Imagining the Kingdom

How Worship Works

Volume 2 of Cultural Liturgies

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Restor(y)ing the World

Christian Formation for Mission

Through worship God trains his people to take the right things for granted.[1]

Sanctifying Perception: Re-Narration Takes Practice

Let's return to where we began: Christian worship and Christian education both have the same *end*. Both the church and the Christian university are institutions caught up in the *missio Dei*, recruiting the hearts and minds of the people of God into the very life of God so that we can once again take up our creational and re-creational calling—to bear God's image *for* and *to* all of creation.[2] The church and the Christian college (and Christian schools) are sites of formation that culminate in *sending*: to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord" *by* taking up our cross along with our commission to cultivate the earth.[3] Christian worship and formation, as

1. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, "The Gift of the Church and the Gifts God Gives It," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 25.

2. On the continuity between the "cultural mandate" (Gen. 1:26–31) and the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18–20), see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 205–7.

3. For clear articulation of the expansive scope of the mission of God, and hence the mission of God's people, see Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand*

practices of *divine* action, culminate in Christian action—being sent as ambassadors of another "city," as witnesses to kingdom come, to live and act communally as a people who embody a foretaste of God's shalom.[4] This is not to "instrumentalize" worship as merely a means to an end, nor is it to reduce worship to a strategy for moral formation; neither should it be confused with an activism that sees Christian action as some Pelagian expression of *our* abilities. 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). As Boulton observes, while John Calvin persistently emphasized a "preferred suite of formative practices"[5] as "disciplines of regeneration," he also constantly emphasized that these were not routines of spiritual self-assertion or human accomplishment:

> Disciples may and do perform these sanctifying practices, but their performances are themselves divine gifts, and they take place properly and fruitfully—that is, in ways that produce genuine humility and insight for them and others—only by way of divine accompaniment and power. . . . Thus following Calvin, we may reframe "spiritual practices" as in the first place works of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, the sanctifying, regenerating, restorative labor of God with us and in us. . . . Each of the church's key practices is still something human beings do, but they do it neither alone nor as the act's primary agent. Rather, in and through the practice, they participate in divine work.[6]

So in the practices of Christian worship, and in related spiritual disciplines, we encounter the Lover of our souls. We are drawn into the life of the One our hearts were made for, the Lord of heaven and earth.[7]

And it is that creating and re-creating God who tells us to *go* even as he goes with us, "even to the end of the age." Christian worship culminates

Narrative (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); and Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

4. Consider Graham Ward's careful parsing of just what counts as "Christian action," analyzed in terms of six key elements: the agent who acts, the nature of the action, evaluation of the action, the object of the action, the effect of the action, and the intentions and affections ("pro-attitudes," after Donald Davidson) that lead to action. See Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens*, The Church and Postmodern Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 181–201. In many ways, I see the present book as expanding and deepening our analysis of the sixth aspect.

5. Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 24.

6. Ibid., 223.

7. Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.1: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

with a sending ("Go!") accompanied by a promise ("And as you go, you go with his blessing")—the benediction that is both a blessing and a charge, a co-*mission*-ing accompanied by the promise of the Spirit's presence. So while we are sent to act, to labor in love for God and neighbor, the Spirit of Christ goes with us so that even "our" Christian action, undertaken as we are recruited into the *missio Dei*, is never merely "ours"; we "act in communion with God."[8] Worship is not merely time with a deistic god who winds us up and then sends us out on our own; we don't enter worship for "top up" refueling to then leave as self-sufficient, autonomous actors. "In the conception of Christian praxis," Ward notes, "there is no room for such a modern notion of self-sufficiency."[9] Instead, the biblical vision is one of co-abiding presence and participation ("I in you and you in me"). In other words, our Christian action is bound up with the dynamics of incorporation. "By the act of receiving the Eucharist," for example, "I place myself *in* Christ—rather than simply placing Christ within me. I consume but I do not absorb Christ without being absorbed into Christ. Only in this complex co-abiding are there life, nourishment, and nurture because of, through, or by means of this feeding; there is both participation of human life in God's life and participation of God's life in human life."[10] So our action is not merely motivated by worship of the Triune God; rather, it is in worship that we are caught up into the life of God, drawn into union with Christ, and thus recruited into this participation that generates Christian action as we "go." "The Christian act," Ward continues, "has to be understood in terms not just of the church but also of the church's participation in Christ, the church as the body of Christ. That is, the Christian act is integral to the church's participation in the operations of the Triune God within realms created in and through Christ as God's Word. Discipleship is thus not simply following the example of Christ; it is formation within Christ, so that we become Christlike. And the context of this formation is the church in all its concrete locatedness and eschatological significance."[11]

To emphasize the s/ending of Christian worship is not to reduce worship to moral formation or to treat the presence of God as a tool for our self-improvement. Rather, the centrifugal *end* of Christian worship is integral to the Story we rehearse in Christian worship; sending is internal to the logic of the practice. To emphasize that Christian action is the end or *telos* of Christian worship is not to instrumentalize worship but is rather to "get" the Story that is enacted in the drama of worship—the

8. J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 110.

9. Ward, *Politics of Discipleship*, 184.

10. Ibid., 187.

11. Ibid., 184. As he puts it a little later, "We might characterize Christian acting as a *praxis* that participates in a divine *poiesis* that has soteriological and eschatological import" (201).

"true story of the whole world"[12] in which we are called to play our part as God's image-bearers *by* cultivating creation. Integral to that Story, and to the practice of Christian worship, is the sense that we are now enabled and empowered to take up this mission precisely because of the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1–17). At the same time, the Spirit meets us where we are as liturgical animals, as embodied agents, inviting us into that "suite" of disciplines and practices that are conduits of transformative, empowering grace. So even if there is a centrifugal *telos* to Christian worship and formation, there is also a regular centripetal invitation to recenter ourselves in the Story, to continually pursue and deepen our in*corp*oration.[13] It's not a matter of choosing between worship *or* mission; nor are we faced with the false dichotomy of church *or* world, cathedral *or* city. To the contrary, we worship *for* mission; we gather *for* sending; we center ourselves in the practices of the body of Christ *for the sake of* the world; we are reformed in the cathedral to undertake our image-bearing commission to reform the city.[14] So it is precisely an expansive sense of mission that requires formation. It is the missional *telos* of Christian *action* that requires us to be intentional about the formative power of Christian practices.

This dynamic interplay between formation and action, worship and mission, is wonderfully illustrated in Matthew Boulton's lucid, provocative account of Calvin's vision for Geneva. At the heart of Calvin's vision for reform was the sanctification of ordinary life that energized the project of reforming not only the church but also the city.[15] Not only should worship be re-ordered and renewed, but all of cultural life should reflect God's designs and intentions. God is Lord not only of the soul but also of the body, the Ruler of not just heaven but also earth. The gospel is good news not just as a rescue plan for embattled souls but as a word from the

12. See Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew, *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 2009), echoing N. T. Wright: "the whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the story of the whole world" (*The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 41–42).

13. In a rich footnote, Boulton suggests that proposals by Willimon and Hauerwas differ from Calvin insofar as their "Anabaptist" conception of the church is more centripetal than centrifugal (*Life in God*, 219n8). I think he's right to feel a difference here; I would only caution that even the centrifugal *telos* requires persistent centripetal gathering *for* formation. In other words, centrifugal mission is only possible to the extent that we are centripetally recentered in Christ through Word, sacrament, and that repertoire of formative Christian practices. For the sake of Geneva, one might say, the saints needed to regularly gather in St. Pierre Cathedral.

14. There are a host of knotty questions and issues here regarding Christian engagement with the "politics" of the earthly city that I will address in detail in volume 3, *Embodying the Kingdom*.

15. For a discussion of the social implications of this, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 211–33, with further consideration in Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 77–84. I will discuss this in more detail in *Haunting Immanence: Reading Charles Taylor in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

Creator who is redeeming *all* things (Col. 1:15–20). The grace of God has ripple effects not just in the church but also in the world, which is precisely why our *sending* is integral to the story. And so we get something of the "activism" that is often associated with the Calvinist tradition, seeking to claim every square inch for Christ.[16]

Not surprisingly then, Calvin articulates a critique of monasticism, that medieval institution that epitomizes the opposite sensibility: elitist withdrawal from the messiness and domesticity of ordinary life. However, as Boulton so carefully points out, what Calvin rejects in monasticism is *not* the commitment to formative practices and regular observance of spiritual disciplines.[17] What he rejects is not the "rituals" associated with monasticism but the elitism and separatism of it. Calvin "storms the monastery" as it were, not to demolish the disciplines of the community, but to *liberate* these formative practices from their separatist captivity. "For Calvin," Boulton observes, "monastics are mistaken only insofar as they make elite, difficult, and rare what should be ordinary, accessible, and common in Christian communities: namely, whole human lives formed in and through the church's distinctive repertoire of disciplines, from singing psalms to daily prayer to communing with Christ at the sacred supper."[18] The upshot of Calvin's critique of monasticism is not a de-ritualized, sermon-centric, intellectualist piety but rather a generalization of monastic practices—a celebration of the "monkhood of all believers."[19]

What's celebrated here is precisely the pedagogical wisdom implicit in the monastic disciplines, which were rooted in an even more ancient heritage of the church's wisdom about spiritual formation. The "suite" of disciplines practiced by the monastery was indebted to an ancient Christian *paideia*, "the church's ancient disciplinary treasury."[20] Immersion in the disciplines of this Christian *paideia* did not require withdrawal from the labor of the city to the isolation of the desert; but it would require remaking the city as a kind of desert: "Geneva as a whole would become a *magnum monasterium*"[21] insofar as the consistory in Geneva—at least if Calvin had his way!—would see to it that butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers would have ample opportunity to immerse themselves in these formative spiritual disciplines that were gifts of God for the people

16. For a classic summary of this vision of the Reformation as unleashing "world-formative" Christianity, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

17. I already noted Calvin's affirmation of a "holy and lawful monasticism" in *Desiring the Kingdom*, 209n118.

18. Boulton, *Life in God*, 13.

19. Ibid., 22.

20. Ibid., 23–24.

21. Ibid., 27.

of God, conduits of grace given for their sanctification. As Boulton comments, "Calvin ultimately sought to expand the sanctuary not only out to the walls of the church's worship space, but also beyond them, all the way out to the Genevan city walls—or better, out to the limits of a Christian disciple's life and work wherever she may go, and in that sense out to the limits of creation."[22] Calvin's concern was that these practices be accessible and practicable for Christians in *all* vocations[23] because they could only carry out their missional vocations in every sphere of culture insofar as they were adequately formed and shaped by the Spirit of God. And for Calvin—as for ancient Christian faith—the way to "clothe" oneself with the virtues of Christ (Col. 3:12–15) was to be immersed in the practices of prayer and worship (Col. 3:16–17). The worship practices and spiritual disciplines of the church were the "paideutic repertoire" needed to form agents who could carry out their mission and vocation in and for the world.

