The BCP, however, cannot be properly understood in its 16th and early 17th century context without reference to the Homilies and Articles of Religion. These works must be held together—perhaps Anglicanism's original three-legged stool! The Homilies and Articles give us deeper insight into Cranmer's thought and his project for reform. They provide a necessary theological framework for understanding the Prayer Book. A history of the Prayer Book that does not give careful attention to the Homilies and Articles of Religion will invariably tilt out of balance. Perhaps the original assignment, which was to do just that, made the project difficult from the start.

These frustrations with Jacobs's approach are not minor. It matters how we tell our story. But these frustrations will not keep me from recommending this well-written story of one of the most important works in the English language. I am grateful for Jacobs's effort and will enjoy sharing it with friends.

Jacobs concludes the book with a helpful reminder of just what kind of work the Book of Common Prayer is. Reflecting on the idea that many books "learn" by reshaping themselves to new cultural environments and political situations, Jacobs concludes that a religious book does not: "it is concerned to teach; and a prayer book especially wants its teaching to be enacted, not just to be absorbed. It cannot live unless we say its words in our voices. It can learn with us, but only if we consent to learn from it" (p. 193).

If this is so, and I believe it is, what would the Book of Common Prayer have us learn today as we participate in its timeless cadences? Another way to ask the question is to divide it into two. What kind of story is this liturgy telling? What kind of life is this liturgy shaping?

Plays or dramas tell stories. They have a narrative structure that leads to a climax followed by resolution. When you participate as an actor in a play you participate in the telling of the story. The same thing happens when we gather for worship. When we come together we join in a liturgy, meaning "a work of the people." This liturgy tells a story. And whether you are Baptist, Reformed, Pentecostal or Anglican you have a liturgy that tells a particular story.

As we tell this story in worship we aren't merely acting. Although many of our lines are scripted, and stage-directions—like sitting, kneeling and standing—are prescribed, we are not acting, we are living the gospel story. For Anglicans the story that our liturgy for Holy Communion tells can be divided into 5 acts. (*Note: Not all authorized rites for Holy Communion fit the exact pattern described below. This is, however, a typical arrangement; and it reflects the practice most commonly in use in N. American churches. The story it tells remains consistent across the authorized versions*).



When we gather for Communion on Sunday mornings our worship begins with a hymn, or songs of praise, followed by the Collect for Purity, another ancient song called the *Gloria*, and the Collect of the Day. We then read several passages from Scripture—beginning with the Old Testament and ending with a Gospel lesson. This first section of our service leads up to the sermon, which ought to explain the meaning and significance of at least one of the passages that has been read from Scripture.

The central concern of this whole first sequence is to put us in the presence of God as he reveals himself to us. The songs and the *Gloria* in particular speak to us of God's might and heavenly reign. Scripture speaks to us God's own words as he reveals himself, first to the people of Israel in the Old Testament, and then to the nations in the Gospels and New Testament. Throughout this portion of the service we are being led to a place of awe and praise in the presence of God. We may call this Act I: Worship begins with God revealing himself to us.

As the sermon ends we respond by proclaiming our faith in the words of the Creed. A Scripture-shaped life leads to a creedal life—public confession of the faith as the Church has received it throughout history. It also leads naturally to self-examination, conviction and the confession of sin. In the face of the revelation of God's holiness and gracious love we cannot help but repent. Act I leads naturally into Act II: In the face of God's revelation we profess the faith and confess our sins.

Once we have gone to our knees and confessed our sins a pastor stands at the front and declares the assurance of God's forgiveness because of what Christ has done on the cross: "Almighty God, have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ..." The priest is not the one who forgives—it is God who does that. The priest's role is to communicate that forgiveness and give assurance. This is Act III: God responds to our repentance by purifying us and forgiving our sins.

Some might think that at this point our worship should be over. We're in with God. We're forgiven. We've prayed and sung and sermonized. Everything's good. Now we can get back to real life. But there is much more to come. Those who remember struggling through Shakespeare in High School know that the climax of a play usually occurs in Act IV. The same is true in our service of Holy Communion. Having revealed himself to us, led us to confession and purified us through forgiveness, God draws us into his presence and transforms us through feeding us with the body and blood of his risen son. This is Act IV.

The climax of our worship comes when we tell this story and share this meal. It is here that we are reminded of Christ's sacrifice. It is here, when we eat the bread and drink the wine, that we accept anew the grace God offers us in Jesus – trusting in the power of his death and resurrection for our salvation. It is here that we are drawn into God's presence and commit ourselves to him afresh. It is here that we are comforted, transformed, strengthened, emboldened and prepared for the week ahead.

In many of our churches The Prayer of Humble Access is said just prior to receiving bread and wine. It captures the poignancy and the wonder of the moment:

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. (1662)

The focus of Act IV is eating and drinking. It is a physical act, and in most Anglican congregations you leave your seat and move forward to receive—God's people gathered at a common table, sharing a common cup. The meal of Act IV leads into the final drama of Act V: From the presence of God we are sent out to serve.

When we have finished sharing the body and blood of Jesus we conclude with a prayer of thanks and praise. This is also a prayer of commissioning. We thank God for including us as members of his family, for drawing us near and transforming us. We then ask him to give us strength and courage as he sends us out into the world to love and serve him. Worship sends us out with a purpose.