Again, note the interplay of the centripetal and centrifugal dynamics here: Calvin's vision of reforming is clearly creational in its scope. We are called to participate in the cosmic redemption by which Christ is redeeming all things, which is why every nook and cranny of the city *matters*—and hence all sorts of cultural labor can be taken up as expressions of the *missio Dei*. However, undertaking that cultural labor "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17); that is, in a way that is rightly ordered—requires that we regularly discipline our habits and desires to God's desires for his creation. This requires that we regularly immerse ourselves in the repertoire of practices and disciplines that recenter us in Christ. And while Calvin rejects monastic withdrawal and Anabaptist "alternative societies," he still emphasizes a fundamental *antithesis* here. It is precisely because "the conventional everyday life of his time" was "deeply at odds with the needs of Christian piety"[24] that Calvin saw the need for countermeasures: regular, persistent opportunities to be immersed in counterformative Christian disciplines that would counter the formative power of other disciplines, other liturgies. So while Calvin does not advocate a retreat from "the world" to the desert, he still emphasizes the set-apart-ness of the Christian life. As Boulton so well summarizes it, "For Calvin, Christian life does involve being set apart, not via a geographical, social retreat to a monastic campus, but rather via a moral, existential brand of practical withdrawal from 'the world' and 'the depravity of disposition.' That is, Calvin envisions a reformed way of life robustly engaged in ordinary affairs that is nevertheless unconformed to

22. Ibid., 43. The latter qualification is important if we are to avoid concerns about a "theonomist" project. Again, I will take up these questions in volume 3.

23. For example, Calvin proposed a daily prayer cycle, "in effect a version of the divine office designed to be practicable to all Christians" (ibid., 39); he also advocated more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper for the sake of Christian formation (40–42).

24. Ibid., 25.

their prevailing patterns and protocols, in effect a *dispositional deflection* from the world while remaining ensconced within it."[25]

And so we arrive at the crux of my argument. We gather to be sent, and we are sent to do—to undertake Christian action that participates in the *missio Dei*. "Mission" then is just shorthand to describe what it is for Christians to pursue their vocations to the glory of God and in ways that are oriented to the shalom of the kingdom. But as we've been emphasizing, our action flows from our *dispositions*, our *habitus*, our nonconscious passional orientation to the world. Which is precisely why any Christian emphasis on mission and vocation and culture-making has to be rooted in a more fundamental concern with "dispositional deflection." If the church is a centrifuge, sending out image-bearers to take up their commission in God's good-but-broken world, it must also be a community of practice that centripetally gathers for dispositional reformation. And other missional institutions—such as Christian schools, colleges, and universities—will also need to engage in such dispositional deflection. In sum, any missional, formative Christian institution that is bent on sending out *actors*—agents of reformation and renewal—will need to attend to the reformation of our *habitus*.

To put this in terms of Merleau-Ponty's lexicon, if we aim to form Christian actors and agents of renewal, then dispositional deflection requires sanctifying perception—for it is our bodily comportment (*praktognosia*) that *constitutes* the world in which we are called and moved to act. To shape perception is to transform action because we transform the "world" in which we find ourselves. If we are going to recalibrate our attunement to the world, and hence feel pulled by a different *call*, it is not enough to have a Christian "perspective" on the world; we need nothing less than a Christian imagination. Because our evaluation of a situation is bound up with our perception of it, and because our perception is shaped by the bodily background within which we constitute our experience, Christian action requires the sanctification of perception on the bodily register of incarnate significance. In sum, if we are going to be agents of the coming kingdom, *acting* in ways that embody God's desires for creation, then our imaginations need to be conscripted by God. It is not enough to convince our intellects; our imaginations need to be caught by—and caught up into—the Story of God's restorative, reconciling grace for all of creation. It won't be enough for us to be convinced; we need to be *moved*. Otherwise we'll just be reading Wendell Berry in Costco; we'll be convinced but not transformed.

Below I want to consider what this means for the church, and specifically for the worship practices of the church. But let's also consider the implications of this for another missional institution: the Christian

25. Ibid., 26 (emphasis added).

To Think About: Imagining the Reformation of Manners

In his historical snapshot of Calvin's vision for Geneva, Matthew Boulton emphasizes that Calvin's vision was to extend those formative practices that had been reserved for clergy and monastics to the laity as a whole, pressing not only for the priesthood of all believers but also for the "monkhood" of all believers. The hope was that the entire city of Geneva would be "enrolled, as Calvin envisions it, in a citywide program of practical formation. Now every Christian, rooted in her own particular calling and context, is to live out a life formed through disciplines only speciously reserved to cloistered specialists: Scripture reading, daily prayer regimens, psalm singing, and so on."[1] Intriguingly, this is pictured as a "reformation of manners."[2]

The phrase might strike us as a bit odd, as if the hope was that Geneva would be a place of politeness, where everyone dutifully says "please" and "thank you." But of course, manners are about more than the niceties that govern our social interaction. *Manners* and *customs* are something like the vernacular terms for what Bourdieu calls *habitus*—which is precisely why Bourdieu would emphasize that there might be more going on in those niceties than we realize (the cosmological significance, for example, of "sit up straight" and "hold your fork in your left hand"). Seeing dispositional deflection as a reformation of manners might also prime us to read Lionel Trilling's essay "Manners, Morals, and the Novel" with new interest and new eyes.[3] Trilling's attention to "manners" links them with the function of literature and the imagination in ways that resonate with our project here. In fact, Trilling suggests that we understand such a notion of "manners" in ways that we can't quite articulate. "Somewhere below all the explicit statements that a people makes through its art, religion, architecture, legislation, there is a dim mental region of intention of which it is very difficult to become aware."[4] Manners are a name we give to that "region of intention," and it is that same region that enables us to understand what we mean by "manners." Manners, as he summarizes it, "is a culture's hum and buzz of implication"—

"the whole evanescent context in which its explicit statements are made. It is that part of a culture which is made up of half uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value. They are hinted at by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis, or rhythm, sometimes by the words that are used with a special frequency or a special meaning."[5] It is just to the extent that we are able to honor and recognize this "hum and buzz" that we will be attuned to what really directs a people and a culture. In other words, we will only appreciate the importance of a "reformation of manners" if we see the powerful drives that are absorbed from such an unuttered and unutterable "evanescent context."

Which is why we need novelists. For Trilling, literature is the science of manners. "The great novelists," he observes, "know that manners indicate the largest intentions of men's souls as well as the smallest and they are perpetually concerned to catch the meaning of every dim implicit hint." The novel is our imaginative form that recognizes this humming, buzzing reality *beneath* our stated ideals. "The novel, then, is a perpetual quest for reality, the field of its research being always the social world, the material of its analysis being always manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul."[6] "In the novel," Trilling concludes, "manners make men."[7] Which is precisely why the reformation of manners is nothing short of a remaking of our very comportment to the world.

1. Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 27.
2. Ibid., 33.
3. In Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1950; repr., New York: NYRB, 2008), 205–22. The gendered language is Trilling's, reflecting 1950s practice.
4. Ibid., 205.
5. Ibid., 206–7.
6. Ibid., 212.
7. Ibid., 216.

university.[26] If Christian education is a holistic formation of prime citizens of the kingdom, then it needs to reshape students' perception in its fullest (Merleau-Pontian) sense: the tactile, visceral mode in which we *mean* the world in ways we can't quite say. Such an education needs to impact the *aesthetics* of human understanding. It needs to get hold of our gut and capture our imagination—that preconscious, emotional register on which we perceive the world and that, in turn, drives or "pulls" our action. Christian formation, in worship or education, must be characterized by a fundamentally aesthetic aspect—not merely in the sense that such formative practices should be "beautiful" or attractive or "pleasing," but in the sense that such practices should tap into our incarnate significance, should pluck the strings of our embodied attunement to the world. If the practices of Christian formation are truly going to reform our manners and deflect our dispositions to be aimed at the kingdom of God, then such practices need to engender rightly ordered erotic comprehension by renewing and reorienting our imaginations.[27]

26. Everything I'll say here also applies to Christian schools at lower levels, and could also apply to other missional institutions of the church such as campus ministries, mental health facilities, summer camps, and more.

27. While I hope I have provided new warrant and impetus for the importance of the aesthetic in Christian formation, the proposal itself is not new. Indeed, I commend Calvin Seerveld's manifesto from a generation ago: "The Fundamental Importance of Imaginativity within Schooling," in *Rainbows for the Fallen World: Aesthetic Life and Artistic Task* (Toronto: Tuppence, 1980), 138–55. Seerveld frames the importance of imaginativity in Christian education in terms of "the sanctification of a person's functional complexity" (141). His "working hypothesis" is that "aesthetic life is integral to sound Christian pedagogy, deserves a curricular attention, and is the philosophical place to order the so many 'intangibles' that make a school's life thrive or

Sanctifying perception requires restor(y)ing the imagination. Note two aspects of this: first, this transformation of the imagination is a re-*story*-ing of our understanding. Sanctifying perception requires aesthetic measures that resonate with the imagination and affect us on an affective level, in the "between" of our incarnate significance. Stories are not just nice little entertainments to jazz up the material; stories are not just some supplementary way of making content "interesting." No, we learn through stories because we know *by* stories. Indeed, we know things in stories that we couldn't know any other way: there is an irreducibility of narrative knowledge that eludes translation and paraphrase.[28] And such stories are not only "told" in a "once-upon-a-time" fashion; stories are compressed into films and commercials, enacted in games and dramas, played out on playgrounds and in malls. Story is the lingua franca of incarnate significance.

In his discussion of education amongst the people of Israel, Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann captures the point: in the Torah, when a child asks a question, the teacher's response is "Let me tell you a story." For the people of God, he continues, story "is our primal and most characteristic mode of knowledge. It is the foundation from which come all other knowledge claims we have."[29] So it is crucial that the task of Christian education and formation is nested in a story—in the narrative arc of the biblical drama of God's faithfulness to creation and to his people.[30] It is crucial that the *story* of God in Christ redeeming the world be the very air we breathe, the scaffolding around us, whether we're at our Bunsen burners or on the baseball field, whether we're learning geometry or just learning to count. All of the work of the Christian school or college needs to be nested in this bigger story—and we need to constantly look for ways to tell that story, to teach *in* stories, because story is the first language of love. If hearts are going to be aimed toward God's kingdom, they'll be won

flag" (152). And in a wonderful admission that resonates with my own sense of lack, Seerveld confesses: "I have no master plan for consolidating functional features of imaginativity at this point, but I know it is important" (152).

28. Daniel Kahneman notes in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011) that story is understood by "System 1" of our consciousness—the automated, "intuitive" register that governs so much of our action in the world (75).

29. Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 22–23.

30. This narrative intuition is what informs Sally Lloyd-Jones's evocative exercise in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, illustrated by Jago (Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2007). While one might have some reservations about this kind of improvisation on the Scriptures, those need not detain us from recognizing and affirming Lloyd-Jones's intuition: "The Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne—everything—to rescue the one he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!" (17).

To Think About: Story and the Economy of Abundance

Stories can haunt and unsettle us, and the most skilled storytellers can do this with remarkable lexical economy (think Cormac McCarthy). The imaginative expanse of a story does not depend on the quantity of words. Rather, there can be a feel *among* the words, resonances, and assonances that carry an aesthetic power disproportionate to their length. Short stories and poetry are often examples of such compressed narrative power. Perhaps nothing matches the evocative power of the six-word story said to have been composed by the master of verbal economy, Ernest Hemingway:

For sale: baby shoes, never worn.[1]

In just six words the story creates—and invites us into—a whole world. One might recall another brief story with similar impact:

He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

1. My thanks to my son Coleson for pointing me to this little gem.

over by good storytellers. Seerveld considers a case in point: What would it look like for history education to be shaped by an aesthetic appreciation for our nature as narrative animals? "Would not a 'story-telling' and 'cultural history' focus redeem much of the fact-plus-anecdote renditions of world history prevalent in so many classrooms?" he asks.[31] A narrative approach is not just a matter of the teacher being a good storyteller, however. It is a more fundamental matter of framing: "pitching historiography toward instruction of student imaginativity rather than as information of chronicled events" and approaching historical knowledge as something with a "pre-analytic quality." This raises questions about the *telos* of Christian education itself. "Such an aesthetically geared 'soft-focus' does not entail sloppy vagueness," Seerveld cautions. But "it does mean that history teaching would not be aimed at training professionally analytic historians but would attempt to give the young a sense of our time, style and location as God's people amid the nations and the ages of the world."[32]

So sanctifying perception involves re-*story*-ing our being-in-the-world. But second, the sanctification of perception for Christian action requires *restoring* rightly ordered perception—training us to take the right things for granted. So it's not just that formation and "dispositional deflection" must be fundamentally aesthetic. There is also a normative point here: our perception will be sanctified just to the extent that our "background" and imagination are recruited by a normative story—the "true story of the

31. Seerveld, *Rainbows*, 151.
32. Ibid.

whole world." Not only is our desire subject to competing formations; so too is our imagination (and it is the imagination, in some sense, that primes and aims our desire). Our imaginations are contested ground, pulled and wooed and shaped by competing stories about "the good life," tempted and attracted by affective pictures of what counts as "flourishing." The way to our hearts is through our imaginations, and the way to our imaginations is story, image, symbol, song. As Michael Budde comments, "Stories, symbols, songs, and exemplars—in our day, of course, it is not the Church that carries these to most people, even to most Christians. For people in advanced capitalist countries (and in ever-larger parts of the euphemistically labeled 'developing world'), most of their stories, narratives, images, and sounds come from centralized, for-profit transnational corporations—the so-called global culture industries."[33] Unfortunately, because the church remains fixated on content and "messages," it fails to see what's really at stake in these global culture industries: our imaginations. What can seem benign and "safe" on the Disney Channel can be a powerful co-option of imaginations for a consumerist, egocentric comportment to the world. But because we miss the affective, nonconscious way that we "get" stories—and the ways such stories can incorporate us into disordered social bodies—we will tend to simply fail to see where the battle lies. The irony, Budde concludes, is that "the commercial 'orchestrators of attention' . . . are winning a contest that church leaders scarcely recognize as underway."[34]

But if we appreciate the central, orienting nature of the imagination, then we will be poised to see what's at stake in our encounter with the stories, images, and moving icons of consumer culture; conversely, we should also appreciate anew the centrality of imagination formation to Christian discipleship and education. We will be in a place to consider how

> "learning our place in the Christian story" might be a serviceable definition of Christian discipleship. It reminds us of a few important things: that we don't invent what it means to be Christian, that being Christian is a learned (not innate or "natural") condition, and that we require others to help us understand and embody the role of disciple. Mostly it draws attention to the inescapable reality that serious followers of Jesus are made, not born. They are formed by the stories, symbols, songs, and exemplars of the Christian experiment. In particular it involves the internalization of the priorities,

33. Michael L. Budde, "Collecting Praise: Global Culture Industries," in Hauerwas and Wells, *Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, 124. For a trenchant analysis of the "practical aesthetic imagination" that explains "contemporary capitalism's magical powers," see Nigel Thrift, "Understanding the Material Practices of Glamour," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 289–308.

34. Budde, "Collecting Praise," 125.

> affections, and dispositions of Jesus of Nazareth, he through whom God reveals most fully who God is and what God desires for us.[35]

The formative power of cultural narratives cannot be adequately met or countered with mere didactics. Counterformation requires countermeasures that capture our imagination and don't just convince our intellect. (Why should the devil get all the best stories?)

On the one hand, this should be the basis for an arts manifesto rooted in that first lesson of literature: show, don't tell. We don't just need teachers and preachers and scholars and "doctors" of the church to *tell* us what to do; if the gospel is going to capture imaginations and sanctify perception we need painters and novelists and dancers and songwriters and sculptors and poets and designers whose creative work *shows* the world otherwise, enabling us to imagine differently—and hence perceive differently and so act differently.[36]

On the other hand, we need to be regularly immersed in the "true story of the whole world"; that is, our imaginations need to be restored, recalibrated, and realigned by an affective immersion in the story of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.[37] As I suggested above, it is the particular lineaments of this Story that distinguish formative Christian practices from others. Christian practices are not just practices that Christians do; they are those practices that "carry" the true Story of the whole world as articulated in the Scriptures, centered on Christ. While secular liturgies and Christian liturgical practices (and spiritual disciplines) each touch on the same aspects of our embodied, creaturely nature as liturgical animals (that is, both secular and Christian liturgies "work" in a similar way), what fundamentally distinguishes them is the specific shape of the story carried in those practices.[38] We need to learn the true Story "by heart," at a gut level, and let it seep into our background in order to then shape our perception of the world. And that happens primarily and normatively in the practices of Christian worship—*provided that* the practices of Christian worship intentionally carry, embody, enact, and rehearse the normative shape of the Christian Story. This opportunity—and qualification—should be occasion for a new intentionality and reflection about the shape of Christian worship, not just as an arena for our expression but as the formative space that sanctifies perception. My argument should be read as an invitation to

35. Ibid., 124.

36. And by this, I don't mean art that is reduced to propaganda. For a relevant critique, see Calvin Seerveld, *Bearing Fresh Olive Leaves* (Toronto: Tuppence, 2000), 126–28.

37. For a relevant discussion of the relationship between Scripture, story, and authority, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 139–43.

38. In other words, what distinguishes different rituals of ultimacy is the specific vision of the good life that is "carried" in them—the *telos* to which they are aimed.

reflect anew on how worship works, precisely in order to encourage both new intentionality in our planning and leadership of worship and a new intentional orientation as we enter into worship. Furthermore, insofar as sanctifying perception is crucial for Christian education, we once again have an argument for the necessary role of Christian worship and liturgical formation as the "background" of the Christian education project.

Picturing the Sanctification of Perception in Jewish Morning Prayer

Scott-Martin Kosofsky's *Book of Customs* opens with a common distinction:

> Customs are the point of departure for a Jewish life. There is a well-known expression, "Judaism is a religion of deed; Christianity is a religion of creed."[39] It's a gross oversimplification, for sure, but not without some truth. Judaism stresses that if you begin with the right actions, you'll come upon the right beliefs; Christianity works the other way around. In the Talmud, there is a passage that's considered fundamental in Jewish education, "Let a man busy himself with observing the commandments and customs even if his heart is not in them, for eventually the hand will teach the heart."[40]

As you can imagine, I take some issue with the gross oversimplification; indeed, if it were true, then I suppose my argument would be a kind of Jewish critique of Christian intellectualism. However, while I think the caricature holds for some modern forms of Christianity—and perhaps to a great degree for North American evangelicalism—in fact I think such "intellectualized" renditions of Christian faith constitute a forgetting of more ancient Christian wisdom.

No doubt that ancient Christian wisdom was deeply indebted to Jewish heritage. So perhaps it is also fitting to seek to recover a Christian affirmation of the priority of practice through engaging contemporary Jewish philosopher Peter Ochs who, in his work on "scriptural reasoning,"[41] has articulated a vision of scriptural formation that deeply resonates with what I've just described as the sanctification of perception by the Story of the gospel. In what ways and in what contexts are the Scriptures inscribed in us such that they transform our perception of the world and our very habits of thought? Ochs's landmark essay "Morning Prayers as Redemptive Thinking" articulates an answer: the condition of possibility for *scriptural* reasoning is *liturgical* formation.[42] The Scriptures

39. I suspect this is a post-Enlightenment distinction, after the "intellectualization" of Christianity in the German Enlightenment and its heirs.

40. Scott-Martin Kosofsky, *The Book of Customs: A Complete Handbook for the Jewish Year* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2004), 1. My thanks to Lee Hardy for pointing me to this resource.

41. See Peter Ochs, "Philosophic Warrants for Scriptural Reasoning," *Modern Theology* 22 (2006): 465–82.

42. Peter Ochs, "Morning Prayers as Redemptive Thinking," in *Liturgy, Time, and the Politics of Redemption*, ed. Randi Rashkover and C. C. Pecknold, Radical Traditions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 50–87.

are most powerfully and formatively absorbed through practices of prayer, meditation, psalm singing, and praise. In short, the condition of possibility for scriptural *reasoning* is worship. If scriptural reasoning represents a recovery of "thick" articulations of the Abrahamic traditions, it also points to "a recovery of a liturgically funded thick description."[43]

In an essay that is part ethnography, part autobiography, part philosophical meditation, Ochs carefully explicates the way in which immersion in the ritual of Jewish Morning Prayer is a mode of "training in how to make judgments."[44] More specifically, he shows how participation in Jewish Morning Prayer is a practice of redemptive thinking that "redeems the way we ordinarily misjudge the world"—a way of undoing our socialization into propositional ways of judging the world that tend to be absolutized, and thus fail to do justice to the richness and complexity of this fraught world. Jewish Morning Prayer, then, is a way to "nurture actual, everyday habits of thinking that are not dominated by this logic"—which translates into a new *philosophical* orientation when they are undertaken by a philosopher. If the philosopher's work is going to be reparative, it needs to be nurtured by prephilosophical practices that counter other formative practices of secular culture. As Ochs comments, "The colonialism that is 'writ large' into the dominant political and economic institutions of the West displays the binary logic that is 'writ small' into the way modern folks learn to make judgments about the world and one another. Morning Prayer shows how other logics can be 'writ small' into the ways we learn to make judgments and how prayer can serve as a daily exercise in these ways."[45]

43. Randi Rashkover, "The Future of the Word and the Liturgical Turn," in Rashkover and Pecknold, *Liturgy, Time, and the Politics of Redemption*, 1.

44. Ochs, "Morning Prayers," 50. The only reservation I have with Ochs's otherwise remarkable exposition of the "nurturing" effect of the practice of Morning Prayer is a lingering anthropology or model of the human person that still tends to privilege "judging" as our everyday mode of being-in-the-world. That is, my concern is that it still envisions the primary or crucial *telos* of such "alternative nurturance" to be a matter of (albeit redemptive) *thinking*, or (albeit scriptural) *reasoning*. To retain this emphasis on judgment, thinking, and cognition suggests that, even though the entire project is contesting the logical habits of "the modern West" (86), the project remains haunted by the ghosts of Descartes and Kant. In a similar way, I find the pray-er in Ochs's account is still a primarily perceiving animal in a narrow sense. We awake each day in order to *perceive* the world: "Daylight means a realm of experience in which creatures are perceivable. Losing the safety of their nighttime vagueness, they become what can be seen and what can, therefore, be received in some particular way as opposed to another way. . . . To be awake is to judge" (54). As soon as we wake up, even before we roll out of bed, Ochs pictures us as perceiving animals making judgments: "Oh, that is my breath! I am alive. Oh, that is my sock—it is on the floor." And we venture into our day to go about "perceiving, conceiving, and interpreting" (55). But is that really how we start our day? Do I immediately wake up perceiving, judging? In fact, do I even spend *most* of the day in such a spectator-like relationship to the world? Or am I rather absorbed in the world, involved with the world, making my way in the world without *thinking* about it? Before we perceive, don't we *care*? For further discussion, see James K. A. Smith, "How Religious Practices Matter: Peter Ochs' 'Alternative Nurturance' of Philosophy of Religion," *Modern Theology* 24 (2008): 469–78.

45. Ochs, "Morning Prayers," 86.

Thus Ochs points to liturgical practices such as Morning Prayer as an "alternative source of nurturance," where nurturance is "a reiterable practice that engenders integrated habits of thinking, feeling, imagining; and it means a practice that is suitable for reforming the ways of older folks, as well as bringing up the young."[46] I receive this exposition and argument as a gift for Christian teachers and learners to imagine how liturgical practices informed by our own scriptural tradition could transform and repair our habits of judgment, our patterns of discernment, and our openness to divine wisdom. In short, Ochs's exegesis of the reparative practice of Morning Prayer points to important ways to nurture alternative philosophical practice.