Our liturgy tells a story in five acts:

Act I: Worship begins with God revealing himself to us.

Act II: In the face of God's revelation we profess the faith and confess our sins.

Act III: God responds to our repentance by purifying us and forgiving our sins.

Act IV: In the presence of God we are transformed.

Act V: From the presence of God we are sent out to serve.

Each week when we gather we take part in this drama of worship, participating together in the story of God's radically self-giving love for us in Jesus Christ.

Now to our second question: What kind of life is our liturgy shaping?

With a formal, written liturgy it is possible to speak lines, stand, sit and kneel but never really engage with your heart. When we worship in this way it is merely a performance. But worship is never meant to be a performance. The words we say, the songs we sing, the Scripture we read are meant to play a part in forming us as new creatures. This formation begins as a work of the heart.

Notice the frequency with which the word "heart" appears in our worship. It begins with our very first prayer, the Collect for Purity:

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. (1979).

We begin by recognizing that God can see our hearts, and we invite him in. We are torn open, exposed and vulnerable, and so we quickly acknowledge that our hearts are not fully his. In the confession we say:

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

As we then prepare to join in Communion we begin by lifting our hearts together to God in order to be fed and filled:

*Celebrant:* The Lord be with you.

*People:* And also with you.

*Celebrant:* Lift up your hearts.

*People:* We lift them to the lord.

Then at the invitation to share in communion we are reminded that we are not merely eating and drinking but responding with our hearts in faith and with thanksgiving. The congregation is invited to receive communion with these words:

The gifts of God for the people of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Finally, as we go out we declare that our hope and prayer for the week ahead is that we will be whole-hearted servants of God:

Grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart.

Worship is not primarily about ritual, language, music or elaborate vestments. It is about the transformation of our hearts and hence our lives by the power of the living God. The kind of life the Anglican liturgy seeks to shape is one that is captured by the love of God, drawn into the life of God and placed in communion with God's people who are then sent out into the world in mission. This is first and foremost a work of the heart.

It is increasingly common for non-Anglican pastors to make use of Anglican liturgical material in designing worship services. More and more evangelicals, in particular, are discovering the treasure trove of resources in our tradition. Is this a good thing, or is this somehow unfair to the tradition? While purists might decry the cutting and pasting of Anglican prayers, confessions and litanies there is precedent for this in the work of Thomas Cranmer himself.

When Cranmer set out to write the first Book of Common Prayer in English, he relied heavily on the Latin liturgies of his day. In the crafting of the Prayer Book he was part translator, part theological editor and part poet. One sees this in the many short prayers called "collects" that Cranmer included in his Book of Common Prayer. Of the 100 collects included in the Prayer Book 67 are based on earlier Latin texts, while 33 appear to be Cranmer's own compositions. He borrowed freely from the great tradition of the Church, adding original work only when necessary. In that original work Cranmer shows no interest in novelty. He relies on Scripture both for content and for forms of expression. In the collects he

penned there are some 30 direct quotations from Scripture, along with countless allusions and references.

Cranmer sets a helpful precedent for pastors today. In crafting biblical worship Non-Anglicans should feel free to borrow liberally from Anglican liturgies. The material is replete with Scripture and is tried and tested for public use. This encouragement, however, comes with two cautions.

First, not all Anglican liturgical material is biblically faithful and theologically sound! Over the past century our early liturgies have been revised and new liturgies developed for special use in a variety of national settings. Cranmer stressed the need for worship to be in the vernacular. Careful revision, therefore, should be a normal part of the life of Anglican liturgies when the language becomes outmoded or alienating. Some of the work of revision that has been done is necessary and even good. Some of it, however, is not; and many of the newly written liturgies are incredibly poor. Beware what you use! And when you choose to do your own revising, be warned: it is not as easy as one might think.

Second, as I have argued above, good liturgy works like a drama. Not only does it tell a story, it shapes the heart and directs the will. Cut-and-paste liturgies may be fine, but without a playwright-theologian behind them they will lack structural integrity and may be theologically weak. They will leave out important acts. The narrative will become truncated and the gospel quite possibly compromised. Beware the desire to create fresh forms of worship using a few older prayers for that “vintage feel.” Creativity may well work against good discipleship. This caution applies to many of my fellow Anglicans. More and more Anglicans are playing cut-and-paste with our liturgies. In an effort to streamline worship and adapt to shorter attention spans some Anglicans are among those who are guilty of pillaging the tradition at the expense of a complete and compelling drama. If we really believe that corporate worship has the power to shape the affections, then it matters greatly what we do and say, and how the disparate pieces of our worship fit together into a coherent whole. There are far fewer playwright-theologians out there than there are hack liturgists attempting to compose something “fresh.”

While Alan Jacobs is strictly correct that the Book of Common Prayer was used “as an instrument of social and political control” (p. 7), it was not primarily such a tool. Rather it was a Bible-based means of proclaiming the timeless gospel in the language of the people, created in an effort to convert and disciple a nation. It remains a useful tool for that work for 80 million Anglicans, and for countless other Christians around the world today.

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