Redeeming Ritual: Form Matters

Let's briefly rehearse the argument to this point. If the end of worship is mission—if we gather to be sent—then Christian missional institutions (churches, schools, colleges, and universities) need to form *actors*. And given that much of our action is generated by dispositions and habits operative at a nonconscious level, the formation of Christian actors needs to form—or better, *re*form—our habits and dispositions. Christian formation will be not merely a matter of providing new knowledge but a matter of "dispositional deflection" and rehabituation of our desires and loves. But we need to drill down even further, for as we've seen, much of my action is generated as a response to a *call* that I sense in my very perception of the world: as soon as I constitute a situation, I have already evaluated it *as* a moral situation that confronts me with certain demands and obligations, a calling—and my dispositions will incline me to act in response to that often unarticulated call. This happens on a register of erotic comprehension and incarnate significance. So if Christian formation (and Christian education) is going to foster Christian action for the kingdom, such formation needs to be nothing short of a sanctification of our perception. And that requires formative measures that are fundamentally aesthetic and imaginative. We need to be moved, not merely convinced.

Historic Christian faith has always intuited this, even if our forebears didn't have cognitive science and social psychology at their disposal. What they did have was a robust theology of creation, an appreciation for the implications of the incarnation, and a sacramental ontology that saw the charged nature of matter that participated in God.[47] The historic practices

46. Ibid.

47. For an important account of these historic Christian intuitions—and the necessity for recovering them today—see Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

of Christian *paideia*—"the church's ancient disciplinary treasury"[48]—have always been a full-bodied, holistic set of disciplines that not only informed the intellect but reformed the very *praktognosia* by which we "feel" our way around the world, reaching the incarnate significance Merleau-Ponty simply called "perception." Indeed, Christian liturgical formation has long understood what Bourdieu finally names: that pedagogies can extort the essential from the seemingly insignificant.

So, for example, Christian worship and spiritual formation have long known and affirmed *in practice* that gestures are not just something we do but that they also do something *to* us—that kneeling for confession is a kind of cosmological act that inscribes in us a comportment to God and neighbor, a way of being-in-the-world that sinks into our bones and becomes sedimented into the core of our being through the crackle of our old knees. The postures of our bodies spill out beyond the sanctuary and become postures of existential comportment to the world. Christian worship has long appreciated the magnitude of practices that marshal the mundane—bread, wine, water—to enact and stage "kingdom come" week after week, giving us a tactile opportunity to rehearse for the consummation of time, and thus go into the meantime of the "not yet" with a different background and different horizon of perception—inhabiting the "not yet" as the fields of the Lord that call for both work and play. As the Story of God's redeeming love sinks down into our imaginative background through practices that are kin/aesthetic, we *perceive* the world differently and thus constitute our environment *as* God's good-but-broken creation. What before would have been vague rumblings and distracting background noises will begin to crystallize into something very different: the cries of the oppressed, the silences of the marginalized alien, Rachel weeping for her children. What was previously perceived with the bright, shiny sheen of "success"—comfort, insularity, accumulation, security—will be perceived anew because it will be constituted within a very different horizon of expectation, a different "background." Conversely, what might have been previously perceived as problems are now constituted as callings. Christian liturgical practices and spiritual disciplines are not just means of personal renewal; they remake the world because they transform the perception of the people of God who not only inhabit the world differently but inhabit a different world, a world constituted as God's creation.

As I've tried to emphasize, Christian worship does this on an aesthetic register: the sanctification of perception is a renewal and restor(y)ing of the imagination, which means that worship is more art than science, more on the order of a poem than a PowerPoint distillation of "the data." However, the (trans)formative possibilities afforded by Christian worship practices are

48. Boulton, *Life in God*, 24.

simply not true of all that describes itself as "worship." In other words, not all self-described "Christian worship" will afford the sort of sanctification of perception that I've described above. Here we need to raise a critical, and perhaps uncomfortable, point: *form matters*—not because of any traditionalism or conservative preservation of the status quo, but precisely because, as Bourdieu showed us, there is a logic to a practice that is unarticulated but nonetheless has a coherent "sense" about it.[49] Form matters because it is the form of worship that tells the Story (or better, *enacts* the Story).

Wide swaths of contemporary Christianity have bought into a specious form/content distinction: we have assumed that Christianity is primarily a "message" and is thus defined by a "content" that is distillable from historical forms. Along with this distinction comes the assumption that forms are basically just neutral containers for the message, selected on the basis of taste, preference, or cultural relevance. With that distinction in place (perhaps unwittingly), we then treat the historical, received forms of Christian worship as a kind of disposable husk that can be shucked (and chucked!) as long as we keep the kernel of the gospel "message." When this distinction and attitude are wedded to our late modern penchant for novelty, we begin to approach Christian worship as an event for disseminating the message and thus look for forms that will be fresh, attractive, relevant, accessible, and so on. In fact, since on this account it is the content/"message" that matters, and since forms are neutral "containers" for the message, we might actually adopt forms that are more familiar and less strange for contemporary "audiences." For example, we might distill the "message" of the gospel and then place it in a "mall" container, or a "coffee shop" container, or a "rock concert" container, or a "rave" container, or what have you. In doing so, we believe that we have in a sense sanctified these forms—taken them up in service to the gospel, all with a "missional" intent.[50]

But as I hope you've already intuited, such strategies are inherently "intellectualist," both because they reduce the gospel to a (propositional) "message" *and* (because of that) completely miss the formative power of the forms themselves. Because such "relevant" paradigms are unwittingly intellectualist,[51] they fail to appreciate that we are liturgical animals shaped

49. Here I'm expanding on some cautions initially articulated in *Desiring the Kingdom*, 151–54.

50. Billings offers a cautionary tale in this regard when he notes that apartheid in the South African Reformed church was initially entertained as a "missional" strategy to expand outreach opportunities to whites who might not be "comfortable" worshiping with blacks. "Lest we think that the movement [for segregated communion] emerging from 1857 is utterly foreign to contemporary concerns, in many ways it can be understood as an instance where the church was being flexible, evangelical, and 'missional' rather than being rigidly Reformational" (*Union with Christ*, 101).

51. This is the case even if the "worship" (i.e., song service) in such congregations is overwhelmingly emotivist. There is an interesting irony in the ballpark here. Throughout the Cultural Liturgies project, I emphasize the importance of affect and emotion, and yet I'm critical of emotiv*ism* as merely expressionist and lacking any strong sense of the *formative* aspects of

by practices that work on our cognitive unconscious. And so they also fail to appreciate that these forms are not neutral; the forms of the mall or coffee shop are not just benign containers that can carry any content. These forms are already "aimed and loaded": they carry their own teleological orientation and come loaded with a complex of rituals and practices that carry a vision of the good life. So while we might think that reconfiguring worship to feel like the mall is a way of making Jesus relevant and accessible, in fact we are unwittingly teaching worshipers and seekers to treat Jesus like any other commodity they encounter in the mall, because the very form of the mall's ("secular") liturgy unconsciously trains us to relate to the world as consumers.

The point isn't that both form and content matter. The point is more radical than that: in some significant sense we need to eschew the form/content distinction.[52] Because worship is not just the dissemination of some content or the expression of an "inner" feeling, the very form of worship tells the Story.[53] The form of worship is the logic of the practice; as such, it has a coherence that is fundamentally narrative, not deductive. The narrative arc of Christian worship is *how* it "makes sense," and it is through our immersion in the implicit narrative logic of the practice that the "practical sense" of the Christian Story soaks into our imagination and becomes part of our constituting background, the Story that governs our *habitus* (as "structured structures" and "structuring structures"!).[54] To be immersed in the irreducible practical logic of Christian worship is like carrying Mark Twain's cat: we thereby learn something we can learn in no other way.

worship. The flipside is the irony: it is precisely those forms of worship that are so thoroughly emotivist that are often wed to "intellectualist" construals of Christian faith.

52. One could say something similar by invoking Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum "the medium is the message." As it turns out, this is not just a felicitous overlap. In fact, McLuhan's own conversion to Catholicism and immersion in the liturgy was a significant part of the "background" that informed his theorizing. For some of his reflections on liturgy, and on religion more generally, see Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*, ed. Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szklarek (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999).

53. I should note that by "form" I do not mean "style." The form of worship is the *logic* of the practice—the coherence of the story that is rehearsed and enacted by the practice. So the "form" of worship is more about the shape of worship—the elements that constitute the narrative arc of a worship service. Such a form can be instantiated in a number of different styles. So to emphasize a historic "form" of worship is *not* an apologetic for pipe organs over banjos and mandolins.

54. I will not rehearse the specifics of this received shape of Christian worship. For a sketch, see *Desiring the Kingdom*, chap. 5. See also the chart "The Common Shape of Liturgy" in this section, which utilizes Frank Senn's masterful overview of the common shape of Christian worship from pp. 646–47 of *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997). Senn's parallel overview of the *Roman Missal* (1969), *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978), Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (1977), *The Methodist Hymnal* (1989), and Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* (1993) testifies to a common "shape of the liturgy" that represents the accrued wisdom of the church catholic, led by the Spirit, regarding what we might call "the narrative sense" of Christian worship.

The Common Shape of the Liturgy

Roman Missal 1969	Lutheran Book of Worship 1978	Book of Common Prayer 1977	The Methodist Hymnal 1989	Book of Common Worship 1993
The Order of the Mass	The Holy Communion	The Holy Eucharist	Service of Word and Table	Service for the Lord's Day
Entrance Psalm	(Brief Order of Confession)	(Hymn, psalm, or anthem)	Gathering	Call to Worship
Invocation and Greeting		(Penitential Rite)	Greeting	Prayer of the Day
	Entrance Hymn	(Hymn, psalm, or anthem)	Hymn of Praise	Hymn of Praise
Penitential Rite	Apostolic Greeting	Greeting and Collect	Opening Prayer	Confession and Pardon
(Kyrie)	(Kyrie)	(Gloria or Kyrie or Trisagion)		(The Peace)
(Gloria)	(Gloria or Worthy Is Christ or Hymn)		(Act of Praise)	Canticle, Psalm, Hymn, or Spiritual
Salutation and Collect for the Day	Salutation and Prayer of the Day	Salutation and Collect of the Day	Prayer for Illumination	Prayer for Illumination
First Lesson	First Lesson	First Lesson	Scripture Lesson	First Reading
Psalmody	Psalmody	(Psalm, hymn, or anthem)	(Psalm)	Psalm
Second Lesson	Second Lesson	Second Lesson	Scripture Lesson	Second Reading
Alleluia Verse	Alleluia Verse	(Psalm, hymn, or anthem)	Hymn or Song	(Anthem, hymn, psalm, canticle, or spiritual)
Gospel	Gospel	Gospel	Gospel Lesson	Gospel Reading
Homily	Sermon	Sermon	Sermon	Sermon
	Silent Reflection			
	Hymn of the Day		(Occasional Service)	Affirmation of Faith
Nicene Creed	Nicene or Apostles' Creed	Nicene Creed	The Apostles' Creed	(Pastoral Rite of the Church)
Intercessions	Prayers of the Church	Prayers of the People	Concerns and Prayers	Prayers of the People
			Invitation to the Table	

Roman Missal 1969	Lutheran Book of Worship 1978	Book of Common Prayer 1977	The Methodist Hymnal 1989	Book of Common Worship 1993
	(Confession of Sin)	(Confession of Sin)	Confession and Pardon	
	Greeting of Peace	The Peace	The Peace	(The Peace)
Offering	Offering	Offertory Sentence	Offering	Offering
Offertory Song	Offertory Verse	Offertory Procession	(Hymn, psalm, or anthem)	
Offertory Prayers	Offertory Prayer			Invitation to the Table
Preface and Sanctus	Preface and Sanctus	Preface and Sanctus	Great Thanksgiving	Great Thanksgiving
Canon (9 options)	Great Thanksgiving (5 options) or Words of Institution	Great Thanksgiving (4 options)		
Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer
Peace of the Lord		Breaking of the Bread	Breaking of Bread	Breaking of Bread
Lamb of God	Communion	Communion	Giving the Bread and Cup	Communion of the People
Communion (Communion Songs)	(Lamb of God or other hymns)	(Hymns, psalms, or anthems)		
Silent Reflection	Post-Communion Song		Post-Communion Prayer	
Post-Communion Prayer	Post-Communion Prayer	Post-Communion Prayer	Hymn or Song	Hymn, Spiritual, Canticle, or Psalm
	Silent Reflection			
Benediction and Dismissal	Benediction and Dismissal	Blessing and Dismissal	Dismissal with Blessing	Charge and Blessing
			Going Forth	

Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 646–47.

This is just a way of saying that with liturgy, like poetry, we should beware of "the heresy of paraphrase." This notion was first floated by Cleanth Brooks, who resisted modes of poetic criticism that thought they could distill the meaning of the poem into its essential "idea" or "message," which, as you might guess, Brooks considered heresy. A poem's meaning, he contended, is not just a matter of its propositional content—as if the words and form and meter and all of those exquisite aspects of craft were

just decorative flourishes that could be dispensed with once you got "the message." No, Brooks argued, the meaning of the poem is ineluctably bound up with its form and is not reducible to what can be propositionalized or paraphrased. A poem is not just a vehicle for ideas; it means both *more* than that and *differently* than that. Brooks summarizes:

> The general point, of course, is not that either poetry or drama makes no use of ideas, or that either is "merely emotional"—whatever *that* is—or that there is not the closest and most important relationship between the intellectual materials which they absorb into their structure and other elements in the structure. The relationship between the intellectual and the non-intellectual elements in a poem is actually far more intimate than the conventional accounts would represent it to be: the relationship is not that of an idea "wrapped in emotion" or a "prose-sense decorated by a sensuous imagery." The dimension in which the poem moves is not one which excludes ideas, but one which does include attitudes. The dimension includes ideas, to be sure; we can always abstract an 'idea' from a poem. . . . But the idea which we abstract—assuming that we can all agree on what that idea is—will always be *abstracted*: it will always be the projection of a plane along a line or the projection of a cone upon a plane.[55]

An apocryphal tale further illuminates Brooks's point: T. S. Eliot reads the entirety of "The Wasteland," and upon its conclusion, someone has the temerity to ask, "What does it mean?" Eliot rereads the poem. Angela Leighton, to get at a similar point, cites a selection from Heather McHugh's fantastic poem "20–200 on 747":

> Given an airplane, chance
>
> encounters always ask, So what
> are your poems about? They're about
> their business, and their father's business, and their
> monkey's uncle, they're about
>
> how nothing is about, they're not
> about about. This answer drives them
> back to the snack tray every time.[56]

55. Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), 204–5. Revisiting Brooks's account, Angela Leighton notes that after Brooks's critique, "paraphrase, as a serious critical idea, has never really made a comeback." Angela Leighton, "About About: On Poetry and Paraphrase," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 33 (2009): 167–76 (quote at 168). For rigorous philosophical updating of Brooks's notion, see Ernie Lepore, "The Heresy of Paraphrase: When the Medium Really Is the Message," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 33 (2009): 177–97.

56. Leighton, "About About," 169.

The "meaning" of the poem is not some distillable content or idea or message that can be neatly paraphrased and summarized in prose form; *what* the poem means is bound up with *how* the poem means.[57] Its meaning is intertwined with all of the metaphorical play and resonance that can never quite be named or identified and yet are precisely those elements that do so much literary work. The poem *means* in its cadence and meter, its diction and wordplay, its pauses and line breaks. The meaning of a poem is playing a different game, and means differently, in a way that is inherently bound up with its form. Echoing Bourdieu, Brooks cautions: "We demand logical coherences where they are sometimes irrelevant, and we fail frequently to see imaginative coherences on levels where they are highly relevant."[58] It is those imaginative coherences that are lost in translation when we try to paraphrase the "message" of a poem.

I'm suggesting the same is true with respect to the meaning of Christian worship: the logic of the practice cannot be paraphrased because there is an "imaginative coherence" that is undistillable and yet incredibly significant.[59] We "get" the Story in the form of worship that intentionally rehearses the unfolding of our covenantal relationship to a promise-keeping God, centered in the climax of the covenant in Jesus. While it has been intentionally and communally crafted over time, the logic of historic Christian worship also *means* on a register that exceeds and eludes our conscious appropriation[60]—which is precisely why worship isn't just something that we do; it does something *to* us. The practices of Christian worship mean in a narrative mode: so I "get" worship in ways that will exceed what I'm "thinking" about *when* I worship. This is how Christian worship works, on both a macrolevel and a microlevel. On a macrolevel, the overall narrative arc of Christian worship—gathering, confessing, listening, submitting, communing, sending—tells a story in the background by its very structure and organization, a rhythm

57. In the McHugh poem, this includes the sheer verbal play on "about" that constitutes the heart of this poem.

58. Ibid., 202.

59. Or, echoing Zuidervaart's notion of "art-internal" truth (in *Artistic Truth*, 8–9), I'm suggesting that there is a kind of "liturgy-internal" wisdom to Christian worship that is irreducible and even eludes articulation. And yet we *know* it's true. Its truth resonates in the imagination; it is absorbed in our gut. We need to learn to trust our gut. We need to learn to trust those "intuitions" that bubble up from our liturgical formation. And then we need to think about how to "expand" this "liturgy-internal" wisdom across our life together.

60. There is no tension in claiming that Christian worship was intentionally developed and planned and yet can mean *more* than what was intended by those who developed it. The same is true of a poem: the best poetry is the fruit of painstaking craft and intentionality in its creation, and yet its meaning will always exceed what the author intended because the dynamics of metaphor and form elude our control. Indeed, the same dynamic is true of Scripture. For a discussion, see James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 199–221.

and cadence that become part of our own background such that this Story governs our perception of the world in ways we won't realize. In this way, Christian faith, as Bourdieu suggests, is something we come to believe with the body: it is incorporated into us as we are incorporated into the body politic that is the body of Christ. We absorb Christian faith as a mode of "practical sense," not primarily by the didactic dissemination of content, but rather through our immersion in an ethos and an environment, where the Story is in the air we breathe and the water in which we swim, operative in the background in ways we might not always realize. There is a kind of grand poetry about the shape of intentional, historic Christian worship that shows rather than tells. And such a narrative "showing" resonates with our imagination in ways that elude our intellectual grasp.

This is also why the form of worship "works" on us at a microlevel. If historic Christian worship and ancient spiritual disciplines carry the Story that seeps into our social imaginary, this is in no small part because liturgical practices are also intentionally aesthetic and tap into our imaginative core. It is no accident that the poetry of the psalms has long constituted the church's prayerbook, nor is it mere coincidence that the worship of the people of God has always been marked by singing. In these and countless other ways, the inherited treasury of formative disciplines has been characterized by an allusivity and metaphoricity that means more than we can say. There is a reason to our rhymes—a logic carried in the meter of our hymns and the shape of our gestures. Worship innovations that are inattentive to this may end up adopting forms that forfeit precisely those aspects of worship that sanctify perception by forming the imagination.[61] Hence wise worship planning and leadership is not only discerning about content—the lyrics of songs, the content of a pastoral prayer, the message of a sermon—but also discerning about the kin/aesthetic meaning of the form of our worship. We will be concerned not only with the *what* but also with the *how*, because Christian faith is not only a knowing-*that* but also a kind of know-*how*, a "practical sense" or *praktognosia* that is absorbed in the "between" of our incarnate significance. Because meter and tune each *means* in its own irreducible way, for example, the form of our songs is as important as the content. It is in this sense that to sing is to pray twice.[62]

61. This is not to say that there is no room for innovation or improvisation in Christian worship or that affirming the formative wisdom of historic Christian worship requires merely repeating status quo forms. The point is rather that improvisations and innovations of worship *form* need to be attentive to the narrative arc of the form and the unique "incarnate significance" of worship practices. Innovations that are "faithful" will preserve the plot of that narrative arc and deepen the imaginative impact of worship. Unfaithful and unhelpful innovations will be developments that are detrimental to the imaginative coherence of worship.

62. See Brian Wren's unpacking of this famous epigram in *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), particularly his discussion of how hymns "work" as "poems of faith" (253–94). My thanks to Kevin Twit for pointing me to this resource.

To Think About: The Poetry of Prayer

Boulton notes that Calvin's vision for the "reformation of manners" was related to his lifelong passion for the psalms, which eventually yielded the Genevan Psalter, "a compilation of all 150 psalms, the Ten Commandments, and the Song of Simeon, all translated into metrical French and set to new tunes composed not for specialist choirs but for the whole congregation."[1] Why metrical? Because Calvin, with the Christian tradition before him, intuited that we are liturgical animals whose hearts are tuned to sing his praise—and that psalm singing will be a *formative* discipline, not only because of the content of the psalms but because of the form of the song.[2]

1. Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 33.

2. For a continuation of this project in the same spirit, see John Witvliet, Joyce Borger, and Martin Tel, eds., *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012). For stories about regular encounters with the psalms, see Kevin Adams, *150: Finding Your Story in the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Square Inch/Faith Alive, 2011).

Worship wisdom requires that we be attentive to the practical sense of aesthetic forms, lest we end up singing lyrics that confess Jesus is Lord accompanied by a tune that *means* something very different.[63] Similarly, because our words mean more than their propositional content—and because worship is intended not only to inform the intellect but also to recruit the imagination—we will want to be attentive to the poetic and metaphorical power of words to evoke the world to come, thus resisting temptations to flatten our worship words to the utilitarian pragmatism of the marketplace.[64] In these and countless other ways (we could also discuss gesture, architecture, images, icons, color, vestments, and much more), Christian worship is *more* than its content and means more than it says. Worship that intends to be formative—and more specifically, worship that intends to foster an encounter with God that transforms our imagination and hence sanctifies our perception—must be attentive to, and intentional about, the aesthetics of human understanding. Christian

63. For a masterful account of these matters, see Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), part 3. For further relevant discussion, see Begbie, "Faithful Feelings: Music and Emotion in Worship," in *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology*, ed. Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 323–54; and Steven R. Guthrie, "The Wisdom of Song," in Begbie and Guthrie, *Resonant Witness*, 382–407.

64. For wisdom on these matters, see Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), particularly their discussion of metaphor (115–41).

To Think About: Praying a World(view)

How might it impact Christian education if we *prayed* a Christian worldview? If the goal of a Christian education is to form and shape a people who imagine the world otherwise—and act accordingly—then we will need to worship accordingly. We worship in order to worldview. And if we are going to absorb the "true story of the whole world," it's not enough to acquire the theoretical information to *know* this truth; we need a conversion of the imagination so that we "get" this story in our bones. What if the way to do that was to *pray* a worldview? And what if the very *form* of the prayer—the sort of liturgical act it invites and requires—also "said" something about our relationship to God, his world, and one another?

This is John Witvliet's suggestion when discussing education that provides a "comprehensive Christian worldview": "My suggestion," he says, "is that there are few better models for what this can look like than the fully-orbed eucharistic prayers that emerge in the fourth century. They present a theological vision of space, time, good, evil, personhood, salvation, creation and final redemption—all compressed into a prayer that is open to eternity and to the mystery and beauty of God's being."[1] Consider one of his exhibits in this regard: the intercession from the fifth-century Gelasian sacramentary.[2]

The Litany (*deacon*): Let us all say, Lord, hear and have mercy. Father Unbegotten, and Son of God Begotten not made, and Holy Spirit of God, the breath of the faithful, we pray, *Kyrie eleison*.

> For the spotless church of the living God, constituted throughout the whole world, we entreat the riches of divine gifts, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For holy priests and ministers of the Mighty God, and all people worshiping the true God, we pray Christ our Lord, *Kyrie eleison*.
> In particular, for all teaching rightly the Word of Truth, the manifold Wisdom of the Word of God, we pray, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For those who keep themselves chaste in mind and body for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, and exert themselves in spiritual labors, we pray for plentifulness of spiritual gifts, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For all religious rulers and their soldiers, who prize justice and right judgment, we implore the Power of the Lord, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For agreeable weather and opportune rains and caressing vital winds and the prosperity of diverse times rightly ordered, Lord of the world, we pray, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For those who for the first time into the name of "Christian" are initiated, whom now the desire for heavenly grace inflames, we pray for mercy to Almighty God, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For those who are involved in the weakness of the infirmities of humanity, in envy of spiritual wickedness or various errors of the world, we implore the mercy of the Redeemer, *Kyrie eleison*.

> For those who are of necessity traveling, or are oppressed by the powers of iniquity, or are vexed by hostile hardships, we pray the Lord the savior, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For those deceived by heresy or superstition, we pray the Lord of Truth, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For doers of good works, and those who assist in the necessary labors of brotherly charity, we pray the Lord to have mercy, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For all within this holy House of the Lord, that they may be turned to religious hearers and devout pray-ers, we pray the Lord of Glory, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For the cleansing of our souls and bodies, and forgiveness of sins, we pray the merciful Lord, *Kyrie eleison*.
> For refreshment of faithful souls, particularly of priests of the Holy Lord, who preside over this catholic church, we pray the Lord the spirit and judge of all flesh, *Kyrie eleison*.
> Mortification of sins of the flesh and quickening of the life of faith, *Grant, Lord, grant*.
> Holy fear and love of truth, *Grant, Lord, grant*.
> A pleasant ordering of life and a creditable end, *Grant, Lord, grant*.
> - An angel of peace and holy consolation, *Grant, Lord, grant*.
> - Here, Lord, the voice of your family who cry for preservation.

As Witvliet comments, this *prayed* "breadth of concern suggests a robust understanding of the scope of divine activity in human lives, institutions, and in creation itself."[3] Here is practice that enables the people of God—in both church and college—to *pray* Kuyper's central claim that there is not a single square inch of creation over which Christ does not say, "Mine!" To articulate this as a prayer is a different sort of speech act: it invites us into the story in a unique way. We become actors in the drama, invested characters on the stage of God's redemptive action. At the same time, to say this *as a prayer* is a practice of dependence: we are asking, praying, pleading, which is a way to practice ourselves out of our penchant for self-sufficient activism and the sort of default Pelagianism that characterizes modern (American) confidence.

What might a college or school look like if such prayers were part of the *ethos* of worship that bathes learning?[4] How might the graduates of such institutions emerge with a different imagination?

1. John D. Witvliet, "Embodying the Wisdom of Ancient Liturgical Practices: Some Old-Fashioned Rudimentary Euchology for the Contemporary Church," in *Ancient Faith for the Church's Future*, ed. Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman, 189–214 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 211.

2. Ibid., 193–94, reproducing the text in Marion J. Hatchett, *Seven Pre-Reformation Eucharistic Liturgies: Historic Rites Arranged for Contemporary Celebration* (Sewanee, TN: University of the South, 1973), 48–49.

3. Witvliet, "Embodying the Wisdom of Ancient Liturgical Practices," 195.

4. This particular example is only meant to be catalytic. One could imagine all sorts of worship practices that could have this sort of of "ethos-setting" effect. For example, what if not only chapels but classrooms were adorned with liturgical colors that changed with the church's calendar? Or what if stained glass or banners that "*show* rather than tell" adorned spaces of both learning and play? The point isn't for Christian learning to *deduce* something from such ethos-setting practices; rather, I'm suggesting that a liturgically shaped ethos will shape the imagination in ways that cannot be articulated but are nonetheless impactful.

worship needs to be an incubator for the imagination, inviting us into "the real world" by bringing us aesthetic olive leaves from the kingdom that is coming, helping us to then envision what it would look like for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We will absorb this eschatological vision of shalom in ways that elude our awareness, and the Story will be incorporated into our bodies on an aesthetic register. Thus the whole of Christian worship must embody this guiding Story in multivalent ways so that it becomes part of our background and thus sanctifies our perception. Christian worship should send us out with new knowledge and information, as well as a renewed feel for the world, a transformed "practical sense."

In this respect, we might say that Christian discipleship is about not only the acquisition of a worldview but also the inhabitation of a sensibility. To be formed in Christ *for* missional action is to acquire a temperament that guides us beneath and beyond what we think. As David Brooks put it, in order to act justly and rightly, we first need to learn to perceive the world in the right way.[65] And given that our perception is a mode of embodied, kinaesthetic intentionality, a Christian passional orientation to the world will be less like an intellectual grid than a sort of *style* of comportment to the world—a sensibility or temperament that changes *how* we are in the world. That sensibility or temperament, then, will significantly shape how we perceive the world, and hence how we act in it. To be formed as image-bearers of Christ is to acquire a temperament that is indexed to the kingdom of God.

In this respect, it seems to me that a Christian social imaginary is something like the "artistic temperament" that Oscar Wilde extols in "The Critic as Artist." Indeed, Wilde's concern in this dialogue is the nature of criticism, which is very much akin to the sort of practiced judgment we've been discussing. So let's consider Wilde's "critic" as an analogue of the thoughtful Christian, engaging culture; what Wilde describes as "criticism," then, would be an analogue for Christian culture-making. What might we learn from such an analogy?

At the core of his argument is the assertion that "criticism is itself an art."[66] So criticism is not just passive commentary and mere observation; the critic is also a creator, a maker, who in her engagement with the work of art produces her own creative product. We might think of this dynamic as analogous to what we've been describing as "constitution": the way in which we "put together" the world, *make* our world, on the basis of a

65. David Brooks, *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement* (New York: Random House, 2011), 127.

66. Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," in *The Portable Oscar Wilde*, rev. ed., ed. Richard Aldington and Stanley Weintraub (London: Penguin, 1981), 81.

background horizon of constitution. To say that the critic is an artist is, in a sense, to say that the critic is *also* a "constituter"—a maker, a creator. It's not just artists who make; to judge art—to be a critic—is also a work of creative constitution.

But if criticism is also a kind of constitution, then we hit upon an important question: what would be the appropriate "background" for criticism? In other words, we need to carefully consider "the artistic qualifications necessary for the true critic."[67] Here Wilde makes a surprising claim. What is most needed for such "true criticism," he suggests, is not merely the right curriculum of study or an encyclopedic knowledge of the arts. Instead Wilde homes in on a surprising qualification: the best critic, he says, will be characterized by an aesthetic *temperament*. "Temperament is the primary requisite for the critic—a temperament exquisitely susceptible to beauty." Which then leads to the question, How is such a temperament acquired? Listen to Wilde's reply and try to keep our analogy in mind:

> To be purified and made perfect, this sense requires some form of exquisite *environment*. Without this it starves, or is dulled. You remember that lovely passage in which Plato describes how a young Greek should be educated, and with what insistence he dwells upon the importance of surroundings, telling us how the lad is to be brought up in the midst of fair sights and sounds, so that the beauty of material things may prepare his soul for the reception of the beauty that is spiritual. Insensibly, *and without knowing the reason why*, he is to develop that real love of beauty which, as Plato is never weary of reminding us, is the true aim of education.[68]

The acquisition of this temperament that is so crucial for "true criticism" is dependent upon an environment. The right environment generates an ethos that cultivates this temperament and sensibility—but it does so "insensibly, and without knowing the reason why." In other words, the temperament is acquired without our realizing it, as part of the "hum and buzz" of an environment, as the constant presence of a background that over time becomes part of *our* background. It is a sensibility that we absorb, a comportment to the good life that is more caught than taught. Temperament is shaped by a sentimental education.

67. Wilde, "Critic as Artist," 120.

68. Ibid. (emphasis added). Gilbert, the voice of Wilde in this dialogue, continues: "I need hardly say, Ernest, how far we in England have fallen short of this ideal, and I can imagine the smile that would illuminate the glossy face of the Philistine if one ventured to suggest to him that the true aim of education was the love of beauty, and that the methods by which education should work were the development of temperament, the cultivation of taste, and the creation of the critical spirit" (121). For a proposal that embraces just such a vision, seeing the unity of the good, the true, and the beautiful, see Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

We might say that a sentimental education is an environmental education. Scandalously, Wilde suggests that maybe the most important thing in Oxford is not the professors!

> Even for us [in industrialized England], there is left some loveliness of environment, and the dullness of tutors and professors matters very little when one can loiter in the grey cloisters at Magdalen, and listen to some flute-like voice singing in Waynfleete's chapel, or lie in the green meadow, among the strange snake-spotted fritillaries, and watch the sunburnt noon smite to a finer gold the tower's gilded vanes, or wander up the Christ Church staircase beneath the vaulted ceiling's shadowy fans, or pass through the sculptured gateway of Laud's building in the College of St. John.[69]

The spaces of the environment have their own cultivating effect on the imagination, on the temperament of the emerging critic who, by means of this sentimental education, is imbibing a sensibility that will become the basis for "true" criticism. But Wilde emphasizes that going up to Oxford will be inadequate without a "sentimental" curriculum. Thus, a little later in the dialogue, Wilde praises "a renaissance of the decorative arts"—and in particular the Arts and Crafts movement associated with William Morris—as crucial to this sentimental education. "For the cultivation of temperament, we must turn to the decorative arts: to the arts that touch us, not to the arts that teach us."[70] The art that cultivates an aesthetic sense is not art that you look at, but art that you *live with*. This is why Wilde celebrates the *decorative* arts—those arts that become part of our background, our ethos, our milieu, like the furniture and wallpapers of William Morris or the tapestries of Edward Burne-Jones.[71] As Wilde puts it,

> The art that is frankly decorative is the art to live with. It is, of all our visible arts, the one art that creates in us both mood and temperament. Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways. The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of pattern give us rest. The marvels of design stir the imagination. In the mere loveliness of the materials employed there are latent elements of culture.[72]

Notice how remarkable Wilde's claim is: it's not just that pretty places are pleasant spaces for learning. Environments that are intentionally well

69. Wilde, "Critic as Artist," 121–22.

70. Ibid., 122.

71. The covers of the Cultural Liturgies trilogy are adorned with a series of tapestries that were the fruit of a collaboration between William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.

72. Wilde, "Critic as Artist," 124.

adorned are veritable schools for the soul—they create in us both a mood and a temperament.[73] They are part of an embodied *paideia*, a kinaesthetic education. The true critic, then, will be raised in houses with the right wallpaper.

Consider, then, this analogy: If Christian faith is a kind of temperament, then its formation requires the right environment. And if Christian education is going to form our sensibilities, then Christian churches, schools, and universities need the right wallpaper. They need to be environments in which the Story of the gospel is imaginatively woven into the entire ethos of the institution. And while this clearly requires aesthetic and architectural intentionality, more important, it requires incorporating intentional, historic practices of Christian worship as the "wallpaper" of a Christian sentimental education—not as mere pious decoration but rather as precisely the temperament-forming ethos and environment that shapes our affective comportment to God's world. It is the practices of Christian worship that should constitute the milieu in which we teach and learn, regularly weaving for us the tapestry of God's covenant faithfulness, immersing us in the Story so that we absorb it "insensibly, and without knowing the reason why."[74]

Redeeming Repetition: On Habituation

A liturgical anthropology that appreciates the aesthetics of understanding ("the meaning of the body," as Johnson puts it) will encourage new intentionality about the *how* of worship—and as I've just suggested, I think such a model especially encourages us to be attentive to form as that which most resonates with (and hence forms) the imagination. Similarly, I think a liturgical anthropology should engender a new appreciation for repetition. We, especially we Protestants, have a built-in allergy to repetition in worship, though we are quite happy to affirm the value of repetition in almost every other sphere of life, from study to music to sports to art. We affirm the value of ritual repetition if we're learning piano scales or learning to hit a golf ball but are curiously suspicious of repetitive ritual in worship and discipleship. I think this allergy has three causes. The first is part of

73. For a more detailed discussion of religion as a kind of "mood" and attunement, see James K. A. Smith, "Secular Liturgies and the Prospects for a 'Post-Secular' Sociology of Religion," in *The Post-Secular in Question*, ed. Philip Gorski, David Kyuman Kim, John Torpey, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 159–84.

74. And once again, we might learn something from John Calvin's Geneva. For example, Karin Maag notes that students at the Genevan academy rehearsed psalms for an hour each day. See Karin Maag, "Change and Continuity in Medieval and Early Modern Worship: The Practice of Worship in the Schools," in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, ed. Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 123.

the genetic heritage of Protestantism: we associate repetition with dead orthodoxy, "vain repetition," the denial of grace, trying to earn salvation, scoring points with God, going through the motions, and various other forms of spiritual insincerity. Ritual and repetition are bound together in our suspicion of "works righteousness": when it comes to religious devotion, we tend to see ritual observance as mere obedience to duty, a way of scoring points with God and earning spiritual credit. We see repetitive ritual as a bottom-up effort—and it's just that notion of "effort" that starts to sound like "work," and it doesn't take long before this all seems part of an elaborate system of "salvation by works."

Second, after the Reformation, and especially in the wake of modernity, wide swaths of contemporary Christianity tend to think of worship as only an "upward" act of the people of God who gather to offer up their sacrifice of praise, expressing their gratitude and devotion to the Father, with the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Obviously this is an entirely biblical impulse and understanding: if *we* don't praise, even the rocks will cry out. In a sense, we are made to praise. The biblical vision of history culminates in the book of Revelation with a worshiping throng enacting the exhortation of Psalm 150 to "Praise the Lord!" However, one can also see how such expressivist understandings of worship feed into (and off of) some of the worst aspects of modernity. Worship-as-expression is easily hijacked by the swirling eddy of individualism. In that case, even gathered worship is more like a collection of individual, private encounters with God in which worshipers express an "interior" devotion. It is precisely this model that prizes "authenticity" so highly. If worship is only about expression, then sincerity is the highest good, and we have this lingering sense that doing the same thing twice—let alone over and over again—is not sincere. Thus we feel the need to encourage novel modes of expression week after week.

Third, and related to the second point, we have unwittingly bought into the cult of novelty that governs our twenty-four-hour "what have you done for me lately?" culture. We buy into the chronological snobbery that disdains the "old" as "*so* five minutes ago" and thus constantly pursue "fresh expressions." We fall prey to the consumerist mentality, which is also (necessarily) a disposal mentality—doing away with the old in order to partake of the new.

But the wisdom of historic Christian worship runs counter to all three of these assumptions precisely because it sees worship not only as expressive (what we offer to God) but also as *formative* (what God is doing *to us* in the encounter). Indeed, if we demonize repetition we end up abandoning rehabituation. For habituation is a kind of cognitive automation, and such automation only happens through repetition. Only through immersion in the same practices over and over can we hope for the inscription of

To Think About: Love's Litany

"In every sphere of life form is the beginning of things." So claims Gilbert in Oscar Wilde's dialogue "The Critic as Artist."[1] He continues in a vein that intersects directly with our concerns here: "The rhythmic, harmonious gestures of dancing convey, Plato tells us, both rhythm and harmony into the mind. Forms are the food of faith, cried Newman in one of those great moments of sincerity that made us admire and know the man. He was right, though he may not have known how terribly right he was. The Creeds are believed, not because they are rational, but because they are repeated."[2] We might be slightly uncomfortable with Wilde's suggestion. And yet, he seems to have intuited from Newman that repetition is the way belief becomes inscribed in the body—that repetition recruits our habits and thus our beliefs, rather than the other way around. Litanies do not just give expression to what we believe and love; they give birth to the belief and love. "Do you wish to love?" Gilbert asks. "Use Love's Litany, and the words will create the yearning from which the world fancies that they spring."[3] The liturgy of Christian worship is the litany of love granted us by the Spirit.

1. Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," in *The Portable Oscar Wilde*, rev. ed., ed. Richard Aldington and Stanley Weintraub (London: Penguin, 1981), 125.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 126.

those "neural maps" that will reconfigure our dispositions. Quite simply, there is no formation without repetition. There is no habituation without being immersed in a practice over and over again. There will be no sanctification of our perception apart from a regular, repeated recentering of our imagination in the Story of the gospel as rehearsed and enacted in the "practical logic" of Christian worship. So it is precisely our allergy to repetition in worship that has undercut the counterformative power of Christian worship—because all kinds of secular liturgies shamelessly affirm the good of repetition. We've let the devil, so to speak, have all the repetition. And we, as liturgical animals, are only too happy to find our rhythms in such repetition. Unless Christian worship eschews the cult of novelty and embraces the good of faithful repetition, we will constantly be ceding habituation to secular liturgies.

Now, we are not talking about repetition for repetition's sake. *What* we're repeating makes all the difference. And *how* we're repeating makes a difference. So my claims about repetition in this section are inextricably linked to the argument about form in the previous section *and* to what I'll suggest in the next section regarding the importance of reflection. The form of worship has to normatively enact the Story, and must do so on aesthetic registers, if the Story is going to sanctify our perception. But if we are regularly and constantly re-immersed in a wise, intentional

community of practice normed by the biblical Story, then we'll begin to find that Story becoming part of our background sensibility, becoming part of our "temperament," and engendering action that reflects the shape of the kingdom. And this happens without us realizing it.

Let's consider a case study for a middle-aged man named Alex. Worship at his church is nothing to write home about, as they say; nothing jazzy or innovative or "outside the box." Indeed, to some, worship in this congregation would look quite staid, "traditional," maybe even a bit boring. But as heirs to the wisdom of a liturgical tradition, and submitting their form of worship to that wisdom, the congregation regularly gathers, week in and week out, to effectively rehearse the true Story of the whole world. Alex and his family are faithful worshipers, but when he's honest, there are Sundays he doesn't want to be there. But he is there nonetheless, simply because somewhere along the way Alex has absorbed a core intuition we've been describing: that worship isn't just something we do; it is also a practice in which God does something to us. And so he knows that there is a certain virtue to "going through the motions," even on those days when he's not "feeling it," as we sometimes say. Even on those days when his heart was not in it, he knew that God would keep his promises and meet him in these practices.

Part of the "logic" of this practice includes a crucial, repeated moment each week when the congregation would kneel and confess their sins to God, and then hear the announcement of the good news of forgiveness in the assurance of pardon. Some Sundays the prayer of confession would roll over his tongue pretty much without any active cognition on his part: "We confess we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. . . . Have mercy . . ."[75] At other times and in other seasons, these words would stop him short; they would be heavy on his lips, and yet they were exactly the words he needed. To recite the prayer was like receiving the gift of tongues, a way for the Spirit to help Alex groan out his own guilt. Then he would hungrily listen for the good news of absolution, eager to be reminded of the mercy of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But then again, at other times, even the astounding news of the gospel would sort of wash over him without much awareness on his part. Nonetheless, he was there, and the cadences of the prayer of confession and assurance of pardon would once again ("insensibly") make a dent on his imagination.

But Alex would never realize how formative this seemingly dull, repeated practice was until years later. In the dark evening of a January night,

75. "Morning Prayer: Rite II," in *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 79.

Alex and his wife would receive a call: their teenage son was in trouble. Derailed by depression and anxiety, he had spiraled into behaviors that were part defiance and part cries for help. Now Alex was receiving a call he had never been trained for, would make a visit he had never dreamed of, and would have a conversation he never wanted to. Not sure what to expect, Alex inched into an unfamiliar room unsure of himself—dazed, bewildered, disappointed, worried—awash in a sea of emotions and fears. But then he began to imagine what his boy must be feeling, for no matter what his son might be doing, Alex knew who he was, and *whose* he was. And so he became eager to find him, only to then be ushered into a room where his son sat folded into himself in a corner. Upon sight of Alex, his son collapsed and grasped Alex around his waist like he had as a child. Amid the tears and heaves of his sobs, Alex heard his son blubber, "I'm so sorry, Dad. Please forgive me."

And what else could Alex have done? This was replaying a scene he knew only too well: Alex himself had spent a lifetime confessing his sins to a gracious Father who, week after week after week, would announce without condition and hesitation, the complete forgiveness of all of our sins. So without hesitation, and without even having to think about it, Alex just knew what to say and what to do: he gathered up his son into his arms and whispered, "Of course I forgive you." There would be more opportunities for Alex to do the same. There wasn't any particular magic in this heartrending moment. But the regularity and repetition of the practice of confession and absolution had already taught him, on a gut level, that he too was a prodigal son who regularly approached his Father asking for forgiveness—*again*. And again. And again. And every single time the gracious Father, already looking for his arrival, met him at the end of the lane and made the same announcement of forgiveness and mercy. Through his regular and repeated immersion in the practices of Christian worship, Alex had absorbed the temperament of our gracious heavenly Father and so constituted this situation with that story in the background. But such an imaginative construal happened "automatically," as it were, because the repetition of the practice had effectively recruited Alex as a character in the same drama.

If Christian worship is going to be formative, it has to be repetitive.[76] Secular liturgies already know this; yet Christians, especially Protestants, can be suspicious of such "ritualized" repetition. But we need not be. God has created us as creatures of habit and meets us where we are. Indeed, the

76. This doesn't mean, of course, that we do the exact same thing week after week. There are macro- and microrhythms of repetition. We might pray the same prayer of confession each week, repeat the church's calendar each year, and work our way through the Scriptures with the help of a lectionary every three years.

Father invites us into union with Christ through Spirit-charged practices that, over and over again, sink us into the triune life. It is in their repetition that the story begins to sink into our imagination, thus sanctifying our perception and engendering action "toward the kingdom."

Redeeming Reflection: On Liturgical Catechesis and Christian Education

The core of my argument has been to emphasize all of the nonconscious ways that we intend our world, and hence the significance of formative practices that "work on" our cognitive unconscious—that shape our background and attune our being-in-the-world in ways that evade conceptualization and even elude our own awareness. *Praktognosia* and *habitus* have been conceptual names I've employed to try to illuminate aspects of our incarnate significance, our embodied being-in-the-world. Appreciating the role that such nonconscious modes of intentionality play in driving our action, I have especially pressed us to be attentive to how our background is formed and shaped and primed to perceive the world, recognizing that we are subject to competing formative practices. I have emphasized these nonconscious modes of meaning largely because they are underemphasized and underappreciated in many discussions of Christian formation and Christian higher education, which is why we are so often susceptible to mis- and de-formation by disordered liturgies that recruit our imagination for a body politic other than the city of God.

However, I want to close by emphasizing that this attention to our unconscious habituation and embodied "feel" for the world is not meant to denigrate or neglect the role of reflection and intellectual analysis. I am not setting up a dichotomy: *either* practice *or* reflection. To the contrary, my hope is to foster intentional reflection *on* practice in order to encourage reflective immersion *in* practice. Consider an example from the very beginning of the book: our proverbial case of reading Wendell Berry in Costco. While ultimately we will close the gap between knowledge and action through rehabituation that operates on our cognitive unconscious (*good* "mindless" eating, as Wansink puts it), there is a moment for reflection here that makes a crucial difference: becoming intellectually aware of what's at stake in my eating practice, and becoming cognizant of how other practices have recruited my habits, will *convince* me to seek new environments and new communities of practice. Being convinced of the importance of practice for "automating" my behavior, I will then *choose* to submit myself to different rhythms and habit-forming routines in order to rehabituate my wants and desires to a different *telos*. Recognizing that my *habitus* has been marshaled by one body politic to ends that I don't want to affirm, I will intentionally pursue the practices of an alternative body politic in order to recalibrate my heart.

We can extend the same principles to how we approach Christian formation—including both the practices of Christian worship and the pedagogies operative in Christian education. Intentionality is important on at least two levels. First, it is crucial that those who are responsible for the shape and form of Christian worship understand the "logic" of the practice in order to know what counts as wisdom *within* the practice.[77] In other words, Christian worship leaders will, in some sense, have to put themselves in the situation of Bourdieu's ethnographer: working with a theory of practice *as* practice, Christian worship planners need to be reflective in order to articulate and analyze the logic of practice so that they can then discern those forms of worship that are consistent with the Story that worship is supposed to invite us into. 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.

Second, and more widely, worship requires full, active, conscious participation even if it is also forming us in ways that elude our conscious awareness. If our immersion in the practices of Christian worship is always and only a matter of "going through the motions," then we are not really practitioners—we are more like free riders who float along in an environment without investment or identification. To put it in Bourdieu's terms, we will not be adequately incorporated into the body. However, there are also appropriate degrees of intentional reflection: a child or a new believer or a mentally challenged adult will be "carried" by the practices more than an adult who has been immersed in the faith for a lifetime. Indeed, we might think of the heart of discipleship and faith formation as liturgical catechesis whereby instruction in the faith is primarily focused on helping the people of God understand why we do what we do when we gather for worship. This was the intuition that informed "mystagogical preaching": formational preaching that intentionally invited catechumens into the body

77. For an illuminating account of how this should inform the *teaching* of worship (for both worship leaders and worshipers), see John Witvliet, "Teaching as a Worship Practice," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 117–48.

of Christ by explicating the sacraments and rites of initiation, "leading" them into the "mysteries" of the faith.[78] But rather than outlining a system of dogma, such preaching and teaching was an excavation and explanation of worship practice. Rather than a curriculum of abstract doctrines, mystagogical preaching was an invitation to reflect on what the people of God *did* week-in and week-out in worship.[79] Commenting on Cyril of Jerusalem's mystagogical preaching, Lester Ruth notes that "Cyril's concern, like that of other early bishops, was to name the different ways in which the various ceremonies had connected the newly baptized to the biblical story."[80] The goal of liturgical catechesis is to invite the people of God to a more conscious, intentional awareness of what we're doing and why we're doing it when we gather for worship—and that intellectual understanding will solidify as a conviction that then moves us to be committed to immersion in the practices.[81]

By equipping the people of God to reflect on worship, we can change how we *enter* worship—change the "angle of entry" into the community of practice that is the worshiping congregation.[82] The angle of entry to worship seems to be a determining factor in the formative power of worship. John Witvliet voices the question that many ask of this sort of "formative" vision of Christian worship: "if liturgical participation shapes us, why in the world are lifelong participants in worship not better people?"[83] Witvliet notes a host of factors that effectively "inoculate" us to the formative power

78. For a classic discussion, see Craig A. Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002). More recently, consider the case study from Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, a congregation in contemporary Seattle, as recounted in Paul E. Hoffman, *Faith Forming Faith: Bringing New Christians to Baptism and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012).

79. The Heidelberg Catechism can be seen in a similar way. Organized around the Creed, the Law, and the Lord's Prayer, the catechism was drawing on what Christians would have rehearsed every week in worship. Insofar as congregations abandon this "spine" of worship practice, the catechism seems abstract, even arbitrary.

80. Lester Ruth, Carrie Steenwyk, and John D. Witvliet, *Walking Where Jesus Walked: Worship in Fourth-Century Jerusalem*, The Church at Worship: Case Studies from Christian History (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 130. This rich volume includes extensive excerpts from Cyril's mystagogical sermons (130–37).

81. Such a goal is obviously germane to congregational life; however, this could also be the legitimate goal of a college chapel program.

82. For a consideration of the affective dynamics related to an "angle of entry," see Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 29–51. One might also consider an analogous point of "entry" in literature: the suspension of disbelief as a "chosen" disposition in order to inhabit the world of the novel. For relevant discussion, see James Wood, *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (New York: Random House, 1999).

83. John D. Witvliet, "The Cumulative Power of Transformation in Public Worship: Cultivating Gratitude and Expectancy for the Holy Spirit's Work," in *Worship That Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregational Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation*, ed. Alexis Abernathy (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 52.

of worship, but one deserves our attention here. "One way to inoculate ourselves against part of worship's power," he suggests,

> is to think of going to church in superstitious terms, as if we are hedging our bets with God. If we participate in worship and simply hope that our being there will cause God to bless us, what we are doing in church really amounts to practicing something other than Christianity. We are practicing superstition, or hypocrisy—in which we sometimes even intentionally learn to say things to God that we do not mean. Spiritually speaking, the sin of hypocrisy is one of the most vexing antidotes to formation. In hypocrisy, our external actions are cut off from internal attitudes. We may even become well practiced at not meaning what we say or do.[84]

The posture or stance we effectively adopt upon "entry" affects our receptivity to the formative power of the practices, and even our openness to the Spirit's operations.

Matthew Boulton suggests that approaching Christian worship practices as merely expressive can also inoculate us to their formative power. "Indeed," he writes, "seeing through Calvin's eyes, we may describe what ails many Protestant churches today as follows: having inherited a treasury of formative exercises, we practice them only here and there, now and then—and still expect and even claim to be getting in shape. Or we expect no such thing, instead interpreting the treasury as a collection not of exercises meant to form us, but rather of activities meant to express, demonstrate, or symbolically establish ourselves as believing Christian beliefs, belonging to a Christian crowd."[85] If our angle of entry can effectively shut down the formative power of the practices, then one of the best things we can do to ensure the transformative, rehabituating power of Christian worship is to foster reflexive intentionality about *what* we're doing and *why*. In short, liturgical catechesis will encourage reflection on worship precisely so we constitute worship *as* that "suite" of disciplines that are habitations of the Spirit, into which we're invited in order to learn how to imagine the kingdom.

Picturing a Reflective, Sentimental Education

If I have celebrated the importance of attending to our "sentimental education," that is not instead of, or at the expense of, an "intellectual" education. The project of formation envisioned here eschews any dichotomy between the two—both because our rational reflection is rooted in affect and because our immersion in affective practice is

84. Ibid., 52–53.

85. Boulton, *Life in God*, 228.

sometimes motivated by intellectual conviction. Our reflection is always already sentimental, and our affective immersion is never untethered from our intellectual being-in-the-world. So a truly holistic Christian education will be a formation of both heart and mind, both intellect and affect.

This interplay of intellect and sentiment is wonderfully pictured in Albert Goldbarth's poem "Sentimental." The poem itself effects what it's talking about: it intertwines sentimental affect with a reflexive question. The poem poses a question that we *think* about even as we are carried along by a meaning that eludes our conceptual grasp and analytic skill. The scene is a writing class in which earnest young poets, devotees of the avant-garde, are on guard for incursions of clichéd schmaltz and kitschy appeals to emotions and sentimentality. Disciples of modernism, they greet Hallmark niceties with haughty disdain. Serious poets, they are wary of anything that smells like the made-for-TV movie. The unforgivable sin is to be sentimental.

But their teacher is going to press them, and it is this thread of the poem that invites us to reflection. How do you know what counts as sentimental? When have we crossed the line? And as we're carried along by the affective play of the poem, our confidence in that line begins to waver, and by the end of it we realize we've been captivated by sentimentality—and that it is *true*.

> The light has traveled unthinkable thousands of miles to be
> condensed, recharged, and poured off the white white pages
> of an open Bible the country parson holds in front of this couple
> in a field, in July, in the sap and the flyswirl of July
> in upper Wisconsin, where their vows buzz in a ring in the air
> like the flies, and are as sweet as the sap, in these rich and ritual minutes.
> Is it sentimental? Oops. And out of that Bible the light continues
> to rush as if from a faucet. There will be a piecrust cooling
> out of its own few x'ed-out cuts. And will it make us run
> for the picklier taste of irony rolled around protectively on our tongues
> like a grab of Greek olives? My students and I discuss this
> slippery phenomenon. Does "context" matter? Does
> "earned" count? If a balled-up fidget of snakes
> in the underbrush dies in a freeze is it sentimental? No,
> yes, maybe. What if a litter of cocker spaniels? What
> if we called them "puppydogs" in the same poem in that same hard,
> hammering winter? When my father was buried,
> the gray snow in the cemetery was sheet tin. If I said
> that? Yes, no, what does "tone" or "history" do
> to the Hollywood hack violinists who patiently wait to play
> the taut nerves of the closest human body until from that
> lush cue alone, the eyes swell moistly, and the griefs
> we warehouse daily take advantage of this thinning
> of our systems, then the first sloppy gushes begin . . .

> Is that "wrong"? Did I tell you the breaths
> of the gravediggers puffed out like factorysmoke
> as they bent and straightened, bent and straightened,
> mechanically? Are wise old (toothless) Black blues singers
> sentimental?—"gran'ma"? "country cookin'"? But
> they have their validity, don't they, yes? their
> sweat-in-the-creases, picking up the lighting
> in a fine-lined mesh of what it means to have gone through time
> alive a little bit on this planet. Hands shoot up . . . opinions . . .
> questions . . . What if the sun wept? the moon? Why, in the face
> of those open faces, are we so squeamish? Call out
> the crippled girl and her only friend the up-for-sale foal,
> and let her tootle her woeful pennywhistle musics.
> What if some chichi streetwise junkass from the demimonde
> gave forth with the story of orphans forced through howling storm
> to the workhouse, letting it swing between the icy-blue
> quotation marks of cynicism—*then*? What if
> I wept? What if I simply put the page down,
> rocked my head in my own folded elbows, forgot
> the rest of it all, and wept? What if I stepped into
> the light of that page, a burnished and uncompromising
> light, and walked back up to his stone a final time,
> just that, no drama, and it was so cold,
> and the air was so brittle, metal buckled
> out song like a bandsaw, and there, from inside me,
> where they'd been lost in shame and sophistry
> all these years now, every last one of my childhood's
> heartwormed puppydogs found its natural voice.[86]

86. Albert Goldbarth, "Sentimental," in *Across the Layers: Poems Old and New* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 113–14. Used with permission.